

ECONOMY AND CONVICTIONS

MARCH- APRIL
2022



**SPIRIT OF
RESISTANCE**

SI VIS PACEM, PARA BELLUM
WHO WANTS PEACE, PREPARES FOR WAR



"The first casualty of war is always the truth", said Rudyard Kipling.

The successive diplomatic visits of Kamala Harris and Joe Biden to Poland, and their European roadshows in recent days, have been much talked about in terms of the gesticulations of their staffs and the effect produced by some of their statements, which were as spectacular as they were vain.

These were symbolic diplomatic visits, but they had no influence on the Russian-Ukrainian war, the outcome of which will only be resolved, and probably not immediately, by the European Union and the financial and commercial sanctions it has imposed since the beginning of the conflict. Perhaps also with the help, here and there, of certain other States currently at work, such as Israel, whose business is obviously also very much affected by the situation, without them being able to exert any real long-term influence on Vladimir Putin's strategy.

If the Russian diplomatic spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, has since announced some progress in the negotiations, this is apparently the best news on the Eastern front for the last three weeks. She added that Russia was not seeking the occupation of Ukraine, the destruction of its state or the overthrow of the Ukrainian government. Added to this are the bar-room comments often made by eminent European specialists, according to whom a de-escalation process should be negotiated from now on, with an exit from the top, which the Russian president would quickly accept because of the expected collapse of his army and even more so of his system. What naivety!

Our geostrategic errors committed for more than 20 years, vilifying nuclear power in favour of other fossil fuels on the basis of false or erroneous assertions, have made our energy dependence fatal, and our lightness unforgivable in the face of Russia's expansionist will, which is nonetheless undisguised, but which the European and American leaders have seen fit to underestimate, although not for the same reasons.

We might as well say that from an energy point of view, but also and above all from a food point of view, since Russia and the Ukraine together represent the world's granary, we have all been fighting the wrong battle by not wanting to see the truth in the face.

This truth also obliges us to ask ourselves, even if it is a little late, if our alliance strategies are as profitable as we believe, and who will benefit from this deleterious situation, whose dramatic consequences should be underlined not only on the humanitarian level, but also for our companies and for all European citizens, whether they belong to the Union or not.

Who will benefit from German rearmament, who will become our preferred supplier of gas, oil or cereals, in short, who will profit from the general weakening of the European Union after having thrown oil on the fire on the Russian question over the last few months? If the subject here is not to question NATO despite its undeniable weaknesses, nor our Atlanticist alliances, it is however urgent to realise that peace can only be maintained by preparing for war, on all levels, relentlessly, and against everyone.

In Europe, we have preferred to practice geopolitics on the cheap, the final bill for which will prove, on the contrary, very costly for the West.

ANNE MAZOYER-JANKOWSKA
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FULFILLING THE AFRICAN PROPHECY THROUGH POLITICAL ACTION

In the global geopolitical narrative to be deconstructed, Africa is locked in an outdated imaginary of a woman to be conquered. Rich in raw materials and vast resources, it is a prisoner of its promises and presents the image of a woman with great potential who, although she has everything she needs to control her own destiny, is reduced to a spectator of her own fate and that of the world.

The analogy ends here. For the continent has a major role to play in the new world order, both with historical partners concerned with a fairer and more balanced relationship and with predators whose sole aim is unregulated exploitation.

Africa, Europe and Russia, this strange war

On 24 February, in a move that was as condemnable as it was predictable, Russia decided to invade Ukraine and interfere with the fundamental freedom of peoples to decide for themselves.

On 2 March, in response to this military operation, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling on Russia to immediately cease hostilities and withdraw its forces. Although this resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority of 141 countries, it is nonetheless eloquent in its revelations, as its reading is full of lessons on the change of paradigms, on the one hand, between Africa and the international powers and, on the other hand, within the continent itself. Indeed, 35 countries (including China) abstained.

In the Maghreb, where countries such as Morocco and Tunisia remain historical partners of EU countries (France, Spain, Italy...), Algeria's abstention is less surprising when one knows its decolonial history and its relations with Cuba and the former USSR, which were forged during independence. Nor is the position of Angola or even Mali surprising in the light of recent developments, where the Wagner group is gaining ground.

But even more surprisingly, the abstention of Senegal, Madagascar and South Africa reveals an undeniable retreat of European and Western influence on the African continent.

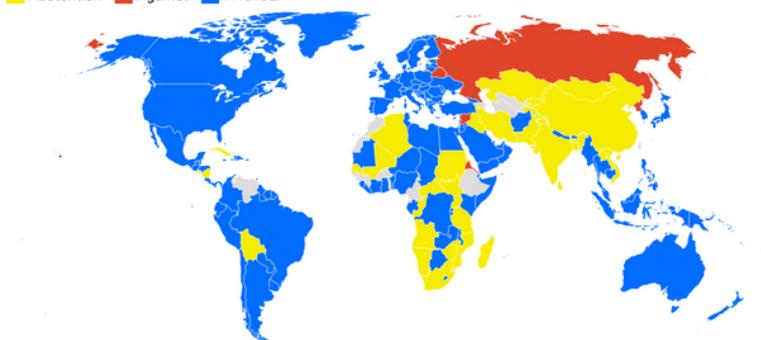
While the urgency is undoubtedly the Ukrainian war, this development raises questions about Russia's expansionist reach in Africa and confirms the need for the European Union, sub-Saharan Africa's main trading partner, to rethink its African policy.

Without going so far as to assert that Europe's destiny will be African, it is certain that Europe's future on the international scene can be read in the mirror with the reconstruction of its power on the African continent and with Africa's trajectory.

UN resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Vote on the resolution of 2 March 2022

■ Abstention ■ Against ■ In favour



Map: FairValue Corporate & Public Affairs - Source: United Nations - Created with Datawrapper



Overcoming the non-alignment illusion of a spectator Africa

The abstention of certain African and Asian countries is, at least in theory, part of a tradition of non-alignment. However, this raises a twofold interpretation: that of a distancing of African countries that do not feel concerned by the war, and that of an absence of alignment deemed more prudent in view of their interests.

Either way, trying to understand the situation by referring solely to African countries' long-term interests is misleading. Unlike the Western powers and even China, which are interested in raw materials but also see Africa and its growing population as a market, Russia brings neither a real trade network nor real investments. To compensate for this shortcoming, to succeed in its breakthrough and to win the other war of image and communication, Russia only has an ersatz army (Libya, Central African Republic, Mali, Darfur...) and relies on an anti-Western discourse and sentiment that is mainly spread among young people.

It is up to Africa not to recognise its friends but to better situate its interests and to control its narrative. This requires going beyond the illusion of non-alignment in a war that will only result in losers. And it is only at the price of this primary lucidity and assumed political action that the continent will be able to go beyond the past reading that presents it as a simple spectator and reverse the current narrative.



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A EUROPEAN SPRING?

When asked about Ukraine, Dominique Moïsi (*special advisor to the IFRI and the Institut Montaigne*) remarked that the European Union, a space of peace par excellence, was unexpectedly returning to its founding story, war. A conflict on a scale unknown for the past seventy years, involving tens of thousands of soldiers in a European theatre, has made it possible for generations who have only known war by saying "Hitler, I don't know" to suddenly realise that bombs and missiles exist beyond the realm of video games, sowing death and destruction right next door.



An infernal spiral

The Ukraine has dealt Putin a series of setbacks, both on the ground where his troops are meeting fierce resistance and on the international stage where condemnation is scathing. In a dramatic turnaround, Germany has decided to deliver arms to Ukraine, to double its defence budget in 2022 and to end the Nord Stream 2 gas import contract soon. The European Parliament unanimously supports Ukraine's application to join the EU, while Sweden and Finland are considering a snap membership of NATO. Far from shaking Putin's mad resolve, the surge of solidarity it arouses within the EU and NATO feeds his rage to fight, at the expense of the Ukrainian people, who are held hostage between the intoxication of power and the West's concern to avoid an escalation.

Parallel evolution

Going beyond its initial economic vocation, the EU has turned into a political institution and now hopes to invest in its own defence, as befits a "geopolitical" Union. For its part, NATO, a military alliance established in 1949 for defensive purposes, is becoming increasingly political. The diversification of their missions is accompanied by the integration of new members: from six to twenty-seven for the former, from twelve to thirty for the latter.

The war in Ukraine has clearly put Washington back at the helm of NATO, thus reviving a tradition that President Trump has abandoned. Reassured, the Europeans are nevertheless relegated to the status of auxiliaries, a status that suits them.

Will the EU's new ambitions rebalance NATO's two pillars?

Between a troubled and a bright future

As the key instruments of seventy years of peaceful development, these two institutions find themselves at a crossroads:

- Will the Ukrainian conflict wake the EU from its deep defence coma? This thesis of some experts is supported by the Versailles Declaration of 11 March which cites, among the three essential dimensions of European sovereignty, the strengthening of defence capabilities and the reduction of energy dependence.

- A NATO strengthened in its European component but still under American tutelage, added to an EU endowed, since 21 March, with a "Strategic Compass" in terms of defence, could certainly fuel Russian fears of a change in the nature of their power relationship with the West, but it will above all guarantee a better balance between Europeans and Americans within the Western camp.

Let us note in this respect the perfect convergence of views of the transatlantic partners on the two priorities of the moment, defence and energy: "During his appearances at both the Nato and EU summits, Biden may press European leaders on longer-term plans. They include the need for more defence spending to match Nato target, which have become even more important given the war in Ukraine, and separate proposals for the bloc to use more of its fiscal firepower on security and energy."

Unless something unexpected happens, the West will emerge from the NATO, G7 and EU summits on 24 and 25 March more united and therefore stronger.

End of the war: humiliation or reconciliation?

Unfortunately, it is premature to consider the post-Putin era. But the day could come to restore the European Common House dear to Gorbachev, in the updated form of a zone of prosperity 'from the Atlantic to the Urals' combining the world's largest market and one of the world's largest deposits of strategic raw materials. This 'geopolitical' Europe, shaped by geography and history, would have the grim alternatives of being the eastern appendage of a US-dominated Atlantic community or the western rump of a Chinese-ruled Eurasian community. With bombs and missiles raining down on the Ukrainian people and sanctions piling up against Putin's criminal heresies, is it too early to give the Russians any assurances about their future?

Let the immediate threat disappear - a scenario that everyone is hoping for - and the barely recovered unity will fade away. But who cares? In this spring of 2022, when nature is turning green all around, the best antidote to the Ukrainian tragedy is to imagine a Europe worthy of its founders, powerful enough to make its humanist values envied and respected throughout the world.



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HIGH-TENSION PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The year 2022 was to mark the opening of a new chapter in contemporary history. A year placed under the sign of the hope of finally being able to breathe deeply again, without barriers of any kind. A year of rebirth, which was to herald with certainty the economic recovery and the abandonment of lifelines in the form of state loans to remedy the sudden halt in business activity. A year of transition to sustainable, ecological and digital social and economic models, and to the affirmation of a resilient and sovereign national and European policy.

In this tangle of promises and illusions, 2022 had the arduous task of being the year of major electoral appointments and the affirmation of France in a leadership role in a European Union that demanded, more than ever, the return of its *λόγος* in the international diplomatic dynamic.

Nevertheless, history, by its cyclical, mocking and brutal nature, reminds each of us, from the man in the street to the businessman to the politician, that the advent of the Risorgimento is not yet a reality.

A question therefore spontaneously comes to mind: after 70 years of peace on European soil and a few days before the first round of the French presidential election, how can one of the main achievements of the Western democracies - the right to vote - retain its value in the face of the stifling echo of tanks and bombs on the Eastern border?

Indeed, the appearance on the media scene of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has destabilised national public opinion in a matter of hours, and with it the programme and rhetoric of the eight candidates for the Elysée Palace. The war we are currently witnessing has served as a rapid and dramatic reminder of the priorities of our time, as well as the vacuity and inconsistency of the issues that, only a few weeks ago, were constantly determining the results of the polls.

From immigration to the French-speaking world, the importance of these issues has been removed from the interest of citizens, and with it the ability of the contenders for the highest office of the state to attract the masses and consolidate a convincing electoral base. This is why, since 24 February, the candidates' declarations have been distorted from their ideological essence and readjusted according to current events - a logic that, for many political scientists, such as Pierre Rosanvallon, is linked to the philosophy of protest populism.

This dynamic has therefore led to questions about the value of a presidential campaign governed by the impossibility of lucidly analysing the various proposals related to domestic politics. At a time when France needs to draw up a solid reform plan to avoid the risks of a too high debt threshold and inexorable inflation, the political agenda has been forced to focus entirely on the impact of the sanctions imposed on Russia, over which hangs the shadow of the energy and food crises that will have drastic consequences on financial stability and consumer purchasing power.



In all this, while all the candidates ready to oust the incumbent president are struggling to conquer adequate speaking time, Emmanuel Macron, whose campaign remains poor for the moment, seems to be able to take advantage of the legitimacy conferred by his position as head of state.

In this sense, the theory of rallying around the flag, developed by John Muller in 1970, seems to confirm once again its intellectual soundness. The principle underlying the political scientist's thinking is based on the observation that in situations of crisis or emergency, which are characterised by their international and dramatic dimension, the people tend to rally around the symbols of the state - the flag and its leader - thus directing their electoral support towards the personalities in place.

Following this logic, and thanks also to the advances made by some candidates to the current public enemy number 1, Vladimir Putin, the president-candidate Emmanuel Macron seems to be promised a victory announced in advance.

However, if today's polls take it for granted, they also point to a decisive variable whose importance is growing: abstentionism. Indeed, the global focus on Ukrainian events risks overshadowing the campaign and, with it, the interest of citizens to go to the polls.

But in this context, the key question today is: in a political and media agenda dominated by foreign affairs, **how can voters formulate critical thinking that will lead them to make decisions in line with their needs for the next five years?**

What is certain is that this election is a high point that risks taking place in the shadow of those democratic principles on which the republican values that make France what it is in the eyes of the world are built. The risk is therefore real: 24 April could constitute a new defeat for contemporary Western politics.



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PRESS RELEASE

FAIRVALUE CORPORATE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS LAUNCHES, ON ITS WEBSITE, AN INFORMATION RELAY PLATFORM DEDICATED TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES



FairValue Corporate & Public Affairs launches, on its website, an information relay platform dedicated to Ukrainian refugees. Against the backdrop of Russia's war with Ukraine, FairValue Corporate & Public Affairs is committed to supporting Ukrainian refugees who are forced to leave their homeland, firstly to the countries bordering the conflict, but also to Europe and the world.

The countries bordering Ukraine, and particularly Poland, are on the front line: the migration crisis facing the country is a huge economic, social and health challenge, and its duration is unknown. There is talk today of more than 5 million refugees who will find asylum in Poland, either temporarily or on a more permanent basis in the coming months.

This human, economic and social responsibility, the heaviest of all the countries bordering the war, cannot be borne by a single Member State, but by the entire European Union and also by each of us, according to our will and our means.

In a spirit of solidarity, our firm, which is established in several European countries, including Poland, has decided to set up a relay platform in the form of a dedicated website, launched today, containing the list and contact details of organisations and associations in charge of the management and assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees in France, Belgium, Italy, the United Kingdom and Poland. This specific site, hosted by www.fairvaluecc.com, will be updated daily by the firm's collaborators, to inform all those who wish to welcome, accompany or simply help Ukrainian refugees by any means.

Anne Mazoyer-Jankowska, President and Founder of FairValue Corporate & Public Affairs declares: *"Our firm, through this action of solidarity, wishes to commit its spirit of resistance to the reconstruction of Ukrainian lives in Poland and in other European countries, in the months and years to come. Beyond that, the professional relationship that FairValue Corporate & Public Affairs has with Poland, its companies and its client federations, but also with its Polish partners and friends, whose resilience commands respect and admiration, has naturally led us to support their commitment and their struggle".*

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