

A European Way to End the War in Ukraine

by
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After two world wars in which they had massacred each other, French and Germans deliberated to discontinue that bloody path: they jumped over their own shadows and joint their forces to create a novel community that would later become the European Union. No further war should ever butcher those countries, no further war should ever ravage their continent. The founding fathers of Europe knew that by laying the grounds for a steadily growing familiarity among the Peoples of Europe they would ban a European war from their people's imagination and thus from reality. Europeans existentially longed for a destiny of peace. And the founding fathers understood that unshakable peace in Europe was a necessary requirement for the only meaningful mission that was left to Europeans in the realm of international affairs: being a force of world peace, in particular by building a bridge of mutual understanding and growing cooperation between the two nuclear superpowers that arose to rule the world after those devastating wars.

We Europeans should never forget that mission.

I. A possible peace agreement brokered by the Europeans

The European Union, the Russian Federation, and the Republic of Ukraine agree on the following:

Article 1: All military hostilities between Russia and Ukraine immediately cease and all Russian military leaves the territory of Ukraine (as defined by its borders before 2014) except for the naval base of Sebastopol by August 31st, 2023.

Article 2: Crimea is by that same date established as an independent state with a Constitutional Assembly. The EU supports the United Nations in setting up an institutional framework during the transition period of this novel state until its first democratic government is elected.

Article 3: The two Donbass provinces are part of the territory of Ukraine. By August 31st, 2023 they are guaranteed by the Ukrainian government a constitutionally anchored regional autonomy of a similar extent and nature as the one enjoyed by the two provinces of Trentino Alto-Adige in Italy.

Article 4: Russia and Ukraine become on January 1st, 2024 temporary members of the European Union. They have time until December 31st, 2029 to introduce reforms so as to satisfy the current criteria for permanent membership of the European Union. Upon accomplishment, they will become regular member states of the EU.

Article 5: As soon as circumstances permit, a similar path towards EU membership is offered to the novel state of Crimea.

Accompanying policies of economic and financial cooperation between the EU and Ukraine, Russia, and Crimea will follow the signature of this agreement.

II. Crisis and identity

Unmitigated disasters and extreme threats call for a bold course of action. The war in the Ukraine calls for a bold peace initiative and this must come from us. If Europe is still able to accomplish something great, this one is the chance to show that it can.

If the agreement sketched above has a non-negligible likelihood to be accepted by both Ukraine and Russia, could we afford to look again at ourselves in the mirror if we had not brokered it? The German language has a felicitous expression to describe the

inner feeling from acting against one's call: "Sichuntreuerwerden". If we neglect the chance to end the carnage at our doors, we shall be disloyal to ourselves.

III. Francis and the wolf

At the time when St Francis was living in the city of Gubbio, a large wolf appeared in the neighbourhood, so terrible and so fierce, that he not only devoured other animals, but made a prey of men also; and since he often approached the town, all the people were in great alarm, and used to go about armed, as if going to battle.

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St Francis, feeling great compassion for the people of Gubbio, resolved to go and meet the wolf, though all advised him not to do so.

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And the saint thus addressed him: "Brother wolf, thou hast done much evil in this land, destroying and killing the creatures of God without his permission; yea, not animals only hast thou destroyed, but thou hast even dared to devour men, made after the image of God; for which thing thou art worthy of being hanged like a robber and a murderer. All men cry out against thee, the dogs pursue thee, and all the inhabitants of this city are thy enemies; but I will make peace between them and thee, O brother wolf, is so be thou no more offend them, and they shall forgive thee all thy past offences, and neither men nor dogs shall pursue thee any more."

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Said St Francis again: "Brother wolf, wilt thou pledge thy faith that I may trust to this thy promise?" and putting out his hand he received the pledge of the wolf; for the latter lifted up his paw and placed it familiarly in the hand of St Francis, giving him thereby the only pledge which was in his power.

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Now this event caused great joy in all the people, and a great devotion towards St Francis, both because of the novelty of the miracle, and because of the peace which had been concluded with the wolf; and they lifted up their voices to heaven, praising

and blessing God, who had sent them St Francis, through whose merits they had been delivered from such a savage beast.

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(Extract from: Anonymous, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*, chapter XXI: Of the mostly holy miracle of St Francis in taming the fierce wolf of Gubbio, published in Italian around 1390)