



Europe: Standing Firm on Ukraine

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There comes a moment in the history of every political community when one must decide whether to stand tall or bend.

For Europe, that moment is now.

The so-called peace proposal associated with the name [Steve Witkoff](#) is presented as a “realistic” exit from the conflict in Ukraine. In reality, as described so far, it resembles more of a **disguised capitulation**: it asks Kyiv to give up occupied territories, accept permanent limits on its defense, and resign itself to being a buffer zone between Russia and the West. It is a “peace” that demands a lot from the victim and almost nothing from the aggressor.

Ukraine as a Bastion, Not a Bargaining Chip

For Europe, Ukraine is not a distant periphery: it is **the advanced front of the continent's security and freedom**.

If today the idea passes that armed force can change borders in Europe and that it is enough to resist for a few years to gain territorial rewards and the lifting of sanctions, tomorrow this logic could be applied elsewhere: in the Baltics, the Balkans, the Black Sea.



Ben Hodges - It is not an abstract matter of “values”: it is a major strategic choice.

For years, General [Ben Hodges](#) has warned that Ukraine can be the **bastion** that breaks Russian expansionism, provided it is put in a position to win, not just survive. It is not an abstract matter of “values”: it is a major strategic choice.

If the Kremlin understands that aggression pays, the **next** crisis is prepared. If it understands that aggression costs, a more stable peace is built.

The Voice of Crosetto: A “Very Tough” Plan Towards Kyiv

In this context, the words of the Italian Defense Minister [Guido Crosetto](#) are an important signal of the unease that the Witkoff plan also arouses within Europe.

Crosetto described the proposal as “**very tough towards Ukraine**”, emphasizing that it contains points that “can never be accepted” by Kyiv. At the same time, he described it as a possible **starting point**, not as an untouchable text: a base from which to start working to reach a peace “acceptable first of all for the Ukrainian people who have sacrificed for years.”

Within these words lies the fundamental issue for Europe:

- it is legitimate to want to end the war,

- but not at the cost of **offloading onto the Ukrainians** the burden of a diplomatic defeat crafted at the table, after they have paid the highest price on the field.



The Honesty of Chief of Staff Fabien Mandon

Another signal comes from France.

The French Chief of Staff, in a public speech, recalled the need for a **“spirit of defense”** commensurate with future threats. And he did so with a very harsh phrase: society must be ready, if necessary, to **“accept losing its children”** to defend what it is.

That phrase sparked controversy: many found it unbearable. But regardless of the reactions, it exposes a point on which Europe can no longer deceive itself:

- do we really want to live in a continent shielded from military blackmail?
- if the answer is yes, are we willing to accept the cost, both human and economic, or not?

Because it is not credible to ask Ukrainians to fight “to the end” while at the same time demanding, for ourselves, security **at zero cost**.



France: Chief of Defense Staff Fabien Mandon

Europe in Front of the Mirror (and, Beside It, the Other NATO Allies)

The issue primarily concerns **European countries**:

- the states on the eastern front, which live close to Russia and historically know what it means;
- the central and western countries, which have decisive economic and industrial capabilities to support Kyiv;
- the Mediterranean democracies, which see in the disruption of the European order a multiplier of instability also to the south.

Alongside Europe, of course, are the other **NATO** allies, who share an interest in an international order where borders are not redrawn with tanks. But the crossroads, today, is primarily European:

- to continue considering security as an **imported good** from outside the continent;
- or to assume that, with or without the USA, Europe must be able to withstand the confrontation with a revisionist aggressor.



With or Without Washington: European Responsibility is Non-Delegable

The United States has supported Ukraine with essential weapons, intelligence, and economic aid. But no American electoral mandate can last as long as the consequences of a European strategic mistake.

If in Washington the temptation to **turn its back** on Ukraine prevails, Europe would face a test of maturity:

- to merely record the change of course and adapt, accepting a peace largely written in Moscow;
- or to demonstrate that the continent's fate does not depend on the mood of a single overseas president, and that **the European pillar of Western security** is willing to fill the void.

In the first case, Europe's credibility would suffer a perhaps irreparable blow. In the second, that **strategic Europe** would truly be born, capable of acting together with other NATO allies but also of taking autonomous initiative when necessary.

What “Standing Firm” Means

“Standing firm” for Europe is not a slogan: it is a concrete program that can mean, for example:

- **increasing and stabilizing** defense spending, focusing on the capabilities that Ukraine and deterrence on the eastern flank really need;
- **accelerating supplies** to Kyiv, not just with one-off packages, but with multi-year commitments that give the Ukrainian army predictability and continuity;
- building a **true European anti-aircraft and anti-missile shield**, capable of protecting both Ukrainian skies and those of member states;
- supporting a future peace that does not mean confirming the aggressor's territorial gains, but bringing the conflict back within the framework of international law.

In this context, the words of Crosetto and the French Chief of Staff indicate two sides of the same truth:

- on one hand, the need to **not accept plans that humiliate Ukraine**;
- on the other, the awareness that security is not free and involves real sacrifices.



Without the USA? Why Europe must stand firm on Ukraine

Ukraine as a Test of the Idea of Europe

In the end, it all boils down to a simple question:

what does Europe want to be in the coming decades?

- A Union that hopes to get by with some diplomatic formula, even if it means turning a blind eye to a historical injustice?

- Or a political community that takes its role seriously and fully supports those on the front line against aggression?

Ukraine is the testing ground for this choice.

If it is treated as a **bargaining chip** in a rushed negotiation, then the message to the rest of the world will be clear: **the principle of the inviolability of borders only holds as long as it is not inconvenient.**

If instead it is supported until peace is truly just – for Kyiv and for the European order – then from the war will emerge a Europe perhaps more tested, but more credible, and less dependent on the whims of any American president.

For this reason, for Europe (together with the other NATO allies), the point is not just “helping Ukraine”.

It is deciding what kind of common home we want to leave as a legacy to our children – those who, as the French general brutally reminded us, might one day be called to truly defend it.

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