

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1 - 2 OTTOBRE 2022 TPO BOLOGNA

## OLTRE L'UMANO

MUNICIPIO  
ZERO

TPO



### SABATO 1 OTTOBRE

ORE 16.00 - OLTRE L'UMANO, OLTRE LA FINE DELLA STORIA

NE PARLIAMO CON:

MARCELLO SPAGNULO - PORPORA MAR-  
CASCIANO - CHRISTIAN MARAZZI VILMA  
MAZZA - GIANFRANCO BETTIN - MOTUS

### DOMENICA 2 OTTOBRE

ORE 10.00 - OLTRE LA GUERRA E  
PACE, PER LA TRASFORMAZIONE

NE PARLIAMO, TRA LE ALTRE, CON:

ANASTASIYA RYABCHUK - KATERYNA  
SEMCHUK - INTERNATIONALIST YOUTH  
COMMUNE - DAVIDE GRASSO - LANFRAN-  
CO CAMMINITI - NOUR KHALIL

### DOMENICA 2 OTTOBRE

ORE 15.00 - BATTI IL TUO TEMPO,  
DENTRO I TERRITORI DEL PRESENTE

ASSEMBLEA PER BATTERE IL NOSTRO  
TEMPO. AD UNA SETTIMANA DALLE  
ELEZIONI ITALIANE, COME STIAMO  
NELLE MOBILITAZIONI E NEI SOMMO-  
VIMENTI SOCIALI DEI PROSSIMI MESI?

PER SAPERNE DI PIÙ



# “The right to resist.” A feminist manifesto

## [Sign the manifesto](#)

We, feminists from Ukraine, call on feminists around the world to stand in solidarity with the resistance movement of the Ukrainian people against the predatory, imperialist war unleashed by the Russian Federation. War narratives often portray women\* as victims. However, in reality, women\* also play a key role in resistance movements, both at the frontline and on the home front: from Algeria to Vietnam, from Syria to Palestine, from Kurdistan to Ukraine.

The authors of the [Feminist Resistance Against War manifesto](#) deny Ukrainian women\* this right to resistance, which constitutes a basic act of self-defense of the oppressed. In contrast, we view feminist solidarity as a political practice which must listen to the voices of those directly affected by imperialist aggression. Feminist solidarity must defend women's\* right to independently determine their needs, political goals, and strategies for achieving them. Ukrainian feminists were struggling against systemic discrimination, patriarchy, racism, and capitalist exploitation long before the present moment. We conducted and will continue to conduct this struggle both during war and in peacetime. However, the Russian invasion is forcing us to focus on the general defense effort of Ukrainian society: the fight for survival, for basic rights and freedoms, for political self-determination. We call for an informed assessment of a specific situation instead of abstract geopolitical analysis which ignores the historical, social and political context. Abstract pacifism which condemns all sides taking part in the war leads to irresponsible solutions in practice. We insist on the essential difference between violence as a means of oppression and as a legitimate means of self-defense.

The Russian aggression undermines the achievements of Ukrainian feminists in the struggle against political and social oppression. In the occupied territories, the Russian army uses mass rape and other forms of gender-based violence as a military strategy. The establishment of the Russian regime in these territories poses the threat of [criminalizing LGBTIQ+ people and decriminalizing domestic violence](#). Throughout Ukraine, the problem of domestic violence is becoming more acute. Vast destruction of civilian infrastructure, threats to the environmental, inflation, shortages, and population displacement endanger social reproduction. The war intensifies gendered division of labor, further shifting the work of social reproduction – in especially difficult and precarious conditions – onto women. Rising unemployment and [the neoliberal government's attack on labor rights](#) continue to exacerbate social problems. Fleeing from the war, many women\* are forced to leave the country, and find themselves in a vulnerable position due to barriers to housing, social infrastructure, stable income, and medical services (including contraception and abortion). They are also at risk of getting trapped into sex trafficking.

**We call on feminists from around the world to support our struggle. We demand:**

- the right to self-determination, protection of life and fundamental freedoms, and the right to self-defense (including armed) for the Ukrainian people – as well as for

other peoples facing imperialist aggression;

- a just peace, based on the self-determination of the Ukrainian people, both in the territories controlled by Ukraine and its temporarily occupied territories, in which the interests of workers, women, LGBTIQ+ people, ethnic minorities and other oppressed and discriminated groups will be taken into account;

- international justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity during the imperialist wars of the Russian Federation and other countries;

- effective security guarantees for Ukraine and effective mechanisms to prevent further wars, aggression, escalation of conflicts in the region and in the world;

- freedom of movement, protection and social security for all refugees and internally displaced persons irrespective of origin;

- protection and expansion of labor rights, opposition to exploitation and super exploitation, and democratization of industrial relations;

- prioritization of the sphere of social reproduction (kindergartens, schools, medical institutions, social support, etc.) in the reconstruction of Ukraine after the war;

- [cancellation of Ukraine's foreign debt](#) (and that of other countries of the global periphery) for post-war reconstruction and prevention of further austerity policies;

- protection against gender-based violence and guaranteed effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention;

- respect for the rights and empowerment of LGBTIQ+ people, national minorities, people with disabilities and other discriminated groups;

- implementation of the reproductive rights of girls and women, including the universal rights to sex education, medical services, medicine, contraception, and abortion;

- guaranteed visibility for and recognition of women's active role in the anti-imperialist struggle;

- inclusion of women in all social processes and decision-making, both during war and in peacetime, on equal terms with men;

Today, Russian imperialism threatens the existence of Ukrainian society and affects the entire world. Our common fight against it requires shared principles and global support. We call for feminist solidarity and action to protect human lives as well as rights, social justice, freedom, and security.

**We stand for the right to resist.**

**If Ukrainian society lays down its arms, there will be no Ukrainian society.**

**If Russia lays down its arms, the war will end.**

**[Sign the manifesto](#)**



# A letter to the Western Left from Kyiv

The ‘anti-imperialism of idiots’ meant people turned a blind eye to Russia’s actions



People clean up the damage at an apartment complex after an attack by Russia on Kharkivskiy District, Kyiv | Sipa US/Alamy Live News

I am writing these lines in Kyiv while it is under artillery attack.

Until the last minute, I had hoped that Russian troops wouldn't launch a full-scale invasion. Now, I can only thank those who leaked the information to the US intelligence services.

Yesterday, I spent half the day considering whether I ought to join a territorial defence unit. During the night that followed, the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyi signed a full mobilisation order and Russian troops moved in and prepared to encircle Kyiv, which made the decision for me.



But before taking up my post, I would like to communicate to the Western Left what I think about its reaction to Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

First of all, I am thankful to those Leftists who are now picketing Russian embassies – even those who took their time to realise Russia was the aggressor in this conflict.

I am thankful to politicians who support putting pressure on Russia to stop the invasion and withdraw its troops.

And I am thankful to the delegation of British and Welsh MPs, unionists, and activists who came to support us and hear us in the days before the Russian invasion.

I am also thankful to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign in the UK for its help over many years.

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This article is about the other part of the Western Left. Those who imagined 'NATO aggression in Ukraine', and who could not see Russian aggression – like the [New Orleans](#) chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Or the DSA International Committee, which published a [shameful statement](#) failing to say a single critical word against Russia (I am very thankful to US professor and activist Dan la Botz and the others for their [critique of this statement](#)).

Or those who criticised Ukraine for not implementing the [Minsk Agreements](#) and kept silent about their violations by Russia and the so-called 'People's Republics'.

Or those who exaggerated the influence of the far-Right in Ukraine, but did not notice the far-Right in the 'People's Republics' and avoided criticising Putin's conservative, nationalist and authoritarian policy.

This is part of the wider phenomenon in the Western 'anti-war' movement, usually called 'campism' by critics on the Left. British-Syrian author and activist Leila Al-Shami gave it a stronger name: the "anti-imperialism of idiots". Read her wonderful 2018 essay if you haven't done so yet. I will repeat only the main thesis here: the activity of a large part of the Western 'anti-war' Left over the war in Syria had nothing to do with stopping the war. It only opposed Western interference, while ignoring, or even supporting, the engagement of Russia and Iran, to say nothing of their attitude to the 'legitimately elected' Assad regime in Syria.

"A number of anti-war organisations have justified their silence on Russian and Iranian interventions by arguing that 'the main enemy is at home,'" Al-Shami wrote. "This excuses them from undertaking any serious power analysis to determine who the main actors driving the war actually are."





A Ukrainian soldier points towards a building in the east of the country that has been damaged by Russian shellfire | Jakub Podkowiak/PRESSCOV/Sipa USA

Unfortunately, we have seen the same ideological cliché repeated over Ukraine. Even after Russia recognised the independence of the ‘People’s Republics’ earlier this week, Branko Marcetic, a writer for American Left magazine Jacobin, penned an article almost fully devoted to criticising the US. When it came to Putin’s intentions, he went only as far as remarking that the Russian leader had “signal[led] less-than-benign ambitions”. Seriously?

I am not a fan of NATO. I know that after the end of the Cold War, the bloc lost its defensive function and led aggressive policies. I know that NATO’s eastward expansion undermined efforts directed at nuclear disarmament and forming a system of joint security. NATO tried to marginalise the role of the UN and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and to discredit them as ‘inefficient organisations’. But we cannot bring back the past, and we have to orient ourselves on the current circumstances when seeking a way out of this situation.

How many times did the Western Left bring up the US's informal promises to the former Russian president, Mikhail Gorbachev, about NATO ("not one inch eastward"), and how many times did it mention the 1994 Budapest Memorandum that guarantees Ukraine's sovereignty? How often did the Western Left support the "legitimate security concerns" of Russia, a state that owns the world's second-largest nuclear arsenal? And how often did it recall the security concerns of Ukraine, a state that had to trade its nuclear weapons, under the pressure of the US and Russia, for a piece of paper (the Budapest Memorandum) that Putin trampled conclusively in 2014? Did it ever occur to Leftist critics of NATO that Ukraine is the main victim of the changes brought about by the NATO expansion?

Time and again, the Western Left responded to the critique of Russia by mentioning US aggression against Afghanistan, Iraq and other states. Of course, these states need to be brought into the discussion – but how, exactly?

The argument of the Left should be, that in 2003, other governments did not put enough pressure on the United States over Iraq. Not that it is necessary to exert less pressure on Russia over Ukraine now.

## **An obvious mistake**

Imagine for a moment that, in 2003, when the US was preparing for the invasion of Iraq, Russia had behaved like the US has in recent weeks: with threats of escalation.

Now imagine what the Russian Left might have done in that situation, according to the dogma of 'our main enemy is at home'. Would it have criticised the Russian government for this 'escalation', saying that it 'should not jeopardise inter-imperialist contradictions'? It is obvious to everyone that such behaviour would have been a mistake in that case. Why was this not obvious in the case of the aggression against Ukraine?

## If the US and Russia reached an agreement and started a new Cold War against China, would that really be what we wanted?

In another Jacobin article from earlier this month, Marcetic went as far as saying that Fox News's Tucker Carlson was "completely right" about the "Ukrainian crisis". What Carlson had done was question "Ukraine's strategic value to the United States". Even Tariq Ali in the New Left Review approvingly quoted the calculation of German admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach, who said that giving Putin "respect" over Ukraine was "low cost, even no cost" given that Russia could be a useful ally against China. Are you serious? If the US and Russia could reach an agreement and start a new Cold War against China as allies, would that really be what we wanted?

## Reforming the UN

I am not a fan of liberal internationalism. Socialists should criticise it. But this does not mean that we have to support the division of 'spheres of interest' between imperialist states. Instead of looking for a new balance between the two imperialisms, the Left has to struggle for a democratisation of the international security order. We need a global policy and a global system of international security. We have the latter: it is the UN. Yes, it has plenty of flaws, and it is often the object of fair criticisms. But one can criticise either to refute something or to improve it. In the case of the UN, we need the latter. We need a Leftist vision of reform and democratisation of the UN.

Of course, this does not mean that the Left should support all of the UN's decisions. But an overall reinforcement of the UN's role in the resolution of armed conflicts would allow the Left to minimise the importance of military-political alliances and reduce the number of victims. (In a previous article, I wrote how UN peacekeepers could have helped to resolve the Donbas conflict. Unfortunately, this has now lost its relevance.) After all, we also need the UN to solve the climate crisis and other global problems. The reluctance of many international Leftists to appeal to it is a terrible mistake.



After Russian troops invaded Ukraine, Jacobin's Europe editor David Broder wrote that the Left "should make no apologies for opposing a US military response". This was not Biden's intention anyway, as he said multiple times. But a large part of the Western Left should honestly admit that it completely fucked up in formulating its response to the "Ukrainian crisis".

## **My perspective**

I will finish by briefly writing about myself and my perspective.

Over the past eight years, the Donbas war has been the main issue that has divided the Ukrainian Left. Each of us formed our position under the influence of personal experience and other factors. Thus, another Ukrainian Leftist would have written this article differently.

I was born in the Donbas, but in a Ukrainian-speaking and nationalist family. My father became involved in the far-Right in the 1990s, observing Ukraine's economic decay and the enrichment of the former Communist Party leadership, which he had been fighting since the mid-1980s. Of course, he has very anti-Russian, but also anti-American views. I still remember his words on 11 September 2001. As he watched the Twin Towers falling on TV, he said that those responsible were 'heroes' (he does not think so anymore – now he believes that the Americans blew them up on purpose).



Ukrainian refugees spend their first night in Poland in a train station in Przemyśl, 24 February | Attila Husejnow/SOPA Images via ZUMA Press Wire

When the war began in Donbas in 2014, my father joined one of the volunteer battalions, my mother fled Luhansk, and my grandfather and grandmother stayed in their village which fell under the control of the 'Luhansk People's Republic'. My grandfather condemned Ukraine's Euromaidan revolution. He supports Putin, who, he says, has "restored order in Russia". Nevertheless, we all try to keep talking to each other (though not about politics) and to help each other. I try to be sympathetic towards them. After all, my grandfather and grandmother spent their whole life working on a collective farm. My father was a construction worker. Life has not been kind to them.

The events of 2014 – revolution followed by war – pushed me in the opposite direction of most people in Ukraine. The war killed nationalism in me and pushed me to the Left. I want to fight for a better future for humanity, and not for the nation. My parents, with their post-Soviet trauma, do not understand my socialist

views. My father is condescending about my 'pacifism', and we had a nasty conversation after I showed up at an anti-fascist protest with a picket sign calling for the disbanding of the far-Right Azov regiment.

When Volodymyr Zelenskyi became president of Ukraine in the spring of 2019, I hoped this could prevent the catastrophe that is unfolding now. After all, it is difficult to demonise a Russian-speaking president who won with a programme of peace for Donbas and whose jokes were popular among Ukrainians as well as Russians. Unfortunately, I was mistaken. While Zelenskyi's victory changed the attitude of many Russians towards Ukraine, this did not prevent the war.

In recent years, I have written about the peace process and about civilian victims on both of the Donbas war. I tried to promote dialogue. But this has all gone up in smoke now. There will be no compromise. Putin can plan whatever he wants, but even if Russia seizes Kyiv and installs its occupational government, we will resist it. The struggle will last until Russia ousters the government of Ukraine and pays for all the victims and all the destruction.

Hence, my last words are addressed to the Russian people: hurry up and overthrow the Putin regime. It is in your interests as well as ours.

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Update, 17 March 2022: We have corrected a translation error in the sentence beginning "When it came to Putin's intentions...". Also, when the article was first published, it described a volunteer battalion as "far-Right": the identity of the battalion was not relevant and it was not significantly far-Right, so both the name and the description have been removed. We have also removed an attribution of blame to some Western left-wing commentators at the author's request.



## **To South African comrades: a call to solidarity**

Thank you. Ngiyabonga. It is a privilege for me to speak to South African comrades. I remember fondly the five years I spent in Johannesburg as a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Social Change at the University of Johannesburg, and I am also humbled by this invitation, because Africans have so much to teach us in Ukraine about decolonization, national liberation struggles, and insistence on agency and self-determination of people who were historically considered as “zones of influence” of more powerful global players.

I want to begin with clarifying the title of today’s event - it is not just a “Russia-Ukraine conflict”, but Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia is waging a war of aggression, and Ukrainians have every right to defend themselves. Virtually all of the social movements and organizations of the progressive left, have condemned Russia’s full-scale invasion that was launched on February 24 and called for immediate withdrawal of Russian troops. Although this point is fairly clear, many on the left have very limited understanding of Russian imperialism, and much less understanding of Ukrainian politics and society. It is understandable that for all of us, our own geography, history and specific socio-political constellation of our societies will impact our perception of global events. But in such situations it makes sense to ask those concerned about their experiences, to try to understand their perspective, instead of engaging in a narcissistic exercise of manifesto-writing that is more about affirming one’s own identity and repeating some cliché statements almost as a religious creed.

We cannot trust manifestos of the Western left that don’t have a single Ukrainian signatory, just like no African should trust a “development project” or an “action plan” written by Western intellectuals without a single voice from the African continent. Ukrainians are political agents, and our views need to be taken into account. Especially by those on the left who claim people’s right to self-determination and who claim to offer solidarity with the oppressed. The left should not buy into the geopolitical explanations provided by those in power, where all that matters are interests of “big” global players like USA, Russia and China, while Ukrainians (or Africans for that matter) have no say whatsoever. We are doomed to being perpetually used as puppets, forced to submit to those who claim property rights over our land, and accept this state of affairs as unchangeable. There are those who prefer to surrender “to avoid more deaths” - like the french Vichy government that surrendered to the Nazis in Second world war, but it is the Resistance, and not the Vichy who are viewed as heroes by the left.

So I begin my answer to the first question of today's meeting ("What kind of solidarity should transnational movements provide?") by insisting on the slogan "Nothing about us without us". Acknowledge and affirm Ukrainians' agency in this war, invite Ukrainians to comment on questions related to this war, follow Ukrainian web resources to learn our perspective. I don't want to claim that any Ukrainian voice holds the truth on the matter just by virtue of coming from Ukraine, but there is a Ukrainian left, there are Ukrainian experts who can comment on issues ranging from nuclear safety, to agriculture or ethnic diversity.

African comrades unfortunately are too familiar with the situations of being talked about by foreign experts, where you are seen at best as victims of the West who should be pitied and offered humanitarian aid, and at worst - as corrupt and incompetent savages who cannot be trusted with such delicate matters as political agency. Similarly, it is easier for the Western Left to see Ukrainians as passive victims, than as agents who want to have their say. As Slavoj Žižek, a Slovenian Marxist philosopher, observes, *it would have been much more convenient if Ukraine were to lose right away. This would have allowed us to express our deep concern, to grieve the losses, and then to return to business as usual. What should have been good news - a smaller country unexpectedly and heroically resists the brutal intervention of a powerful aggressor - became a source of shame, a problem that we don't know how to deal with.*

The "good news" of heroic resistance of Ukrainians should be acknowledged. It turns out that a small but motivated army together with numerous territorial defense volunteers and vibrant civil society networks can halt the advances of one of the most powerful armies in the world (that is by far bigger both numerically and technically). This resistance deserves support because it sets a precedent for other smaller states or stateless nations who are struggling for their liberation from oppression - Russia's defeat can give us hope that empires can and do fall not only in history textbooks but before our very eyes.

Transnational movements should acknowledge Russian imperialism. Yes, there are more than one imperialist powers in this world. Just because Putin's regime is critical of the West, doesn't mean that it is better than the West or that it should be supported with the logic of "enemy of my enemy is my friend". It's like saying that Lonmin is better off under Cyril Ramaphosa than it would have been under a European owner - or that Marikana miners deserve solidarity only if they are opposing white imperialists from the global north. Putin's regime deserves opposition - first and foremost by those who suffer from it directly. Putin is not willing to tolerate an independent Ukraine, and a vast majority of Ukrainians do not want to be assimilated into Putin's vision of the "Russian world". I invite you to read a joint statement of the Ukrainian and Russian left against Russian imperialism <https://lefteast.org/against-russian-imperialism/>

The left must show consistency and say no to all imperialist aggression in the world. Today the imperialist aggressor is Russia, not NATO, and if Russia is not stopped in Ukraine, it will definitely continue its aggression. Furthermore, we must have no illusions about Putin's regime. It offers no alternative to Western capitalism. It is an authoritarian, oligarchic capitalism. The level of inequality in Russia has risen significantly during the 20 years of his leadership. Putin is not only an enemy of the working class, but also an enemy to all forms of democracy. Popular participation in politics and voluntary associations is treated with suspicion in Russia. Putin is essentially an anti-Communist and an enemy to everything the left fought for in the twentieth century and is fighting for in the twenty-first. In his worldview, the strong have a right to beat the weak, the rich have the right to exploit the poor, and strongmen in power have the right to make decisions on behalf of their disempowered population. (QUOTE OF DEMANDS)

We understand that countries of the Global South have very limited resources to intervene, and will suffer most from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We do not expect the same commitments as we do from countries of the Global North. We greatly cherish small symbolic gestures, like Syria's help with training doctors to offer first aid in case of use of chemical weapons (they like no other know what Putin's regime is capable of) or statement by 80 intellectuals from the Global South including Wole Soinka, Arundati Roy, Gilbert Achcar among others.

There are also demands that are of direct interest to the Global South, for instance a demand on the Russian navy to unblock Ukrainian sea ports to secure grain exports. Because of Russian invasion, millions of Africans are likely to suffer from hunger, and Russia must be held accountable for such immense human suffering.

And then there are demands that are important for a more just global order: to drop the debt of poorest war-torn countries (This will benefit Ukraine, as it will be struggling to rebuild its economy, as well as other countries in similar circumstances), a demand for support to all refugees in Europe - wherever they come from and whatever their skin colour. Support for key "frontline" workers in Ukraine and elsewhere who carry the burden of social infrastructure and needs of the civilian population during war (this is the time when we realise what a precious public asset a functional railway network, and public hospitals are in such fragile circumstances). A rethinking of how natural resources are exploited in Russia and elsewhere around the world by a minority of oligarchs, and used as a blackmailing tool in geopolitics. And a need for demilitarization of the world, beginning with the simultaneous giving up of nuclear weapons by all countries that possess them.

Now I briefly want to address the second question - Is NATO using Ukraine as a proxy? And the first thing I want to say - the answer to this question doesn't change anything in what I said above. Even if we say "yes" to this question, we should still condemn Russia's invasion and support Ukrainian resistance, including militarily. Judith Butler - one of the most anti-militarist and anti-NATO leftist intellectuals - remarks that



If NATO assists Ukraine, then they are doing the right thing this time. But that is no reason to become a fan of NATO. One is not for NATO, but for Ukrainian rights of self-determination. One can want this war to end with Ukrainian popular sovereignty restored, but that is no reason to allow one's desires and thoughts to be constrained by a war logic, or to think that only the two sides are the only actors in the scene. In other words, one can maintain a well-grounded skepticism of NATO and a general anti-war position and still maintain a profound wish to see the Ukrainian resistance prevail. Of course, the Ukrainians must fight for their country, their rights of self-determination, and if and when this war ends, they will have to demand return and reparation, like the Palestinians have been doing for over 70 years. Judith Butler of course has a privilege not to "allow one's desires and thoughts to be constrained by a war logic" in peaceful Berkeley, CA. Many smaller and weaker states around the world don't have this privilege to think theoretically about NATO, because war is their daily reality and they have to deal with it - and to Butler's credit, she is well-aware that in some cases NATO may be the only player with enough resources to help the resistance.

So no matter how we answer the proxy question, Ukrainians still have a right to resist Russian aggression and accept all the aid that comes our way. A comparison I can make is African reliance on Soviet support in national liberation struggles on the continent in the second half of the XXth century.. It is undeniable that the Soviet Union's support for African liberation movements was motivated first and foremost by its own pragmatic interests in the cold war. We might say that these wars were also proxy-wars. But does that mean that Africans should not have resisted, or that they should not have accepted Soviet support?

We also have to be aware that NATO countries have pumped Russia with at least 346 million euro worth of military equipment between 2015 and 2021 despite an embargo on weapons sales imposed after Russia's annexation of Crimea. And the EU to this day continues to pay Russia 1 billion euro every day for consuming its oil and gas. It may turn out that NATO countries support of Putin's regime was greater than their support to Ukraine prior to February 24 invasion.

I do agree that NATO has its own interests in Ukraine - although these interests, at least for some of the member states like France or Germany were actually to discourage Ukraine from applying for membership, resistance to any possible involvement in this war, hesitancy in offering arms, refusal to close the sky over Ukraine (this was in part due to great economic dependence of NATO countries on Russian oil and gas). The aid that is finally coming now can be summed up as "too little too late" - for example, thousands of civilian deaths could have been avoided if air-defense systems were provided in the first days of war.

So, my answer is that criticism of NATO or of Western imperialism more broadly should not distract us from supporting Ukrainian resistance. I want to end my presentation by quoting the statement of intellectuals from the Global South I have mentioned earlier

*Since February 24, Vladimir Putin has been waging a war of conquest against Ukraine. His army has been bombing and destroying cities, killing civilians by the thousands, as it did in Chechnya and Syria. The Ukrainians are resisting. We must support them without thinking twice or holding back. In most of our countries, however, too many people have sided with the Russian dictator. In the name of an anti-imperialism that has turned into passionate hatred over the years, they are applauding anyone who is opposing the West. We measure the overwhelming responsibility of Western powers large and small for the devastation of our world. We have denounced the wars they have waged to ensure their continued dominance over vast regions, including our own, and condemned their defense of indefensible dictatorships to protect their interests. We know their selective use of the values they claim, letting refugees from the South die at their doors and welcoming "their own" with open arms. But let's not get into the wrong battle. All those who demand freedom for themselves, who believe in the right of citizens to choose their leaders and to refuse tyranny, must stand with the Ukrainians today. Freedom must be defended everywhere. For our part, we refuse to support any dictatorship on the pretext that its opponents are our enemies. By defending Putin's war, we are depriving ourselves of our own right to be free.*

Amandla! Awethu!

(<https://spectrejournal.com>)

# Feminist Resistance Against War

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## A MANIFESTO

**FEMINISTS AGAINST WAR ([HTTPS://SPECTREJOURNAL.COM/AUTHOR /FEMINIST-ANTI-WAR-RESISTANCE/](https://spectrejournal.com/author/feminist-anti-war-resistance/))**

*March 17, 2022*

**We profoundly condemn the military invasion led by the Putin regime in Ukraine, which has already left thousands of people dead and hundreds of thousands displaced, and which provokes a sharpening of the confrontation between imperialist blocs at the global level.**

We reject the positions issued in recent days that deepen the warmongering spiral. We reject the decisions that involve adding more weapons to the conflict and increasing war budgets. We reject security narratives that reinforce authoritarian logic and militarization. Not in our name.

We must remember that NATO is co-responsible for the situation created by its global expansionism and militaristic security narrative. Weapons perpetuate war, perpetuate barbarism, and perpetuate suffering. There is no greater security than peace.

With this manifesto we collect the call launched by Russian feminist groups and join the Feminist Resistance Against War! In this way, we recover the feminist thread of history that has participated in struggles against reactionary wars, from the movement led by Rosa Luxemburg in 1914, the Greenham Common anti-nuclear weapons camp of the 1980s, or the Women in Black movement against war, to name a few.

We are with the people of Ukraine who want to restore peace in their lives and demand a ceasefire. We are with the mobilized Russian citizens, who, despite the repression and threats of the authoritarian and repressive regime of Putin, demand to stop the military invasion.

That is why we say Feminist Resistance Against War. Behind the NO to War there is no naive position. The only real road to peace is the de-escalation of war. **We demand a bold redirection of the situation to break the militaristic spiral initiated by Russia and supported by NATO. We demand the immediate cancellation of Ukraine's foreign debt of 125 billion dollars as a concrete measure of support for the Ukrainian people and denounce the reforms and conditionality imposed by the IMF in recent years.**

Learning from the painful experiences of war and conflict in Europe in the last century must mark our commitment and action. War is irreconcilable with the essential values and goals of the feminist movement. We stand for peace, coexistence of peoples and a democratic solution to conflicts.

**WE ARE MANY WHO SAY NO TO WAR, IMPERIALISM, PATRIARCHY, AUTHORITARIANISM AND MILITARISM.**

**Volodymyr Artiukh**

## **The political logic of Russia's imperialism**

[June 9, 2022](#)

The debate around the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including the previous contributions in FocaalBlog, has shifted from the 'either NATO or Russia' dichotomy to a more nuanced exchange along the lines of 'it is NATO, but...' versus 'it is Russia, but...'. In a welcome development, discussants started following Tony Wood's (2022) advice to 'ascribe weights' to the factors leading to Russia's invasion. It is also the intention of this text. However, rather than doing so quantitatively, and ascribing 'weights' to each individual actor, I aim, like [Don Kalb](#) (2022), at presenting a relational narrative.

Beside my interrupted fieldwork in Ukraine (2021), this contribution to the war debate is based on my fieldwork in Belarus (2015-2017) and my conclusions on how Lukashenka's 'Caesarist regime' mutated when faced with popular and geopolitical challenges to its 'passive-revolutionary strategy' (Artiukh 2020, 2021), to use Gramsci's vocabulary. Drawing on my insights from Ukraine and Belarus, I sketch the political logic of Russia's aggressive territorial expansion against the backdrop of US hegemonic decline. I claim that this expansion, driven by the logic of legitimism whereby Russia offers its prospective clients a new anti-revolutionary 'Holy Alliance,' as Tsarist Russia did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and engenders a system of 'anti-Maidan' regimes that share important cultural and political commonalities.





Image 1: Head of states, among them Ukrainian and Russian presidents taking part in a meeting in Minsk on August 26, 2014, photo by [Mykola Lazarenko/Ukrainian Presidential Press Service](#)

This political logic, clearly formulated in [Putin's 2015 UN speech](#) follows a shift in Russian imperialist strategy. According to the political economist Ilya Matveev (2021), Russian imperialism transitioned from the economic logic to the territorial logic around the year 2014, when the Russian state resigned from the strategy of expanding private businesses to Ukraine and other post-Soviet republics and started waging political control over these territories even at the expense of the interests of private capital. The most salient example of this new strategy was the annexation of Crimea and the support for the pro-Russian rebels in Donbass. However, the strategy seems to be broader and includes the reactivation of other 'frozen conflicts' (Georgia 2008, possibly Moldova), involvement in domestic conflicts (Ukraine 2014, Belarus 2020, Kazakhstan 2022), and provision of military services (Syria and several African countries).

The central tenet of this legitimist territorial strategy was the conservation of neopatrimonial regimes threatened by popular discontent. The Donbass break-away statelets were the first in a series of regimes that started appearing in the post-Soviet space since 2014 in reaction to the real or perceived threat of popular protests. I call such forms of governance 'anti-Maidan' regimes in reference to their first legitimizing narrative of resisting Ukraine's

Maidan protests. What unites them is the fact that they are reactions to populist uprisings, foster the demobilization rather than mobilization of their populations, and rely on police and military coercion rather than hegemonic projects. As elites in need joined this Holy Alliance, their regimes transformed accordingly: these include Assad's Syria, Lukashenka's Belarus, most recently Kazakhstan, and the newly occupied regions of Ukraine. Bringing this logic back home, Russia's own regime has undergone a transformation into an authoritarian police state with post-fascist tendencies.

This project should be traced back to the continued organic crisis that burst to the surface in 2008 and made the situation on the eve of the 2013 Maidan uprising possible. The Ukrainian Maidan protests were one of the localized 'worldwide mobilizations' (Kalb & Mollona, 2018) against neoliberalized neopatrimonial regimes under the strain of the crisis, best epitomized by the Arab Spring. Formed around the territorialized condensation of po-litical passions, such uprisings were rooted in something akin to Sorel's political myth that was able to create a cleavage between 'us and them' but unable to produce lasting change because of the lack of organizational frameworks and leadership. Therefore, it was the more radical violent groups that took advantage of such movements, the contemporary *condottiere* that, nevertheless, were not able to embody the collective will (Gopal, 2020).

These post-developmental neopatrimonial regimes were in different stages of decline and stood in different relations with their neighbours. Thus, the Tunisian and Belarusian regimes, being able to rely on their patrons and having stronger states, were able to incorporate the uprisings in their continuing passive revolutionary strategies. Others suffered from the in-tervention of their neighbours, as it happened in Bahrain, Yemen, and Ukraine. Still others plunged into a prolonged civil war, such as Libya or Syria, and became a battleground of competing US, Turkish, and Russian imperialisms.

Contrary to wide-spread preconception, the US demonstrated a failure of its hegemony when faced with these situations. Here I use hegemony in a Gramscian-Arrighian sense, as a set of institutions and ideologies buttressed by the potentiality of the use of credible force that can overcome crises and align the interest of core and peripheral elites. Whereas the US central bank managed to relatively successfully mitigate the crisis of 2008 in Europe, it failed to establish order in its periphery (Tooze, 2019). Similarly, the US military operations brought unintended consequences. Once this hegemonic hole opened and the US showed its weakness, a 'shitshow' emerged, in Obama's words, as the contenders immediately sprang to action offering their help to restore order.

One hegemonic contender was Russia, one of the neopatrimonial regimes whose decline was only beginning to show itself. The first signs of this decline appeared in the urban middle class protests of 2011-2013 and were quickly suppressed. Since domination in international relations, according to Gramsci, is an extension of the modes of domination of the

ruling class, Russia's system of neopatrimonial international dependencies was also slipping away. Thus, Russia came up with a doctrine of the support of 'legitimate regimes' against the hybrid war waged by the west (Göransson, 2021). As an alternative of the faltering US hegemony based on the 'promotion of democracy' including the support of popular uprisings, Russia came up with an offer of a Holy Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Gramscian terms, this was an offer of the preservation of the historical bloc that is based on Caesarist domination rather than hegemony. Thus, as opposed to the faltering US hegemony, Russia offered an international system of domination without hegemony. Such an offer would solve two tasks: bolster the rule of the Russian domestic regime and ensure the stability of the regimes of the states that join the Holy Alliance.

This is how one can read the post-Maidan developments. The fall of Yanukovych signalled the fragility of the neopatrimonial regimes and thereby threatened Russia as the provider of security guarantees after Yanukovych accepted such offer in late 2013. The weak political-mythical quality of the Maidan uprising ended in the 'us and them' cleavage, thus alienating a considerable part of Ukraine's population (Zhuravlev & Ishchenko, 2020). Expectedly, it followed by the stage of far right *condottierism* that further widened the cleavage. Europe was disoriented and the US was cautious to get involved in yet another 'shitshow.' The annexation of Crimea and the fuelling of the civil war in Ukraine was the logical application of the legitimism doctrine. This first move was a typically Caesarist one, a special operation of Putin's 'praetorian guard'. The goal of bolstering domestic legitimacy was attained by the so-called Crimea effect, while the goal of establishing the legitimate order in Ukraine was in process.

Russian analysts expected that the post-Maidan government would not differ much from the previous one and thus would need a donor of security against the separatist threat that Russia itself fuelled. Russian leadership also knew that neither the EU nor the US would be willing to become such donors to the full extent required. Thus, they offered the package of the so-called Minsk agreements which was a military-diplomatic consecration of Russia's military victory over the weak post-Maidan regime. The Minsk agreements envisaged the presence of the de facto Russian political and military forces within a federal Ukrainian state that would potentially win the ensuing civil war (Koshiw, 2022). The EU had no other choice than trying to freeze the 'no war no peace' situation hoping that it would solve itself in the future. The US largely kept at a distance during the Trump interregnum.

However, the Kyiv authorities and the heirs of the Maidan *condottiere* fought to avoid this situation tooth and nail. They imposed the post-Maidan consensus, profiting from the cleavage opened by the Maidan political passions and supported by the *condottiere*. With some limited help from the EU and the US, the Kyiv authorities managed to re-establish state institutions and rebuild the army. The West had no choice but to accept the new Kyiv

Caesarism. This time Russia decided to wait while developing the separatist republics in Donbass as the outpost for the coming battle.

By that time, the LNR/DNR, kept together by the perpetual state of emergency and harsh repressions against dissident political, cultural and labour activists, became a grey zone controlled by the Russian public and private agencies (Savelyeva, 2022). Having consolidated its sovereignty over the anti-Maidan outpost in Donbass, Russia claimed an undisputed success in Syria by reviving Assad's rule over most of the country and burying the remnants of the 2011 uprising. Finally, the post-2020 Belarus, which switched from authoritarian populism to an outright dictatorial police state (Artiukh, forthcoming), was undoubtedly the most successful case of Russia's international assistance within the Holy Alliance. Similarly to the leadership of LNR/DNR, Lukashenka constructed his post-protest legitimacy as a machine-gun brandishing saviour of the country from a west-inspired coup attempt, which explicitly compared to Ukraine's Maidan. Not only did Russia's political, media and economic support succeed in stabilizing Lukashenka's regime but also managed to tie it to Russia, thus securing a military lodgement.

This series of successes against the background of the American and European failures emboldened the Russian elites. While Russia reinstated the power of Assad in Syria, exported its services to African countries, and crashed protests at home, the US was mired in the Trump 'shitshow' internally, nearly losing NATO allies, announcing a pivot to Asia, and losing miserably at the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The only unfinished business for the Holy Alliance was Ukraine. Since the beginning of 2020, Russia started integrating the separatist statelets in Donbass into the Russian ideological, economic, and political sphere while simultaneously pressing the Ukrainian authorities to hastily implement the political part of the Minsk agreements.

After a brief flirtation with Putin, Zelensky's government realized it could not reinstate sovereignty over the separatist regions if the Minsk process was supervised by Russia and domestic politics was contested by nationalists. Russia's actions hinted at the possibility of either fully integrating these statelets into Russia following the Crimea example or using them as the outpost of the 'Russian world,' as proclaimed in the ideological doctrine of LNR/DNR in early 2021. According to some analysts, that's the time when the Russian authorities started preparing for the eventuality of a full-fledged military operation against Ukraine. Next steps were only a question of time and opportunity.

This opportunity came in late 2021 or early 2022. Many factors converged that would weaken the West and embolden Russia, and Russian elites understood this. Not only were the US and Europe hit by the pandemic, but they also faced political transitions: the new and weak president in the US who continued the pivot to Asia, the new chancellor in Germany and the coming elections in France. Things were going much better for Russia:



Belarus was securely under Russia's control as a poster child of the Holy Alliance, Russia's economy stabilized and accumulated all-time high resources, the lightning fast special operation in Kazakhstan would prove Russia as a reliable donor of security. Thus, Russia announced its assault with the first war scare of the April 2021 that seemingly opened a dialogue on the matters of strategic security between the US and Russia. After that Putin and Medvedev wrote their texts about Ukraine and Zelensky, essentially offering an ultimatum: either Ukraine would be destroyed as a state, or it would be refashioned according to the Russian will.

Zelensky was probably aware of the coming danger, therefore he stepped up the cleansing of the domestic political domain and tried to improve the army as much as possible while still clinging to the ceasefire in the Donbass. He hoped to balance his way out of the narrow road ahead of him. Russia meanwhile rolled out another ultimatum in December 2022 that already asked for the withdrawal of the NATO infrastructure from the former Warsaw Pact countries in addition to a ban on accepting new NATO members. Much like Austria's ultimatum against Serbia in 1914, Putin's was also not meant to be met. After some initial setbacks, the Russian army has continued to occupy Ukraine's territory beyond LNR/DNR, keeping the political goals of the war deliberately vague.

Three months into the war, the newly occupied territories in the south of Ukraine are controlled by the methods developed by other anti-Maidan regimes, primarily Belarus and LNR/DNR. The tremendous success of Lukashenka's crackdown against those who protested the results of the unfair elections in 2020 relied on unprecedented police brutality, long-term jail sentences, and the demoralization of dissenters. Having abandoned his trademark populism, Lukashenka proved that brute force alone might work if people are sufficiently atomized in cities and on the shopfloor. Initial mass demonstrations against the Russian occupation have been dispersed as Russia strengthened its policing capacity in the rear of the invading army. There are reports of political activists being kidnapped and tortured, repeating the Donbass experience. One of the methods used in Belarus, the systematic video-taping of forced self-denunciations, was recently repeated in Kherson oblast, where people unhappy with the occupation were forced to apologize on camera and say that they have 'completed a denazification course.' This is not accompanied by any coherent ideological narrative; instead, Russian media project a wild mix of Soviet, Tsarist, and vaguely fascist symbols whose sole purpose is to intimidate and show that the resistance is futile (Artiukh, 2022).

While constructing the system of anti-Maidan regimes, Russia has also transformed itself from a 'managed democracy' into a police state with post-fascist tendencies and imposing a postmodern mix of ideologies that are not meant to truly persuade the masses (Budraitskis, 2022). If the US presided over the emergence of post-Soviet world by promoting neoliberal textbooks and failing to create a hegemonic security paradigm, Russia's anti-

Maidan strategy accomplished the end of post-Sovietness by destroying all remnants of the Soviet civilization that the successor states fed on. On the one hand, this is symbolic decommunization – from the literal destruction of monuments in Ukraine to the zombification of Soviet symbols which are being turned into symbols of the colonial conquests of the Russian Federation; on the other hand, it is political and economic “decommunization” – the delegitimization of the borders of the former republics and the destruction of the centers of Soviet industrialization in the Donbass, Mariupol, or Kharkov. The long decline of *pax postsovietica* is almost over.

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Tags: [imperialism](#), [Russia](#), [Ukraine](#), [war](#)

# Guerra e lotta di classe. Sindacalista ucraino sulle leggi neoliberali di Zelensky - DINAMOpress

*di Francesca Zampagni e Giulia Breda*

In Ucraina non è solo l'invasione di Putin a mettere in pericolo la vita e i diritti di tante persone, non da ultimo di lavoratori e lavoratrici. Il 17 agosto scorso, infatti, il presidente Volodymyr Zelensky ha firmato il disegno di legge 5371 (ora legge 2434) che elimina buona parte delle garanzie sindacali e introduce misure largamente a favore dei datori di lavoro. Ma non si tratta dell'unico "attacco" al mondo del lavoro dallo scoppio del conflitto a questa parte: già nell'ambito della legge marziale introdotta per difendere il paese venivano varate misure di deregolamentazione relative a contratti e salari. Abbiamo parlato con Vitaliy Dudin, avvocato e sindacalista, membro dell'organizzazione socialista democratica ucraina Sotsyalnyi Rukh (che aveva tra l'altro lanciato una [petizione](#) per fermare la ratifica della legge, supportata da varie sigle internazionali) per capire meglio la situazione e chiedergli delle prospettive future.

## **Cosa sta succedendo in Ucraina nell'ambito dei diritti del lavoro?**

In generale, è molto difficile difendere i diritti del lavoro in Ucraina, visto che scontiamo anche la mancanza di un sistema giudiziario effettivamente funzionante. Ovviamente, con la guerra, la situazione è ulteriormente peggiorata per via della mancanza di controlli da parte dell'ispettorato e per il fatto che il diritto di manifestazione per i sindacati è sospeso. Dal momento in cui è cominciata l'invasione da parte della Federazione Russa, sono state firmate e sono entrate in vigore quattro nuove leggi in materia lavorativa.

La prima, la più importante, riguarda la riorganizzazione dei rapporti lavorativi in tempo di guerra (n.2136 del 15 marzo) e rappresenta il modo in cui il nostro governo ha risposto alla crisi economica generata dalla guerra. Si tratta di una legge assolutamente sfavorevole alla classe lavoratrice e che persegue in toto gli interessi dei datori di lavoro. Rende infatti possibile per le aziende non corrispondere ai propri impiegati alcun salario, nel caso le attività dovessero essere sospese (ed è bene specificare che si applica a tutto il territorio del paese, non solo alle aree effettivamente interessate delle operazioni belliche). In più, viene permesso ai datori di lavoro di sospendere le previdenze decise nel contratto collettivo e i lavoratori e le lavoratrici possono essere licenziati senza alcuna contrattazione con i sindacati. Insomma, poco dopo l'inizio del conflitto si è verificata una massiccia deregolamentazione delle leggi sul lavoro: chiaramente, vista la legge marziale e la situazione di estremo pericolo dovuta alla guerra, la società non si è opposta.

Dopodiché, altre tre leggi sono state introdotte: la n.2352 sull'ottimizzazione dei rapporti di lavoro, che dà ai datori di lavoro la possibilità di terminare il contratto con i propri dipendenti nel caso in cui i beni dell'azienda vengano danneggiati o distrutti a causa delle operazioni belliche, ma anche – ed è una delle misure più gravi – esonera i datori dal pagare i salari ai dipendenti che vengono coscritti per le



operazioni militari (diritto che invece venne mantenuto dopo il 2014, quando era di fatto iniziata la guerra con la Russia). È davvero una misura iniqua nei confronti di chi si trova ora sotto le armi: moltissime persone dal settore ferroviario, metallurgico e minerario sono ora mobilitati nell'esercito e, senza il supporto finanziario dello stipendio lavorativo, le loro famiglie sono a rischio di ristrettezza economica. A luglio, il parlamento ha poi approvato la n.2421 sui cosiddetti "contratti a zero ore", e la n.2424, sulla semplificazione dei rapporti di lavoro nelle piccole e medie imprese. Si tratta di una completa liberalizzazione del lavoro a chiamata, per cui vengono previste garanzie inferiori al salario minimo (che in Ucraina già è bassissimo, 6500 *grivnia* pari a circa 160 euro) e con cui si fa pesare il rischio di impresa sulle spalle di lavoratori e lavoratrici e, allo stesso tempo, dà in mano ai datori di lavoro la possibilità di cambiare alcune condizioni essenziali nella stipulazione dei contratti. Significa cioè che queste piccole e medie imprese possono di fatto ignorare le disposizioni contenute nel codice del lavoro del paese.



*(da commons.wikimedia.org)*

Insomma, il punto è che il nostro governo sta mettendo in atto una deregolamentazione sperimentale delle leggi sul lavoro dannosa per i lavoratori e molto pericolosa per il futuro. Il fatto che si tratti di misure necessarie per la crescita economica è una favola. La vera ragione è che c'è la volontà di rendere i datori di lavoro più liberi dai propri obblighi di tutela in un momento di crisi economica dal momento che il governo ucraino, che è profondamente neoliberale, non è pronto e non ha la forza di stabilizzare le condizioni in ambito lavorativo, utilizzando magari i sussidi per le imprese. Ci servirebbe invece una politica totalmente opposta, specialmente nel contesto attuale: fare pressione, ad esempio, perché venga cancellato il debito del paese e utilizzare questi soldi per assicurare i posti di lavoro delle categorie più vulnerabili (inclusi ex-militari, vedove, migranti).

Le persone hanno bisogno di protezione e gli viene dato l'opposto: lavoratori e lavoratrici in questo momento sono disumanizzati dall'operato del governo.

### **Come mai, dal tuo punto di vista, il governo è così determinato?**

Il nostro governo è caratterizzato da un programma profondamente neoliberale. Questo è chiaro sin dal 2019, nel momento in cui è entrato in carica con una maggioranza parlamentare molto ampia che gli dava la possibilità di avviare praticamente qualsiasi riforma. Ma questa grande agibilità a livello istituzionale si è dovuta scontrare con l'opposizione dei movimenti di lavoratori e lavoratrici: fra il 2020 e il 2021 migliaia di persone sono scese in strada per contrastare le riforme del lavoro. Insomma, in tempi di pace (pace relativa, se contiamo i fatti del Donbass), per Zelensky era difficile riuscire a far approvare queste riforme, visto che venivano perlomeno rallentate dalla dialettica democratica che poteva svilupparsi anche nelle piazze.

Ora, con la guerra e con la legge marziale, questo tipo di opposizione non può esserci. Quindi ci sono delle ragioni di contingenza politica per cui queste leggi vengono approvate ora, ma anche di contingenza economica: c'è ovviamente una crisi più acuta di prima. Ma, come dicevo prima, queste riforme non rappresentano in alcun modo una risposta adeguata all'emergenza: la deregolamentazione dei licenziamenti potrebbe anzi danneggiare ancora di più l'economia, visto che senza uno stipendio decente le persone smetterebbero anche di comprare prodotti. C'è un'ulteriore spiegazione del perché siamo arrivati a questo punto: in Ucraina non c'è una tradizione consolidata di dialogo fra le parti sociali nel mondo del lavoro, la contrattazione con i sindacati è il più delle volte qualcosa di puramente formale e, con la guerra, questo processo è diventato ancora meno democratico e trasparente.

Più in generale, anche i sindacati per molto tempo non hanno esercitato il diritto di sciopero e hanno posto poca pressione ad aziende e governi i quali, in assenza di vere e proprie rivendicazioni per salari migliori, si sono semplicemente attestati sullo status quo e hanno lasciato che le aziende possedute dagli oligarchi imponessero le proprie condizioni. Ovviamente non tutte le situazioni sono uguali e sussistono differenti condizioni in ciascun settore.



*(immagine dalla pagina Facebook di Sotsyalnyi Rukh)*

### **Come state cercando di reagire? La solidarietà internazionale può giocare un ruolo?**

Penso che la solidarietà internazionale sia importante. È veramente difficile difendere i propri diritti lavorativi nel momento in cui non si possono organizzare proteste, le ispezioni statali sui posti di lavoro fanno poco o nulla, l'accesso ai processi di giustizia è reso difficoltoso dai costi che si devono sostenere per intentare cause o ricorsi... I nostri strumenti ora sono per forza di cose limitati, perciò la mobilitazione internazionale è di grande aiuto. A maggior ragione dal momento che nel parlamento ucraino non ci sono partiti di sinistra, ma tutte forze neoliberali. La sinistra internazionale, gruppi di protezione dei diritti umani o sindacati anche esteri possono porre pressione su Zelensky affinché le leggi vengano implementate in maniera migliore o comunque tolte quando finirà la legge marziale. E magari spingere i sindacati ucraini ad attivarsi maggiormente, anche perché possono ancora contare su milioni di membri.

Penso comunque che le persone stiano diventando sempre più consapevoli del valore del proprio lavoro. Paradossalmente, anche se il potere non è in mano di lavoratori e lavoratrici, il contesto della guerra sta dando loro un maggior potere e una maggiore forza: diventano più radicali, più arrabbiati e chi è occupato nei settori essenziali capisce il ruolo essenziale che sta giocando e capisce sempre più il carattere neoliberale del governo Zelensky. Questa crisi si può vincere. Nonostante la guerra – anzi, per via della guerra – la lotta di classe in Ucraina continua. Immagine di copertina dalla pagina Facebook di Sotsyalnyi Rukh

# Guerra in Ucraina, quale futuro per la memoria europea? - DINAMOpress

*di Anna Simone*

Alla radice del conflitto in corso, c'è anche la diversa percezione che i vari paesi europei hanno della sconfitta del nazifascismo e del crollo dell'Unione Sovietica. Una "guerra simbolica" che andava avanti da tempo

Ha detto Julian Assange, che al momento rischia di essere estradato dalla Gran Bretagna agli Stati Uniti, che «negli ultimi anni, le guerre iniziano molto spesso per via di bugie diffuse dai media». Di sicuro, almeno sul piano discorsivo, quella della Russia contro l'Ucraina è stata preceduta da una palese mistificazione, che Putin ha "formalizzato" nella sua dichiarazione del 22 febbraio e che le élite russe hanno poi più volte ripreso e rimaneggiato col procedere dell'attuale invasione: la necessità di mettere in atto una "de-nazificazione" del territorio e della popolazione nella vicina repubblica.

Il riferimento più diretto, com'è noto, è agli eventi dell'Euromaidan del 2013-14 in cui una sollevazione popolare rovesciò il governo dell'allora presidente ucraino Yanukovich e in cui ottennero grande visibilità e spazio di agibilità politica le forze di ispirazione nazionalista e neo-nazista di Pravy Sektor e Svoboda (con la conseguente formazione del battaglione Azov, che combatterà poi in Donbass). Ma, al di là delle contingenze specifiche, le affermazioni del presidente russo e dei suoi sodali affondano in un più ampio processo di costruzione della memoria e di "re-invenzione del passato" che prosegue da decenni, e non solo in Russia ma sull'intero territorio europeo.

Fra il 1989 e il 1991, la Guerra Fredda è terminata lasciando un nuovo equilibrio da ricostruire e numerosi interrogativi aperti, nonostante in superficie aleggiasse un generale "entusiasmo" e una fiducia quasi "meccanica" nei progressi che da lì in avanti si sarebbero innescati.

Ma, anzi, è forse lecito affermare che pure il periodo post-Guerra Fredda è di fatto cominciato con una sorta di "menzogna", o perlomeno di omissione: il fatto che, benché fredda, quella appena conclusa fosse appunto una guerra, con i suoi vincitori e i suoi vinti. E i vinti, chiaramente, furono l'Unione Sovietica (come entità ed esperienza politica complessa, non solo territoriale) e una certa concezione del "comunismo" (non solo a est).

Ma, al di là dei grandi proclami (che fin dall'inizio andavano comunque in direzioni lievemente divergenti: se Gorbachëv parlava dell'Europa come «casa comune» dei popoli, sottintendendo una visione implicitamente pluralistica, il suo omologo Bush sognava un'Europa «*whole and free*», ponendo l'accento su una concezione delle democrazie di stampo più smaccatamente liberale), un tale dato di fatto non fu mai realmente certificato in maniera condivisa. Non fu certificato, cioè, da un tentativo ampio e concordato di ridisegnare gli assetti globali, o quantomeno regionali, e soprattutto dal tentativo di elaborare un'interpretazione condivisa – fra "est" e "ovest" – di cosa fosse stata l'esperienza nazifascista e la seconda Guerra Mondiale, che significato attribuire al termine "totalitarismo" e quali esigenze portava con sé, da ambedue i lati del muro, la fine della Guerra Fredda.





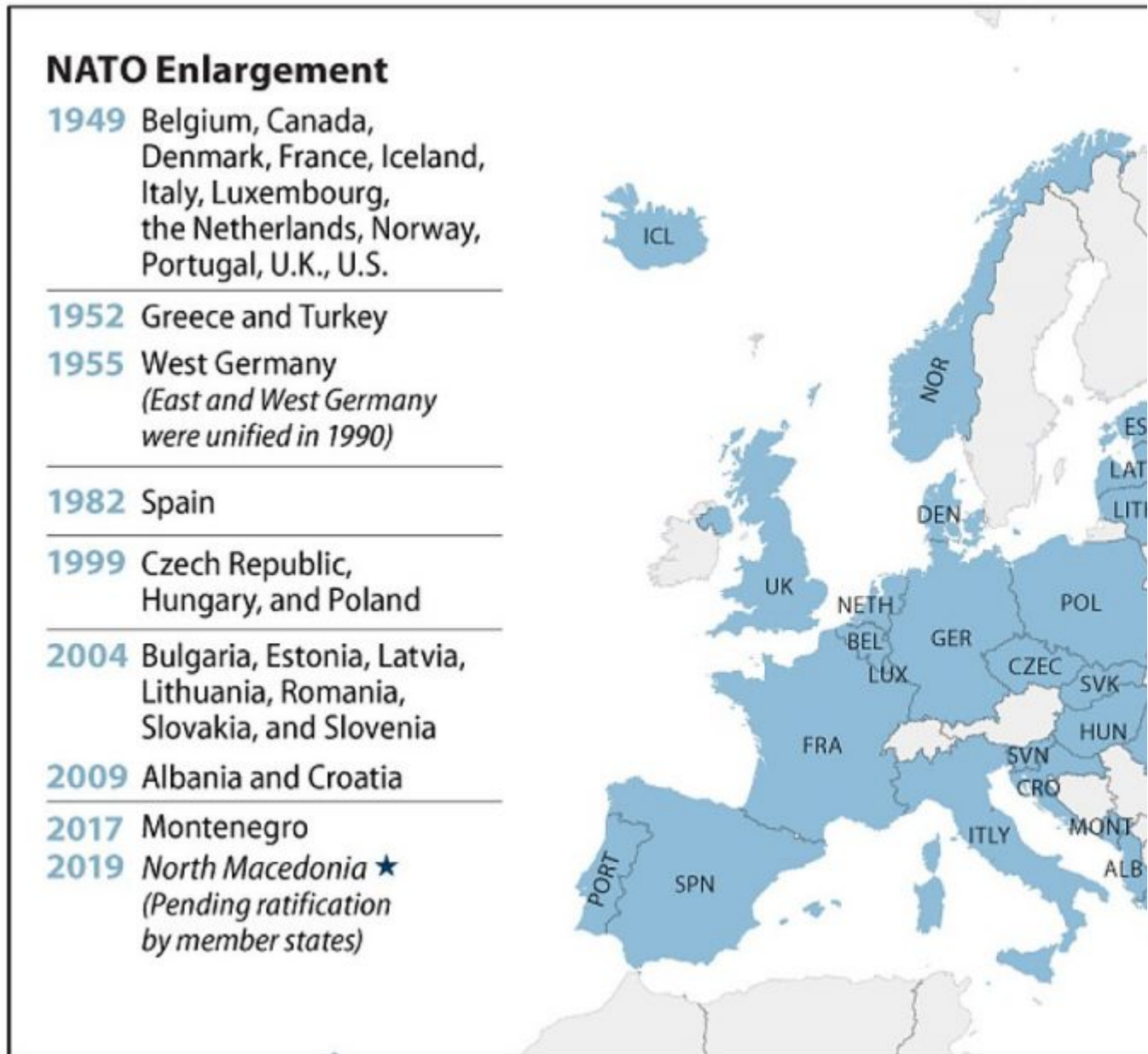
Complice il conflitto in Jugoslavia, che diede ulteriore spinta all'unilateralismo, ogni ipotesi di costruzione di un "alfabeto comune e pluralistico" venne sotterrata in favore di politiche più circoscritte e a "medio periodo". La possibilità, forse mai del tutto concreta, di immaginare e discutere un sistema di sicurezza e cooperazione inter-statale "da Lisbona a Vladivostok" lasciò spazio a una meno ambiziosa "architettura" fatta di trattati, dichiarazioni d'impegno (scritte e non scritte, talvolta in aperta contraddizione fra loro) e accordi economici in ottica più che altro regionale, volta a controbilanciare gli attriti delle sfere d'influenza delle grandi potenze (è il senso, per esempio, del Memorandum di Budapest del 1994, con cui il governo di Kyiv rinunciò alla totalità suo arsenale nucleare in cambio della garanzia di non-interferenza territoriale ed economica da parte russa).

Se in tanti hanno ricordato la presunta "promessa" di non allargamento della Nato che fu fatta a Gorbachëv nel 1990, è poi vero che l'unico meccanismo di protezione e garanzia della propria sicurezza che si trovarono a disposizione molti stati dell'ex-Patto di Varsavia fu l'ingresso nell'alleanza atlantica (con alcune peculiari eccezioni).

Come [ha scritto](#) in maniera molto dura ma sostanzialmente corretta Zosia Brom all'inizio della guerra nella sua lettera d'accusa alle "sinistre occidentali", per i paesi dell'est si è trattato di semplice «istinto di auto-conservazione»: «[...] per via del fatto che nel 1945 altre nazioni prendevano decisioni sopra la nostra testa, l'est-Europa si è quasi letteralmente aggirato in punta di piedi attorno alla Russia facendo richiesta di poter fare ciò che volevamo. In seguito, si è arrivati alla firma del *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperations and Security between Nato and Russia Federation*. Questo accadeva nel maggio 1997 e la Russia, finalmente, ha accettato di riconoscere quel processo che viene chiamato "espansione della Nato" a patto che venissero

rispettate alcune condizioni. Queste condizioni ci hanno in effetti reso dei membri di seconda classe dell'alleanza atlantica ma è il massimo che abbiamo potuto ottenere e ce lo siamo preso».

Il senso profondo della guerra in corso si gioca anche sul filo di queste parole e sulla diversità di percezione che esse sottendono. Se per alcune comunità e popoli l'allargamento a est di istituzioni come Unione Europea e Nato ha rappresentato un passo quasi "obbligato" per tutelare la propria sovranità e indipendenza, per altri in Europa – o meglio, per la Russia e nello specifico per la Russia di Putin – un tale processo è stato sempre guardato con sospetto. Si può dibattere all'infinito su quanto l'ingresso di sempre più paesi nell'alleanza atlantica fosse *effettivamente* un pericolo dal punto di vista militare (e politico) per la Russia, ma quel che conta forse è che venisse costantemente percepito dalle élite della Federazione come tale e che, da parte di vari rappresentanti di queste élite, non ne sia mai stato fatto mistero.



Così come anche in parte degli ambienti politici statunitensi – per voce di figure come George Kennan o William J. Burns – si è fatta strada fin da subito la convinzione per cui il costante allargamento della Nato rappresentasse un «grave errore» che avrebbe inevitabilmente condotto alla guerra con la Russia. Il che, però, rimanda appunto da una parte alla mancanza di

un'alternativa credibile a Nato e Ue nella complicata architettura di equilibrio geopolitico europeo e dall'altra alla divergenza di visioni e percezioni che il post-Guerra Fredda alimentava a seconda dei contesti.

Sappiamo come, nei primissimi anni '90, i paesi est-europei e in particolare la Russia avviarono una lunga e faticosa transizione dall'economia di stato all'economia di mercato attraverso una serie di riforme neo-liberiste vincolanti per i prestiti del Fondo Monetario Internazionale che costituivano una vera e propria *shock therapy*.

Ma già qui iniziano a divergere le narrazioni, o le "percezioni" che dir si voglia: mentre questa "sovraestensione del modello di sviluppo americano" poteva essere letta da alcuni come "fine della Storia" (e a questo punto, la parola "fine" valga in tutt'e due le sue accezioni), per chi invece la "subiva" in quanto intervento economico su larga scala la sua implementazione appariva più come forma di sottomissione, come certificazione di una "sconfitta geopolitica" (quella successiva alla Guerra Fredda, appunto) che non veniva però esplicitata a livello pubblico e internazionale. Siamo veramente in un regime di ribaltamento totale, dove lo stesso fenomeno ha una doppia e opposta faccia a seconda delle prospettive da cui lo si guarda: se per gli Usa prestiti e riforme messi in atto in Russia costituivano una sorta di "Piano Marshall" (peraltro, l'ipotesi di un vero e proprio Piano Marshall per la Federazione fu oggetto di discussione a Washington, salvo poi abbandonarlo completamente nel 1993 per via dell'incipiente recessione e per i disordini scoppiati a Los Angeles), per i gruppi dirigenti che andavano formandosi a Mosca un tale processo, che da una parte era fondamentale per consolidare i nuovi "blocchi di potere" attraverso le privatizzazioni delle grandi aziende statali, dall'altra veniva vissuto in maniera sempre più forte, benché tacita, alla stregua di riparazioni di guerra.

È di fatto attorno a questa consapevolezza – e, anzi, all'impossibilità di esplicitarla come tale nello spazio discorsivo – che andava formandosi l'inconscio collettivo della nuova Russia e il patto sociale fra un popolo in preda allo smantellamento del welfare e dei vecchi punti di riferimento simbolici e il nuovo autoritarismo revanscista che si sarebbe perfettamente incarnato nella figura di Vladimir Putin. Resoconti di alto valore letterario come *Tempo di seconda mano* del premio Nobel Svjatlana Aleksievič descrivono bene il carattere di "ricostruzione negativa" degli anni '90 nello spazio post-sovietico.

È finita una guerra, ma non la si chiama in questo modo. La sconfitta dell'Urss si dice collasso, i territori perduti diventano uno "spazio" più astratto, disperso in un fantasmatico "post" della Storia. La vittoria degli Stati Uniti assume invece le sembianze di un orizzonte eterno, all'insegna della "globalizzazione" e della "democrazia".

La debolezza dell'Europa, a quel punto, sta nel pensarsi come unica alternativa possibile e nel non mettere in discussione questo ordine simbolico. O meglio, nel non avere il coraggio di rifondare un nuovo ordine – vale a dire un *tempo di prima mano*, da costruire attraverso il confronto due, tre, mille storie, dell'est e dell'ovest, che in quel momento arrivano a inglobarsi le une dentro le altre. Invece di questo confronto, che sarebbe dovuto essere per forza di cosa anche un confronto di natura *politica* sull'attrito dei valori, sulla dialettica fra modelli sociali diversi e in un certo senso meno "antagonisti" di quanto li presentava la propaganda (sappiamo infatti che l'elaborazione dello stato sociale in Occidente avviene, oltre che sulla spinta delle lotte dal basso, anche per la "pressione" delle conquiste lavorative e sociali che si mostravano in Unione Sovietica), la storia europea ha iniziato a impennarsi sempre più su un "paradigma vittimario" che è stato di volta in volta assunto e strumentalizzato dai nuovi attori che comparivano sulla scena.





Non è un mistero, anche se si tratta di un fatto passato un po' sottotraccia, che soprattutto nell'ultimo decennio siano in corso numerose "guerre della memoria" sul continente europeo. Mentre in Italia si discuteva del "carattere divisivo" del 25 aprile, sul significato da attribuire alla liberazione dal nazifascismo, in Polonia, in Ucraina, nei paesi baltici e ovviamente in Russia tali avvenimenti prendevano intanto tutt'altre pieghe e "ri-semantizzazioni". Con diverse sfumature e diversi accenti, per le ex-repubbliche sovietiche dell'ovest (a eccezione di Russia e Bielorussia), il ricordo della Seconda Guerra Mondiale ha iniziato a rimandare innanzitutto all'occupazione sovietica (e ai crimini a essa correlati) più che alla sconfitta del nazi-fascismo.

È questo il senso e la traiettoria che prendono le varie indipendenze nazionali che si concretizzano dal '91 in avanti. La Lettonia, per esempio, istituisce un giorno di commemorazione per le vittime del genocidio comunista. L'Ucraina, com'è noto e ampiamente dibattuto (non senza strumentalizzazioni), proprio dopo la sollevazione di Euromaidan e sulla scia del sentimento "anti-russo" che si era creato all'epoca ha dato il via in tempi più recenti alle famigerate "leggi sulla de-comunistizzazione" che hanno dato la stura all'innalzamento di personaggi controversi come Stephan Bandera al rango di "eroi nazionali" e hanno contribuito al consolidamento del trauma dell'Holodomor (su cui esistono divergenze di interpretazione storica) in quanto "mito fondativo" dell'unità nazionale. Così, in Polonia si è assistito alla rivitalizzazione in chiave conservativa delle radici cristiane e "bianche" del paese.

Ma il punto centrale, su cui fa spesso leva la retorica di Mosca, è che si è proceduto alla riabilitazione e alla ri-valutazione in chiave patriottica di figure ed eventi che avevano spesso a che fare col "collaborazionismo" coi nazisti e talvolta anche con l'antisemitismo purtroppo diffusissimi nel contesto della seconda guerra mondiale in quelle zone.

È in quest'ottica, anche, che va letta la [legge](#) del Sejm del 2018 che criminalizza i discorsi pubblici che attribuiscono parzialmente la responsabilità dell'Olocausto alla Polonia o alla nazione polacca.

Ma d'altra parte, in Russia (e con differenti accenti, in Bielorussia), avveniva un'opposta e forse ancora più potente ri-elaborazione di queste eterogenee memorie. Come [ha scritto](#) in maniera convincente Giorgio Comai, «In Russia, la Seconda guerra mondiale, ricordata come “grande guerra patria”, non è ricordata principalmente per l'Olocausto o per le politiche repressive di fascisti e nazisti, ma prima di tutto come una guerra contro l'Unione sovietica, contro la Russia. [...] “Nazista” oggi significa quindi in primo luogo “anti-russo”, in una linea interpretativa che evidenzia orgogliosamente la continuità tra Urss e Russia, insistendo in particolare sulla Russia come forza principale che ha sconfitto il nazismo in Europa durante la Seconda guerra mondiale». Questo diventa tanto più significativo se si pensa al fatto che il Giorno della Vittoria del 9 maggio ha assunto una centralità di gran lunga maggiore rispetto al periodo passato sotto il dominio di Putin e in particolare dopo il conflitto con l'Ucraina del 2014: nel 2015, per esempio (che era il settantesimo anniversario), si è visto il dispiegamento più grande di attrezzature militari nella parata commemorativa. Per la prima volta, arrivavano nella piazza Rossa truppe dalla Cina, dall'India, dalla Serbia e dalla Mongolia (mentre le nazioni occidentali, per via degli avvenimenti dell'anno precedente, hanno largamente boicottato la celebrazione).



Ma, soprattutto, diventa ancora più significativo nel momento in cui questa vittoria contro la Germania nazista da parte del popolo sovietico viene sempre più etnicizzata e “russificata”, omettendo per esempio il fatto che una delle popolazioni che ha subito le maggiori perdite durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale è quella ucraina (oltre un milione di soldati e oltre 5 milioni di civili). Oppure “glissando”, per quanto concerne una buona parte dei libri di testo in uso nelle scuole, sulle



controversie relative al patto Molotov-Ribbentrop e sul dibattito rispetto al ruolo di Stalin nel favorire lo scoppio del conflitto mondiale. Fatto sta che, prestando fede ad alcuni sondaggi condotti dal centro Levada in Russia, nel 2015 solo il 38% delle persone interpellate credeva che il patto Molotov-Ribbentrop fosse un accadimento storico realmente avvenuto, il 17% lo considerava una falso e il 45% non ne aveva mai sentito parlare. Similmente, secondo un sondaggio del 2002 riguardante il significato della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, il 44% la vedeva come una «guerra per la sopravvivenza della patria», il 20% come «una guerra fra l'Unione Sovietica e la Germania di Hitler» mentre solo il 27% come «una guerra contro il fascismo per la libertà e la democrazia nel mondo».

E ancora, più che a una specifica ideologia, nel 2015 il termine “fascismo” in Russia rimaneva associato alla Germania di Hitler (74%), seguita dall'Ucraina, dalle repubbliche baltiche e dalla Polonia, vale a dire – come nota la storica Marlene Lulle – «con quelle nazioni con cui la Russia stava conducendo una “guerra della memoria”».

A ogni modo, ritornando ora al contesto più generale e riprendendo ancora le parole di Laurelle (il cui libro *Is Russia Fascist?* rappresenta davvero una lettura imprescindibile e illuminante su tali questioni), il risultato è che «dopo trent'anni [dalla fine della Guerra Fredda, ndr] l'Europa ancora manca di una unificata, o almeno coesiva, narrazione storica che prenda in considerazione le diversificate storie e prospettive nazionali e che, allo stesso tempo, possa integrare queste ultime dentro una più ampia impalcatura memoriale pan-europea. [...] La Seconda Guerra Mondiale rimane il principale ostacolo sul cammino in questo senso. Per i paesi dell'ovest, la fine del conflitto ha aperto la via a una pacifica ricostruzione post-bellica e a tre decenni di pieno sviluppo economico. Per i paesi dell'Europa centrale e orientale, è iniziato un ingresso forzato nel blocco socialista, e per le tre repubbliche baltiche, ha significato anche la perdita della propria sovranità».



La fine del conflitto contro il nazifascismo, dunque, per alcuni paesi e comunità rappresenta una “liberazione”, per altri una “vittoria nazionale”, per altri ancora l’inizio di una lunga e maltollerata occupazione straniera. Il quadro, soprattutto per l’Europa centro-orientale, si complica poi con la caduta del muro e con l’ingresso attorno agli anni 2000 di molti paesi nell’Unione Europea e nella Nato, cui si accompagna l’emergere di nuovi “miti fondativi” spesso di natura smaccatamente anti-sovietica (e, talvolta, indirettamente anti-russa). «Non è una coincidenza che le “guerre della memoria” con la Russia abbiano esperito una *escalation* proprio in quel periodo», annota infine Laurelle. Ed è dunque in un tale contesto che si arriva, fra le altre cose, alla “famigerata” risoluzione Ue del 19 settembre 2019 in cui venivano sostanzialmente equiparate le esperienze del nazifascismo da una parte e del comunismo sovietico dall’altra. Un fatto politico marginale, ma che ben rappresenta col suo estremo equilibrismo l’assenza di una memoria condivisa a livello di continente.

Questi sono i motivi per cui la guerra in corso, almeno in una certa misura, andrebbe interpretata come uno scontro non solo per l’autodeterminazione nazionale nel presente ma anche per un’autodeterminazione nel costruire, *dentro alle condizioni presenti*, un rapporto più libero e condiviso col proprio passato (vale a dire: con il rapporto che una comunità proveniente dall’esperienza sovietica dovrebbe intrattenere con una tale esperienza e con la rappresentazione del ricordo di quest’ultima nello spazio pubblico).

Così come, il “carattere fantasmatico” della memoria post-1989 sul suolo europeo, vale a dire – come già accennato – la mancanza di un discorso europeo condiviso sul significato del nazi-fascismo dai due lati della cortina di ferro e su un accordo condiviso su cosa sia il totalitarismo – è anche ciò che ha permesso a Vladimir Putin di costruire il proprio potere in senso paranoico,

attorno allo “spettro” di rivoluzioni che non sarebbero mai potute avvenire nei fatti o che comunque avrebbero avuto altro “segno” rispetto a quello propagandato dalla sua macchina informativa. Spiega molto bene l'attivista e analista politico Ilya Budraitskis nel suo *Dissidents among the Dissidents*: «Se c'è stato qualcosa di consistente rispetto all'eclettica ideologia dello Stato Russo post-sovietico dall'inizio degli anni 2000 in avanti, lo si può riassumere in un unico concetto: anti-rivoluzione. Non va confuso con la contro-rivoluzione. [la contro-rivoluzione] arriva infatti dopo le rivoluzioni e si prefigge di cancellare le nuove forma politiche e sociali che sono sorte, che hanno poco in comune con il vecchio ordine pre-rivoluzionario. Ma, se la controrivoluzione emerge come forza capace di distruggere una rivoluzione esistente, l'anti-rivoluzione è quella cosa che invece prova a scongiurare una rivoluzione immaginaria, il cui angosciante spettro rincorre il potere al comando e ne proclama la caduta».

È esattamente la base su cui Putin ha costruito l'immaginario a proprio sostegno e su cui, come [sostiene](#) Volodymyr Artiukh, ha anche via via elaborato una dottrina di relazioni internazionali a supporto di diversi regimi contro e anti-rivoluzionari nell'area caucasico-mediterranea (la Bielorussia di Lukashenka o la Siria di Assad) che sta alla radice dell'invasione in Ucraina. Saranno capaci l'Europa e l'Occidente di ritessere a ritroso le fila di tutti questi conflitti simbolici (e non) e dunque intessere, nuovamente, un dialogo con territori, mondi e società che sembrano ormai aver preso un'altra strada? Certo è che il nostro futuro prossimo sembra essere sempre più condizionato dalle *memorie* del passato.

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# Ukrainian Feminists under Western Eyes

May 9, 2022



“I define solidarity in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships among diverse communities. Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression, the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together. Diversity and difference are central values here—to be acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances. Jodi Dean (1996) develops a notion of ‘reflective solidarity’ that I find particularly useful. She argues that reflective solidarity is crafted by an interaction involving three persons: ‘I ask you to stand by me over and against a third.’ This involves thematizing the third voice ‘to reconstruct solidarity as an inclusive ideal,’ rather than as an ‘us vs. them’ notion. Dean’s notion of a communicative, in-process understanding of the ‘we’ is useful, given that solidarity is always an achievement, the result of active struggle to construct the universal on the basis of particulars/differences. It is the praxis-oriented, active political struggle embodied in this notion of solidarity that is important to my thinking—and the reason I prefer to focus attention on solidarity rather than on the concept of ‘sisterhood.’”[1]

— Chandra Tapade Mohanty

## When Kurdish feminists challenge Western pacifist feminists

Several feminist scholars (Dirik, Tank, Şimşek and Jongerden, etc.) have denounced the Western media’s orientalist fascination with Kurdish women fighters. These authors show how the Western media portray Kurdish women as symbols of Western liberation in the East, which is in turn portrayed as barbaric. This Western-centric portrait has the purpose and effect of silencing Kurdish women whose political ideas[2] are never relayed. And for good reason, for if they were, the narrative carried by the Western media would be challenged and invalidated.

Kurdish feminist Dilar Dirik has also questioned the role of Western feminism in this orientalist discursive construction of Kurdish women fighters:

“Some western feminists questioned its legitimacy and dismissed it as militarism or co-optation by political groups. Western media narratives have portrayed this struggle in a de-polititized, exotic way, or by making generalized assumptions about women’s ‘natural’ disinclination to violence. The media reporting was dominated by a male gaze, but this was

partly due to feminists' refusal to engage with this relevant topic. One cannot help but think that one of the reasons for this hostility may be the fact that militant women are taking matters into their own hands impairs western feminists' ability to speak on behalf of women in the Middle East, projected as helpless victims."

In her article "Feminist pacifism or passive-ism?," she denounces the inability of a naively pacifist feminism to distinguish between violence as oppression and violence as an act of resistance or self-defense:

"Unlike violence which aims to subjugate the 'other,' self-defense is a complete dedication and responsibility to life. To exist means to resist. And in order to exist meaningfully and freely, one must be politically autonomous. Put bluntly, in an international system of sexual and racial violence, legitimized by capitalist nation-states, the cry for non-violence is a luxury for those in privileged positions of relative safety, believing that they will never end up in a situation where violence will become necessary to survive. While theoretically sound, pacifism does not speak to the reality of masses of women and thus assumes a rather elitist first world character."

Indeed, it seems to me that the experience of Kurdish feminists challenges — at least partially — the canonical feminist antimilitarist theory. Feminist antimilitarism has emerged from the experience of many women and feminist activists in a wide range of peace movements around the world. However, feminist antimilitarism cannot ignore the experiences of those women and feminists advocating for armed struggle. When these experiences challenge the feminist antimilitarist theoretical framework, this framework needs to be updated by these experiences. It is not about invalidating the contributions of antimilitarist feminism, but rather about enriching them with new experiences coming from different positionalities.

In 2015, one of the leading thinkers of Feminist antimilitarism, Cythia Cockburn, interviewed two anti-militarist feminists, members of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) who had lived under Nazism. She confronted them with what she calls the 'pacifist dilemma' by asking them whether they would invite Kurdish women fighters to lay down their arms in the name of pacifism. The interviewees replied:

"I don't think so. Sitting here safely outside the war zone, we should understand them, not condemn them. To resist is a human right. However, in the long run we should not accept that militarism is the only response. We should seriously begin to build peacemaking mechanisms."

"As a Wilpfer I would like to speak with the *peshmerga*[3] women, hear what they say. Fascism is so dirty. It's like an octopus, getting its tentacles into society, its racist idea of the superiority of one kind of person over another. I might well agree, and say to the Kurdish women, 'Yes, you have to fight.' But, perhaps when it's over, they themselves might look back on their campaign and say, 'That was not the way to do it'."

I share with these women the following ideas:

1. our role from outside the war zone is to support, not condemn, women and feminist fighters;
2. we must always listen to what the people concerned have to say;
3. supporting women around the world in their struggles, including military struggles, is not incompatible with fighting, in a broader and longer-term context, for the demilitarization of the world.

## **Can the Ukrainian feminists speak?**

I recently had a discussion with a Ukrainian feminist who has been involved for a long time in



feminist activism and is now a refugee in a Western European country. She told me that she finds it difficult to speak openly about political — and particularly gender — issues existing in Ukraine because she is under the impression that the support of the western feminists and leftists is conditional. In their view, Ukrainian society would have to be perfect — and thus free of contradictions — in order to deserve the full right to fight against the Russian invasion. Faced with this Western injunction, she, like many other women, feels obliged to choose between speaking out on gender issues in Ukraine and seeking support for the Ukrainian resistance from leftists and feminists worldwide. Indeed, feminist injunctions that force women to choose between feminism and their other struggles often result in driving women away from feminism. This is a recurring problem of Western feminism that counter-hegemonic feminists have repeatedly pointed out.

Yet feminist analysis and activism remain necessary in Ukraine, as everywhere else. In the feminist Collective of the European Network of Solidarity with Ukraine, I have the pleasure to work with feminists involved in grassroots activism in Ukraine. They report that most of Ukrainian society — including many Ukrainian women — is either oblivious or suspicious of feminism, and this situation has worsened with the war. Feminist grassroots initiatives are facing financial difficulties as well as the hostility of landlords when trying to find a space for carrying out their activism. Viktoriia Pigul, a Ukrainian anticapitalist feminist comrade, drawing on several testimonies from Ukrainian women and children, has reported on the multiple forms of violence they are suffering. As is widely known by now, over the past few weeks, a lot of women and children have been brutalized and raped by Russian soldiers. Many of them are helpless. Many of them escape the war by fleeing to Poland, unaware that abortion in Poland — unlike in Ukraine — is banned by the law. In Poland, they are often exposed to new kinds of abuse by men. In this context, feminist activism in Ukraine is more essential now than ever.

Olena Lyubchenko has recently published a very rich analysis, essential reading, in which she shows how the militarization of Ukraine in recent years has been linked to austerity measures that have shifted the burden of resistance against Russian aggression onto women at the household level, while at the same time preparing the state for a highly unequal process of ‘Euro-Atlantic’ integration:

“Militarization, austerity, and aggression in this context act as processes of dispossession and primitive accumulation. They ‘generate global reserves of labor-power whose cross-border movements are at the heart of the worldwide production and reproduction of capital and labor.’ In this way, racialized citizenship reproduces precarity and exclusion for some and security and inclusion for others, just as the Ukrainian working class’s historical differentiation within global capitalism is being rewritten and instrumentalized.”

Just as Dilar Dirik has denounced the instrumentalization of Kurdish women fighters in the Western media, Olena Lyubchenko denounces in this article the instrumentalization of Ukrainian resistance in Western media and institutional discourses that portray Ukrainians as heroes fighting a war “for Europe.”[4] In this context, and still in continuity with Dilar Dirik’s critique, it seems essential to question the role of Western feminism (and more broadly of the Western left) in this instrumentalization.

A transnational pacifist feminist manifesto was signed a few weeks ago by 150 prominent feminists from Europe and the Americas, without a single Ukrainian or post-Soviet European feminist among the signatories. Indeed, some Western feminists, close to Ukrainian feminists, refused to sign it. This manifesto reproduces the dominant geopolitical approach according to which the great imperialist powers are the only actors of history. It thus ignores the multi-scale reality and the agency of multiple actors highlighted by the feminist critique of geopolitics. It reduces Putin’s war against Ukraine to a simple inter-imperialist conflict, thus erasing the agency of all Ukrainians. Only one line

out of more than thirty is devoted to Ukrainians:

“We are with the people of Ukraine who want to restore peace in their lives and demand a ceasefire.”

This is a good example of how, in one sentence, to reduce 44 million people to the cliché of a passive victim who needs, once again, to be rescued by the West. Ukrainians, women and men who are actively and militarily resisting the aggression that has been imposed upon them, are of no interest to Western feminist pacifists, just as they are of no interest to their male Western leftist friends. It seems that Ukrainians deserve our solidarity as victims, but not as resistance fighters. This caricaturing of Ukrainians as passive victims of NATO or European instrumentalization is similar to the Western media portrayal of Ukrainians as “European heroes.” Both discourses erase the political voices and wills of Ukrainians. In fact, many Ukrainian men and women are determined to resist, including by armed struggle. This determination is not imposed by Zelensky or NATO, as shown by the strong involvement of all sectors of Ukrainian society in the resistance.

While the positions of Western feminists and leftists on issues such as arm supply are unlikely to have an impact on the decisions of Western policy makers, they do have a real impact on Ukrainian feminists and leftists. Indeed, abandoning (in some cases opposing) the Ukrainian resistance has the effect of weakening our Ukrainian comrades within the resistance, and undermining their ability to carry forward an emancipatory political project for all the people of Ukraine.

### **For a dialogical internationalist feminist practice**

The Ukrainian resistance is far from perfect and is not free of contradictions. It is riven by conflicts of class, gender, and race, as are all our societies. Ukrainian women are experiencing war, aggression, torture, and mass rape by Russian troops, as well as continuing to suffer the violence they suffered before the war from Ukrainian men and the state. Moreover, the war context reinforces state authoritarianism as well as the sexual division of labor (things like male-only military conscription, reassignment of women to social reproduction work, etc.). The reinforcement of gender relations gives power over women to men and the State while women in turn are disempowered and become more vulnerable and exposed to all kinds of violence. In this context, anti-capitalist feminists, caught up in this intricate multi-scale reality, are struggling with their fellow Ukrainians against the Russian invader while continuing to struggle against part of their own fellow Ukrainians: against Government’s neoliberal policies and employers’ attacks, against sexist, racist or LGBTphobic violence, etc.

Struggling simultaneously ‘with and against’ can only be incomprehensible to the minority of people who have the privilege of having only one enemy, or engaging only on one front. Counter-hegemonic feminists have taught us that positionality is central to any feminist politics. To take but one example, the Combahee River Collective, one of the most important Black lesbian feminist collectives in feminist history, rejected lesbian separatism as being both analytically and strategically inoperative for Black women who cannot afford the luxury of disassociating themselves from Black men in their common struggle against racism. Barbara Smith goes so far as to say:

“So seldom is separatism involved in making real political change, affecting the institutions in the society in any direct way. [...] We have noticed how separatists in our area, instead of doing political organizing, often do zap acts. For example, they might come to a meeting or series of meetings then move on their way. It is not clear what they’re actually trying to change. **We sometimes think of separatism as the politics without a practice.**”[5]

In the current context it is quite consistent for Russian feminists to claim pacifism and categorically

disassociate themselves from Putin, from the war he is waging, and from the whole part of Russian society that supports this war. In their anti-war manifesto, Russian pacifist feminists characterize the war as a war of aggression, and Putin as solely responsible. This pacifist position on the part of the Russian feminists is thus perfectly compatible with supporting the armed resistance in Ukraine. On the other hand, it would seem impossible for many Ukrainian feminists to dissociate themselves from their own community (however sexist it may be), if only for the sake of survival. Yet, at the same time, Ukrainian feminists have no choice but to keep leading the feminist struggle within their own society if they do not want to see gender/sexism further reinforced. While lesbian separatism was the privilege of those who experienced oppression only on the basis of gender and sexuality, abstract pacifism is the privilege of those who do not live under bombardment and feel no need to take up arms to defend themselves. Doing feminist politics away from the battlefield is as easy as it is sterile.

Internationalist feminist politics must take as its starting point the voices of the people concerned. Any feminist politics that is done without these voices will ultimately be done against them, and will thus be detrimental to the construction of global feminist solidarity. How could a position that turns its back on Ukrainian feminists and has the effect of silencing them on gender issues be qualified as feminist or internationalist? The only political actors capable of carrying out an emancipatory political project in Ukraine are those who are on the spot. We should better start listening to them and supporting them, despite any possible disagreements, because it will be them, as they are and with their own contradictions, who will lead the struggle. Or it will be nobody.

NB: If you want to financially support feminist activism in Ukraine, you can make your donations to the feminist collectives Bilkis and Feminist Workshop or to the anti-capitalist organization Sotsialnyi Rukh, in which feminists carry out specifically feminist political work.

## Notes

[1] Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham & London: Duke. University Press. p.7.

[2] For an overview on the ideological and organizational principles of the Kurdish Women's Movement: Dirik, Dilar (2017) "Self-Defense Means Political Autonomy! The Women's Movement of Kurdistan Envisioning and Pursuing New Paths for Radical Democratic Autonomy". *Development* 60, 74-79. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41301-017-0136-3>

[3] The use of the word *peshmerga* to designate Kurdish women fighters is problematic. *Peshmerga* refers to the Kurdish fighters in Iraq. As Dilar Dirik and Bahar Munzir explain, Kurdish women fighters in Iraq are in a very small minority within the combat units where there is a rigid sexual division of labor, as the two parties leading Iraqi Kurdistan are patriarchal. Yet women fighters in the YPJ and YJA-Star are often mistakenly referred to as *peshmerga* by the Western media. Cynthia Cockburn reproduces this error in her article, which in turn is taken up by the interviewees.

[4] Where the word 'Europe' is mostly identified with the European Union as a marker of 'civilization' against those considered 'barbarians' who don't belong in it or refuse its discipline.

[5] Smith, Barbara and Beverly (2015) "Across the Kitchen Table: A Sister-to-Sister Dialogue". in Moraga and Anzaldúa (eds.) *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.

# Petition – Cop Civics Space

Advancing climate justice demands an inclusive, holistic approach to environmental policy that embeds human rights and tackles systemic problems, including historically rooted social injustices, ecological destruction, abuses by businesses, corruption and impunity, and social and economic inequality. The strongest voices across the world pushing back against these systemic problems, and in favor of more meaningful and ambitious climate action, have come from civil society.

We voice our support to the [call](#) made by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association: that the work of civil society be recognized, publicly and at the highest levels, as essential to the advancement of climate action and just transition. Moreover, we stress the importance of the right to freedom of expression and independent reporting to foster efforts to address the climate crisis.

We emphasize that effective climate action is not possible without open civic space. As host of COP27, Egypt risks compromising the success of the summit if it does not urgently address ongoing arbitrary restrictions on civil society.

We call on Egypt to ensure that civil society organizations, activists, and communities can meaningfully participate in all discussions and activities on climate and just-transition policy development and implementation at all levels of decision-making without fear of reprisals. Authorities must put in place transparent and inclusive processes to ensure that everyone, including women, Indigenous peoples and local communities, workers, youth, children, persons with disabilities, and other groups facing marginalization or discrimination, is provided with equal opportunities to effectively participate in climate decision-making.

We also call on Egypt to end the prosecutions of civil society activists and organizations and guarantee space for civil society—including human rights defenders—to work without fear of intimidation, harassment, arrest, detention, or any other form of reprisal, including by releasing of unjustly jailed human rights defenders, lifting arbitrarily travel bans and asset freezes and closing all politically-motivated cases against activists targeted for their human rights work.

Access to information is central to effective participation. To this end, we call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately end the arbitrarily blocking of websites and ensure access inside the country to the hundreds of independent media, human rights organizations and other blocked websites. We also call for the immediate release of all journalists who have been imprisoned solely for doing their job, and an end to restrictions on media and digital spheres.

We recognize that a select number of journalists, human rights defenders, and other individuals who had been arbitrarily detained were conditionally released in recent months. We urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those held simply for peacefully exercising their human rights, implementing [criteria](#) set by local NGOs for these releases: fairness, transparency, inclusiveness, and urgency.

Preparations for COP27 are taking place against the backdrop of an ongoing and deep-rooted human rights crisis in Egypt. The Egyptian authorities have for years employed draconian laws, including laws on counter terrorism, cyber crimes, and civil society, to stifle all forms of peaceful dissent and shut down civic space. We note that, under the current government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, thousands continue to be arbitrarily detained without a legal basis, following grossly unfair trials, or solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. Thousands are held in prolonged per-trial detention on the basis of spurious terrorism and national security accusations. Among

those arbitrarily detained are dozens of journalists targeted for their media work, social media users punished for sharing critical online content, women convicted on morality-related charges for making Tik Tok videos, and members of religious minorities accused of blasphemy.

Prisoners are held in detention conditions that violate the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, and since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power hundreds have died in custody amid reports of denial of healthcare and other abuse. Egypt remains one of the world's top executioners, executing 107 in 2020 to 83 in 2021, with at least 356 people sentenced to death in 2021, many following grossly unfair trials including by emergency courts. The crisis of impunity has emboldened Egyptian security forces to carry out extra-judicial executions and other unlawful killing, enforced disappearances and torture with no fear of consequences.

The Egyptian authorities must take meaningful steps to address the human rights crisis, including by lifting restrictions of civic space and ending their crackdown on peaceful dissent.

## **Led by**

1. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)
2. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
3. Committee for Justice (CFJ)
4. Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR)
5. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
6. EgyptWide for Human Rights
7. El Nadeem Center Against Violence and Torture
8. Refugees Platform in Egypt (RPE)
9. Sinai Foundation for Human Rights
10. The Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF)
11. The Freedom Initiative (FI)
12. Egyptian Human Rights Forum



# Russia's Feminists Are in the Streets Protesting Putin's War

BY

FEMINIST ANTI-WAR RESISTANCE

TRANSLATION BY

ANASTASIA KALK / JAN SURMAN

In today's Russia, feminists form one of the most active social movements defying state repression. Now they're uniting to resist Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine.

The below text is a manifesto by Russian feminists who have united against the occupation and war in Ukraine. Feminism is one of the few opposition movements in contemporary Russia that has not been destroyed by the waves of persecution launched by Vladimir Putin's government. At the moment, several dozen grassroots feminist groups are operating in at least thirty Russian cities. In this text, feminists taking part in antiwar demonstrations around the country call on feminists around the world to unite in opposing the military aggression launched by Putin's government.

On February 24, at around 5:30 AM Moscow time, Russian president Vladimir Putin announced a "special operation" on the territory of Ukraine in order to "denazify" and "demilitarize" this sovereign state. This operation had long been in preparation. For several months, Russian troops were moving up

to the border with Ukraine. At the same time, the leadership of our country denied any possibility of a military attack. Now we see that this was a lie.

Russia has declared war on its neighbor. It did not allow Ukraine the right to self-determination nor any hope of a peaceful life. We declare — and not for the first time — that war has been waged for the last eight years at the initiative of the Russian government. The war in Donbas is a consequence of the illegal annexation of Crimea. We believe that Russia and its president are not and have never been concerned about the fate of people in Luhansk and Donetsk, and the recognition of the republics after eight years was only a pretext for the invasion of Ukraine under the guise of liberation.

As Russian citizens and feminists, we condemn this war. Feminism as a political force cannot be on the side of a war of aggression and military occupation. The feminist movement in Russia struggles for vulnerable groups and the development of a just society with equal opportunities and prospects, in which there can be no place for violence and military conflicts.

War means violence, poverty, forced displacement, broken lives, insecurity, and the lack of a future. It is irreconcilable with the essential values and goals of the feminist movement. War exacerbates gender inequality and sets back gains for human rights by many years. War brings with it not only the violence of bombs and bullets but also sexual violence: as history shows, during war, the risk of being raped increases several times for any woman. For these and many other reasons, Russian feminists and those who share feminist values need to take a strong stand against this war unleashed by the leadership of our country.

The current war, as Putin's addresses show, is also fought under the banner of the “traditional values” declared by government ideologues — values that Russia allegedly decided to promote throughout the world as a missionary, using violence against those who refuse to accept them or hold other views. Anyone who is capable of critical thinking understands well that these “traditional values” include gender inequality, exploitation of women, and state repression against those whose way of life, self-identification, and actions do not conform with narrow patriarchal norms. The justification of the occupation of a neighboring state by the desire to promote such distorted norms and pursue a demagogic “liberation” is another reason why feminists throughout Russia must oppose this war with all their energy.

Today feminists are one of the few active political forces in Russia. For a long time, Russian authorities did not perceive us as a dangerous political movement, and therefore we were temporarily less affected by state repression than other political groups. Currently more than forty-five different feminist organizations are operating throughout the country, from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, from Rostov-on-

Don to Ulan-Ude and Murmansk. We call on Russian feminist groups and individual feminists to join the Feminist Anti-War Resistance and unite forces to actively oppose the war and the government that started it. We also call on feminists all over the world to join our resistance. We are many, and together we can do a lot: Over the past ten years, the feminist movement has gained enormous media and cultural power. It is time to turn it into political power. We are the opposition to war, patriarchy, authoritarianism, and militarism. We are the future that will prevail.

We call on feminists around the world:

- Join peaceful demonstrations and launch offline and online campaigns against the war in Ukraine and Putin's dictatorship, organizing your own actions. Feel free to use the symbol of the Feminist Anti-War Resistance movement in your materials and publications, as well as hashtags [#FeministAntiWarResistance](#) and [#FeministsAgainstWar](#).
- Distribute the information about the war in Ukraine and Putin's aggression. We need the whole world to support Ukraine at this moment and to refuse to help Putin's regime in any way.
- Share this manifesto with others. It's necessary to show that feminists are against this war — and any type of war. It's also essential to demonstrate that there are still Russian activists who are ready to unite in opposition to Putin's regime. We are all in danger of persecution by the state now and need your support.

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Feminist Anti-War Resistance has a [Telegram channel](#) with additional information (in Russian). Members of the initiative are anonymous for security reasons. Its representative in London is [Ella Rossman](#).

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Feminist Anti-War Resistance is an anti-war campaign launched by Russian feminists.

Anastasia Kalk is a political theorist, PhD student, and teaching fellow at the New School for Social Research.

Jan Surman is a historian of Central and Eastern Europe currently based at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Science.

FILED UNDER

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Ukraine / Russia

 CONFLITTO IN UCRAINA 5 MAGGIO 2022  12:57

# Ucraina, Davide Grasso: “Ho combattuto Isis con i curdi, oggi non mi riconosco nel pacifismo assoluto”

*Davide Grasso ha combattuto in Siria con i curdi contro Isis, oggi di fronte alla guerra in Ucraina interroga il pacifismo più intransigente: “Solo una posizione credibile di fronte alle ucraine e agli ucraini, che riconosca loro il diritto alla resistenza, può permettere critiche di sostanza a chi vuole strumentalizzare quel popolo per altri fini. Ma senza resistenza e senza giustizia neanche i negoziati possono condurre a una pace stabile”.*

A cura di **Valerio Renzi**

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## Conflitto in Ucraina

ATTIVA  
AGGIORNAMENTI

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Davide Grasso, 42 anni, è un ricercatore ed ex combattente Ypg, le Unità di Protezione Popolare curde che in Siria hanno combattuto contro Isis. Con lui riflettiamo della guerra in Ucraina, della legittimità della resistenza ucraina e delle posizioni del pacifismo di fronte all'aggressione russa, ma anche della difficoltà di una parte della sinistra radicale a riconoscere le responsabilità di Putin.

**Hai combattuto in Siria assieme ai curdi delle Ypg, oggi sostieni che la posizione pacifista rispetto a quanto sta accadendo in Ucraina sia debole di fronte a una guerra di aggressione. Ci spieghi meglio?**

Io prima di tutto non sono pacifista. La prima cosa con cui bisogna fare i conti è che la violenza a volte serve in alcune contingenze sociali e politiche, e che la guerra a volte è necessaria nella storia. Il dibattito per me è quando si può accettare di utilizzare la violenza, secondo quali principi e con quali limiti, piuttosto che immaginare di modificare la realtà del mondo senza mai ricorrere alla forza secondo un principio astratto. La posizione pacifista non violenta è stata difesa da Marco Tarquinio durante la manifestazione del Teatro Ghione ad esempio, una posizione in cui non mi riconosco. Uccidere altre persone è una cosa orribile e, l'esperienza mi ha insegnato, orribile è perdere sul terreno i propri amici. Diversamente dalle destre che tradizionalmente idealizzano la guerra dobbiamo chiederci in quali circostanze sia davvero inevitabile e necessaria. Una posizione più utile del pacifismo assoluto, perché una posizione integralmente non violenta toglie valore a molte delle conquiste



storiche che sono state ottenute utilizzando anche la forza. Ravvedo poi una grande incoerenza nelle posizioni di tanti sedicenti pacifisti, molti dei quali hanno espresso solidarietà rispetto alla mia scelta di arruolarmi in un esercito e di combattere una guerra, un esercito popolare certo, le Ypg e le Forze siriane democratiche, ma che sempre conduce una guerra, tra l'altro anche in alleanza con gli Stati Uniti o con la Russia in momenti diversi e diversi scenari. O penso alla Palestina: non mi risulta che Moni Ovadia rispetto alla Palestina abbia una posizione per principio pacifista o che neghi il diritto alla resistenza. Credo che questa forma di pacifismo sia insostenibile in termini politici oggi e quasi sempre incoerente.

LEGGI ANCHE

**Nord Stream, disastro non solo energetico. Il Cnr: "Danni all'ambiente fuoriuscita di metano"**

**In molta sinistra c'è una difficoltà a riconoscere in Putin un avversario e il responsabile dell'invasione. Perché?**

Ci sono due motivi credo. Il primo motivo è la difficoltà di molta sinistra di fare i conti fino in fondo con quello che è accaduto nel 1989. Rendersi conto che quello che è crollato non era un sistema difendibile, ma soprattutto che è caduto per una mobilitazione di popolo, in particolar modo con la mobilitazione degli studenti e della classe operaia dei paesi del socialismo reale. Non riuscire dopo trent'anni a discutere serenamente di questo, a "elaborare" il trauma, conduce oggi a questa forma di odio nascosto verso popoli che votano e si battono per modelli liberali, perché l'alternativa concreta che hanno è peggiore. Non ci si rende conto che noi dovremmo essere per forme di democrazia e eguaglianza ancora più ampie di quelle liberali, non detestare i popoli che hanno patito i fallimenti del socialismo reale e si sono liberati. Oggi nella sinistra pacifista o sedicente tale c'è chi è proprio filo Putin, i cosiddetti

rossobruni che, come lui del resto, non riconoscono più una distinzione lungo l'asse destra-sinistra, e purtroppo si trovano a sostenere per lo più posizioni sovraniste e regimi fascistoidi in giro per il mondo, a partire da Assad in Siria. E poi c'è chi non è affatto affascinato da Putin e non sostiene il suo governo, ma resta visceralmente anti-occidentale.

## **In che senso?**

C'è ovvero l'idea che l'Occidente – la cui visione monolitica è anch'essa discutibile – sarebbe il nemico assoluto. L'eredità giuridica, politica, culturale dell'Europa e degli Stati Uniti sarebbe il male assoluto, mentre tutti gli altri blocchi di potere altrettanto capitalisti e spesso molto più autoritari del mondo occidentale finiscono per essere considerati o migliori, o comunque oggetto di critiche eccessive. Un'idea molto strana per la sinistra che dovrebbe essere internazionalista. Come se il fatto che io abbia un passaporto italiano non dovrebbe farmi sentire vicino al mio coetaneo iraniano, che con coraggio e correndo dei rischi che sono molto maggiori dei miei, lotta contro l'oppressione che vive nel suo paese. Dovremmo invece rivendicare le libertà che abbiamo noi qua in Europa ad esempio, come un risultato delle lotte del movimento operaio e dei movimenti sociali, di secoli di lotte e sacrifici. Provare nei confronti delle libertà di cui godiamo una forma di odio nichilista, per non essere poi in grado di denunciare e combattere le forme di oppressione anche nel resto del pianeta, non riesco a capire cosa abbia a che fare con una qualsiasi idea di liberazione, uguaglianza, emancipazione.

**Nei territori dove tu hai combattuto, in questi giorni è in corso una pesante offensiva della Turchia, in particolare contro i territori degli ezidi vittime di un vero e proprio genocidio da parte dello Stato Islamico...**

L'autogoverno dei territori autonomi curdo-ezidi in Iraq, e curdo-arabi in Siria,

sono un esempio perfetto per vedere come le grandi potenze non si fanno scrupoli a schiacciare modelli alternativi di convivenza tra i popoli e di società. L'offensiva della Turchia, con la complicità dei governi di Iraq, Iran e Siria, avviene mentre Erdogan ha il supporto sia dell'amministrazione americana, che sta fornendo anche nuove attrezzature militari, quanto della Russia, di Israele e dell'Arabia Saudita. Nel caso della rivoluzione del Rojava e dell'autodifesa degli ezidi massacrati da Isis, le grandi potenze si ritrovano a tutelare i loro interessi lasciando campo libero al proprio alleato turco. Per questo io credo che sarebbe necessario costruire un'idea di nazione democratica, un'idea di democrazia e di socialismo che siano all'altezza del XXI secolo, proponendo un'idea di società che sia una via d'uscita diversa da quella dei blocchi esistenti. Un simile modello dovrebbe essere ipotizzato anche dagli ucraini per le loro differenze interne. Per questo quanto messo in pratica dai curdi nel Rojava e il modello del confederalismo democratico, non è un qualcosa di esotico ma un modello che ci interroga direttamente.

**Criticare l'amministrazione Biden e il ruolo della Nato non ti impedisce però di essere solidale con il popolo ucraino in questo momento...**

Non solo non me lo impedisce ma ne è la diretta conseguenza. Chi cancella il popolo ucraino dall'equazione in questo momento sono coloro che riducono questa guerra a una contrapposizione tra Nato e Russia, e vorrei far notare che sono i vari editorialisti e politici liberali, tanto quanto alcuni pacifisti. In questo schema gli ucraini scompaiono. E non basta mi dispiace un'empatia generica perché stanno morendo sotto le bombe, quando una popolazione viene aggredita non capisco come si possa mostrargli solidarietà e allo stesso tempo non sostenerla attivamente per allontanare da sé il pericolo rappresentato dall'esercito invasore. Quando sento dire da Vauro che tutti coloro che combattono sono dei criminali, ritengo che questa sì è una posizione violenta. Io ho combattuto contro Isis con il sostegno degli Stati Uniti

e anche della Russia e non mi sento un criminale. I soldati americani e inglesi durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale erano criminali? Io credo che o si propongono, si costruiscono, opzioni politiche e sociali credibili, o rinchiudersi nella Torre d'Avorio della superiorità morale senza neanche essere in grado di sostenere delle posizioni quantomeno logiche non porti da nessuna parte. Soprattutto non si fa un buon servizio a chi vuole fermare l'escalation militare e scongiurare il perdurare e l'allargarsi del conflitto. Solo una posizione credibile di fronte alle ucraine e agli ucraini, che riconosca loro il diritto alla resistenza, può permettere critiche di sostanza a chi vuole strumentalizzare quel popolo per altri fini. Ma senza resistenza e senza giustizia neanche i negoziati possono condurre a una pace stabile.

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ATTUALITÀ

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# UKRAINE - TO THE WESTERN LEFT, ON YOUR AND OUR MISTAKES

Here in the post-Soviet world, we learned a lot from you. By 'we' I mean atomized or loosely organized communist, democratic socialist, left anarchist, feminist scholars, and activists from Kyiv, Lviv, Minsk, Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, and other places that are plunging into the horrors of war and police violence. After our own Marxist tradition underwent sclerotization, degradation, and marginalization, we read commentaries on *Das Kapital* in English. After the Soviet Union collapsed, we relied on your analysis of the American hegemony, neoliberal turn in the forms of capital accumulation, and Western neo-imperialism. We have also been encouraged by the Western social movements from alterglobalism to the anti-war protests, from Occupy to BLM.

We appreciate the way how you tried to theorize our corner of the world. You have correctly pointed out that the US helped undermine the democratic and economically progressive options of post-Soviet transformation in Russia and elsewhere. You are right that the US and Europe have failed to create a security environment that would include Russia and other post-Soviet countries. Our countries have long been in a position of having to adapt, make concessions, agree to humiliating conditions. You have done this with sympathy verging on romanticization, and we have sometimes condoned it.

Amidst Russia's shelling of Kharkiv, however, we see the limits to what we learnt from you. That knowledge was produced under the conditions of the American hegemony, which has reached its limits at Russia's bloody-red lines. The US lost its ability to represent its interests as common interests for Russia and China, it cannot enforce compliance with military power, and its economic leverage is shrieking in spite of what many of you claim, Russia is not reacting, adapting, making concessions anymore, it has re-gained agency and it is able to shape the world around it. Russia's toolkit is different from that of the US, it is not hegemonic, as it relies on brute force rather than on soft power and economy. Nevertheless, brute force is a powerful tool, as you all know from the US behaviour in Latin America, Iraq, Afghanistan and all over the globe. Russia has mimicked the coercive infrastructure of America's imperialism without preserving its hegemonic core.

And yet, this mimicry does not mean dependence. Russia has become an autonomous agent, its actions are determined by its own internal political dynamics, and the consequences of its actions are now contrary to western interests. Russia shapes the world around, imposes its own rules the way the US has been doing, albeit through other means. The sense of derealization that many commentators feel – 'this is not happening with us' – comes from the fact that the Russian warring elites are able to impose their delusions, transform them into the facts on the ground, make others accept them despite their will. These delusions are no longer determined by the US or Europe, they are not a reaction, they are creation.

Having faced 'the impossible to imagine,' I see how the Western left is doing what it has been doing the best: analysing the American neo-imperialism, the expansion of NATO. It is not enough anymore as it does not explain the world that is emerging from the ruins of Donbas and Kharkiv's main square. The world is not exhaustively described as shaped by or reacting upon the actions of the US. It has gained dynamics of its own, and the US and Europe is in reactive mode in many areas. You explain the distant causes instead of noticing the emergent trends.



Thus, it strikes me how, talking about the dramatic processes in our corner of the world, you reduce them to reaction to the activity of your own government and business elites. We have learnt all about the US and NATO from you, but this knowledge is not so helpful anymore. Maybe the US has drawn the outline of this board game, but now other players move the chips and add their own contours with a red marker. US-centric explanations are outdated. I have been reading everything written and said on the left about last year's escalating conflict between the US, Russia, and Ukraine. Most of it was terribly off, much worse than many mainstream explanations. Its predictive power was nil.

This is not to accuse the Western left of ethnocentrism, this is to point to their limited perspective. Overwhelmed with the fog of war and psychological stress, I cannot offer a better perspective. I would only call for help in grasping the situation in theoretical terms while incorporating insights from our corner of the world. US-plaining is not helpful to us to the extent that you think it is. We also need an effort to emerge from the ruins of eastern Marxism and the colonization by the Western Marxism. We make mistakes on this way, and you may accuse us of nationalism, idealism, provincialism. Learn from these mistakes : now you are also much more provincial and you face temptations to resort to simplistic Manicheanism.

You face a challenge of reacting to a war that is not waged by your countries. Given all the theoretical impasses I alluded to above, there is no simple way to frame an anti-war message. One thing remains painfully clear : you can help deal with the consequences of the war providing assistance to refugees from Ukraine no matter what skin colour or passport they have. You can also pressurize your government into cancelling Ukraine's foreign debt and providing humanitarian help.

Do not let half-baked political positions substitute an analysis of the situation. The injunction that the main enemy is in your country should not translate into a flawed analysis of the inter-imperialist struggle. At this stage appeals to dismantle NATO or, conversely, accepting anyone there, will not help those who suffer under the bombs in Ukraine, in jails in Russia or Belarus. Sloganeering is harmful as ever. Branding Ukrainians or Russian fascists only makes you part of the problem, not part of the solution. A new autonomous reality emerges around Russia, a reality of destruction and harsh repressions, a reality where a nuclear conflict is not unthinkable anymore. Many of us have missed the tendencies leading to this reality. In the fog of war, we do not see clearly the contours of the new. Neither do, as it seems, the American or European governments.

In this reality we, the post-Soviet left, will have incomparably less organizational, theoretical, and simply vital resources. Without you, we will struggle to survive. Without us, you will be closer to the precipice.