
War in Ukraine. Politi: "Peace is a long way off, perhaps people are operating under the table"

Negotiation is impossible if the parties do not want to engage in talks. Our judgment of the state of the war between Ukraine and Russia could not be simpler and at the same time more painful. Both countries are destroying their future, sending thousands of young people to their deaths and impoverishing the rest of the population. According to **Alessandro Politi**, director of the NATO Defense College Foundation, "to achieve peace, it will take an interlocking of factors," a condition that at least apparently seems a long way off. Regarding the damage to Nord Stream 2, he adds, "It requires a serious forensic investigation. Several NATO countries have the capability to carry out similar sabotage, but so do the Ukrainians." **Director, is peace still far away today?** It is very far away, people are perhaps operating under the table. I wish I could say that negotiations are close, but it is only wishful thinking. **However, discontent in Russia is beginning to be felt.** About two-thirds of those involved have reportedly said no to mobilization. It is a message to Putin to speed up negotiations. But it takes two to make negotiations happen. Zelensky's statements do not seem to point in this direction. War digs a deep rift of hatred. Atrocities have been committed on both sides, as documented by the mass graves commemorating the Katyn massacre and the Amnesty International report. **Do we have to wait until after the Midterm elections for U.S. intervention?** No, it is a relative hope. Negotiations are very difficult. Turkey has managed to obtain some limited results. But getting to peace requires interlocking elements from a multiplicity of actors. The two main actors should understand that this war is destroying them and ruining their future beyond repair. **Pope Francis has called on both sides to come to peace.** The Pope is right. Many ordinary Russian citizens, even if they do not listen to the Pope, are of the same opinion. **Some commentators say Putin's latest statements should be regarded as a swan song. [incorrect expression, swan song exists before the discovery of the black swan].** It is dangerous to confuse what we wish for with reality. Putin is certainly in political trouble, but he has not reached his demise. **Putin's reference to the use of nuclear weapons is of great concern.** He did not make an open threat. I understand the focus on some phrasings but they are part of a larger discourse that does not go so far as to say he will use nuclear weapons to defend territories. No one should take Putin's statements lightly, but neither should they exaggerate their scope. Putin certainly wants to take these territories. However, to say that there can be no negotiation because he conducted referendums indicates only a possible political choice, which is not compulsory, however. The Ukrainians have the right to liberate their territories to the last inch, but the real issue is when: it is not a given that they can retake them all right away. **NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stated that "There will be serious consequences if Putin uses nuclear weapons."** His response is very wise because it calls on Putin to be cautious. **Chechen leader Ramzan Kadirov urged consideration of the use of tactical low-yield nuclear weapons, but the Kremlin's response was icy.** What matters are Putin's silences and Lavrov's (Russian Foreign Minister, ed.) words. Kadirov is the leader of a small autonomous republic; he can say what he wants, but he does not have the same responsibility for the nuclear arsenal that Putin does. The government in Moscow is much more cautious. **Is it true that Ukraine continues to make progress in the field?** It is very difficult to assess. As of yesterday, there are reports that there have been major breakthroughs in the south. It is said that Russian troops are trapped west of the Dniepr and cannot retreat because of lack of supplies. But all information is difficult to verify because propaganda is being spread by both Russians and Ukrainians.

Few understand that truth is the best propaganda.

Are we in the midst of the Cold War, where the nuclear threat is used to terrorize the

opponent? The Cold War was more soft-spoken. Now there is more of a race to make a statement, and it is a game that can get out of hand. **Regarding the sabotage of Nord Stream 2, is it possible that the United States did it?** No. They would have the capabilities, as would many other countries, including Italy, but it's one of those situations where no one prefers to act personally. **If it was the Russians, however, that would be even more serious; the area is largely controlled by NATO forces.** It is unlikely that it was the Russians. It would have made more sense for them to shut off the gas taps. We don't know much about the device. A serious forensic investigation is needed. Several NATO countries have the capability to do similar sabotage, but so do the Ukrainians. It could also have been private operators, inspired by or with actual help from some state. **Could speculation on gas prices be among the motivations?** That is highly unlikely. This is a way to burn bridges and reduce the possibility of negotiations. It pushes peace further away.

Maria Elisabetta Gramolini