



GEOPOLITICS OF EASTERN EUROPE: IN SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE AND AGAINST RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

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In February 2022, Putin's regime started a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This is not the first time Russia ignited armed conflict against the independent, neighbouring country in the last three decades, namely the annexation of Crimea and invasion in Eastern Ukraine and establishing two pseudo-republics on the occupied territory in 2014, as well as aggression towards Moldova in 1992 and Georgia in 1992-93 and 2008).

As young greens, we aim to see an Eastern Europe (and a world) shaped by international collaboration and solidarity, not authoritarian imperialism and brutality. We recognise authoritarianism in an imperial power as the root cause of warmongering and therefore hope to see a shift to democracy, pluralism and rule of law in Russia, which would have wide-reaching direct and indirect beneficial consequences on Eastern Europe and the whole world.

Currently, the regime in Russia is violently oppressing not only its own people but also invading sovereign states, thereby violating international law and murdering thousands of innocent civilians.

Furthermore, in countries where Russia is unable to violently invade, it meddles in local affairs by spreading misinformation and propaganda, funding anti-democratic movements such as the far-right and anti-gender organisations. Russia is constantly trying to interfere in the elections in most of Europe, uses economic levers such as fossil fuels to influence political decisions, and blackmailing the outbreak of war and use of nuclear weapons. Today, we see the involvement of Lukashenka's military forces – his regime has in fact become a de facto accomplice in Putin's criminal actions on the territory of Ukraine. Russian authoritarian regime is a direct threat not only to its neighbouring countries but also to the entire democratic world.

To justify the ongoing war, Russia and its protagonists have emphasised that its security is being threatened by the Eastward expansion of NATO and that the West should have taken the mentioned into consideration - respect the interests of Russia. However, the reality has been the opposite.

The core reason for NATO's expansion to the East - on the contrary to what Russian officials claim - has not been driven by the West's attempts to press Russia or threaten its security, but by a desire of the Eastern and Central European countries to protect themselves against the Russian war machine. The latter, indifference with Russia which is based on the concept of spheres of influence, is a question of existential importance as if there is no strong military alliance guaranteeing one's independence and sovereignty there is an imminent danger of interference and intervention from the Russian Federation - something that is currently happening in Ukraine.

Indeed, we would like to see a world where there is no need for military alliances and there is global cooperation, but currently, the reality is rather different. The importance of security guarantees for Eastern European nations has never been as obvious as it is today.

On that account, we believe that the will and the agency of the Eastern European nations wanting to become part of the North Atlantic Military Alliance or the European Union should not be diminished. Eastern Europe is not the backyard of Russia. States have a right to decide which organisation and alliance they want to join. Hence Russian interference is unlawful and unacceptable - the concept of "spheres of influence" should not have a place in today's world.

Another issue that has become apparent since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war is the reluctance and/or impotence of the EU, NATO and the United Nations to act decisively in order to help Ukraine resist Russian aggression. We believe that the inability of large international bodies to prevent and stop the war will most likely lead to European countries increasing their military budgets and tensions rising further in Europe. We oppose the build-up of military capabilities, but also acknowledge the desire of countries to defend their sovereignty, maintain the security of the population and resist the imperialist

pretensions. At the same time, it increases the risks of military conflicts in the future.

Although many national actors - such as Poland and the Baltic countries - provided very substantial support to Ukraine, most of the developed democracies have once again proven their unwillingness to sacrifice more than just a bit of their comfort to stop the bloodshed started by a dictatorship. Such weak and indecisive actions will only encourage other authoritarian regimes to expand their influence, feeling impunity for having the resources Europe needs. The developed democracies have long been supporting authoritarian regimes such as Russia or China economically, thus authorizing repression against their populations and aggression towards other states. To ensure stability in Europe and the world, wealthy democracies must abandon such cooperation. We strongly believe that there cannot be peace without democracy.

It is crucial to stop importing fossil fuels from Russia as continuing to purchase means funding the war. At the same time, the solution cannot be a mere replacement of Russian energy from the source coming from another authoritarian country. The process of transition to renewable energy has to speed up and intensify. Green energy is not only a matter of climate protection but also democracy and peace.

During these extremely emotional times, we should remember that not all of the citizens of Russia and Belarus support the war against Ukraine, as well as Putin's and Lukashenka's regimes. There are still people in Russia and Belarus who are fighting against and don't support this regime. All Russians and Belarusians are at risk of facing condemnation just because of their ethnicity, even those, who neither support this war nor regimes in their countries and are actively opposing them. It is worth mentioning that Lukashenka's regime is tougher on its citizens than Putin's. But people of Belarus went on large-scale protests there and showed their disobedience to the whole world, and thanks to these protests in Belarus Lukashenka's regime is not recognized as legitimate by all democratic countries and they are not validating and communicating with this regime, while they were cooperating with Putin's regime until now.

We express solidarity with Russians and Belarusians who are vocal about their stance on this war. We call for people not to make assumptions about people just because of their ethnicity, but rather because of their deeds.

Given all this, we strongly condemn the actions of Putin's regime which is committing war crimes and murdering thousands of innocent civilians in Ukraine. We as Eastern European Young Greens stand firmly on the side of the Ukrainian people and call on all actors to provide the necessary humanitarian and technical support for Ukraine while ceasing business and other relations with the Russian Federation while Putin's authoritarian, kleptocratic and criminal regime stays in power.