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By Fabrizio Casari  
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## Ukraine, Putin turns the table around



Sources: Rebellion

Waiting for the French mediation, the talks between Putin and Biden, the German distancing, the Italian fears, the Spanish uncertainties and the opposition of the former Eastern bloc, as well as the deadlines, regularly discredited, of the improbable Russian invasions, the war always announced but never initiated has had its first outcome.

In a decision that displaced Western chancelleries, Vladimir Putin signed the diplomatic protocol recognizing the independent republics of Luhansk and Donetsk. The recognition was immediately followed by the signing of an agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance, which will involve a Russian military presence in defense of the two republics and, at the same time, a clear warning to Kiev and its interested supporters.

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Thus ends the dirty war, the only one that was really being fought despite the fact that the international media system hid it: that is, the Ukrainian shooting practices on the civilian population of the Donbass, which for years have turned 4 million citizens into hostages of Kiev, with inhabitants becoming displaced, schools that become targets, territory that becomes a cemetery. Until yesterday, this was the result of the recent offensive of the Ukrainian army in the Donbass, which tells better than a thousand lies what really happens on the border between Russia and Ukraine and who are those who really work tirelessly for the war.

The Russian political counteroffensive belies the heavy succession of shameful forecasts, complete with dates for imaginary Russian invasions, which have created a new and deep crack in the credibility of the United States and its British stewards that, following the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the Taliban responsible for the Twin Towers and Syrian chemical weapons, they rightly enter the circle of ridicule.

Putin's move opens up an unprecedented political, diplomatic and military scenario. Politics, because it initiates the Russian political counteroffensive, which has as its fundamental lever the security of its population and its borders. The recognition of the independent republics of the Donbass region now deprives Ukraine of a part of its territory, certainly; but it is a territory that had become independent since 2014, just like Crimea. Nothing strange, in fact: a people who feel Russian by historical, religious, political, linguistic and cultural belonging, has no desire to be incorporated into the model of the Third Reich dressed as McDonalds that governs Kiev thanks to a coup d'état.

Militarily and diplomatically it represents a double success for Moscow: it creates a buffer zone between Russia and Ukraine and further covers the border with Kiev and openly challenges Ukraine and the United States to continue the war against the independent Donbass. It leaves aside Ukrainian security as the only issue to be dealt with in the geopolitical issue and puts the question of Russian security back at the center of a possible political-diplomatic negotiation with the Western masters of Ukraine. In addition, it leaves to diplomatic negotiations the future steps to be taken, suggesting that a possible Ukrainian military response against the Donbass could lead to a counteroffensive on a local scale that would also involve the port of Mariupol and Odessa, strategic for Kiev.

## Las reacciones

La respuesta de la OTAN parece por el momento mucho más prudente que las amenazas proferidas hasta ayer. En el plano político, hay que ser muy descarado para no aceptar el reconocimiento de las dos repúblicas independientes, dado que en 1992 todo Occidente, bajo la presión de Alemania, Austria, el Vaticano y Estados Unidos, reconoció inmediatamente la secesión croata y bosnia de Yugoslavia y la armó, financió y apoyó política y militarmente contra Serbia. Incluso llegó a aborrecer ética y jurídicamente el reconocimiento de la secesión por motivos étnicos. Lo mismo hizo años después con Kosovo, que se separó de Albania. No está claro por qué en este caso no debería aplicarse el principio de secesión legítima.

Militarily, as Ukraine is not (yet) a NATO country, the Russian counteroffensive does not allow the invocation of Article 5 of the Atlantic Pact. The EU, as always, has no policy and is waiting for what the United States does. With the exception of Borrell, (a modest mixture of Francoism and narcissism that the EU has chosen to represent itself internationally, thus gaining more contempt than it already deserved) the European comments that matter are aimed at profiting from Putin's move, hoping that it will end with the acceptance of the state of affairs and the imposition of sanctions aimed only at the two independent republics. These sanctions have no real effect and only serve to save the already worn-out face of a NATO unable to unite even on the feasibility of Kiev's accession to the Alliance, let alone respond to Moscow.

The idea that, above all, France, Germany and Italy cultivate, in fact – and that gives Washington serious headaches – is that beyond the generic declarations of unity, the most important part of the EU wants to restart a global negotiation between the West and Russia. A negotiation partly different from that imagined until yesterday, because Putin's movement has already put a clear line in the negotiations: we are capable of operating in any scenario, whether peace or war; if one thinks of threatening Moscow by targeting it with missile batteries, it will be guaranteed by all means that they cannot be deployed.

What is needed, therefore, is a table that puts regional security policies back on the agenda, knowing that the refusal to consider Russia's security needs fair will only cause Moscow to proceed autonomously to defend them. This would put on the ground the

issues that Europe wants to avoid at all costs, namely the military one. Putin, moreover, has already demonstrated throughout his presidential career, from Chechnya to Donbass, Georgia and Belarus, Kazakhstan and especially Syria, that he is not willing to be surrounded by NATO, nor to be threatened militarily. That in matters of national security it does not accept threats and does not hesitate to act quickly and effectively to defend Russian national interests.

### **Sanctions: who threatens whom?**

It is said that Western sanctions that would follow an eventual "invasion" would be extremely harsh on Russia (which already suffers unfairly). There is no doubt that, in the short term, they would disrupt foreign investment and force Moscow first to retaliate and then to differentiate its import and export market. But while sanctions would be big business for the United States, they would also be very damaging to the EU: for example, blocking the pipeline from going live would mean for the EU to forego gas supply at a limited price.

The EU imports about 40% of its gas needs from Russia), so a blockade of supplies would not be so much a threat to Moscow as to Brussels, because it would make the application of Western sanctions against the Kremlin self-punishable. Moscow has already authorized the construction of a new pipeline through Mongolia that will carry Russian gas to China, which needs power to sustain its growth.

For Europe, however, the scenario would be complicated. In the event of a further reduction in available gas, the price would rise to levels unacceptable to EU countries, which would be forced to proceed randomly and not with a common policy, given the different options. It is no coincidence that Draghi has already indicated that Italy will not adhere to sanctions affecting the energy sector. Even Germany, which has Russian gas as its main source of energy supply, would be forced to resort to coal, which would blow up all environmental constraints and would not be a short-term solution to the problem.

Also at the financial level, although Moscow would have it difficult, structural problems would arise for Europe, given the exposure of several countries to Moscow (the EU's fifth trading partner), which amounts to 56,000 million euros, which obviously would no longer

be reimbursable. These debts would no longer be recoverable, and the repercussions for banks would be extremely severe. In return, since U.S. exposure is minimal, the U.S. would have no problems in the short to medium term disrupting financial flows with Russia.

In addition, there is a threat that Moscow will withdraw from the SWIFT financial transmission system (which unites 11,000 banks from 200 countries). The decision would hurt Moscow, of course, but not to the point of paralyzing it, since it was prepared since 2014 for this scenario. Similarly, the inclusion of Russian banks on the "blacklist" would also not have particularly serious effects for Moscow.

Excluding Moscow from SWIFT would be the most classic boomerang, as it would provoke a series of chain reactions from countries hostile to the US that would risk turning the international economy into a clash of blocs. The first and most important consequence would be the acceleration of the "independent financial infrastructure" project decided by Moscow and Beijing and, given the weight and emergence of economies not aligned with Washington and Brussels, now intercontinental leaders of debt and certainly not of expansionary policies, the risk of a short-term systemic implosion seems well-founded. The inescapable question is: is the West really prepared for a reset that will also severely punish its interests? To give even more strength and strategic perspective to the alliance between Beijing and Moscow? And all this for Ukraine and its Nazi government?

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