

The EU as a sui generis imperialist project¹

Burak Saygan

This essay aims to provide a broad overview of the European Union as a somewhat original imperialist project. Its original nature lies in its framework going beyond nation-states – it is commonly called a “supranational” entity. Whereas it is not possible to tackle any of the aspects in-depth, I will start with the basic context that made the EU project viable – and necessary – as the tool for the survival of various European empires as imperialist powers, capable of contending with the US and face the Soviet threat. Then, I will turn to the EU’s colonial past and present to take an objection to the common narrative about the EU as a peaceful project of development and democracy. After dealing with the EU on an international scale, the following subsection will argue that *even within Europe*, the EU as an exceptional project of peaceful coexistence is nothing but an oft-repeated myth. Finally, I will conclude with an overview of the EU’s most recent crises and its current imperialist engagements.

EU: imperialist survival as a proto-state

The EU is best understood as a proto-state, derailed in its very making—possi-

¹ This article first appeared in a book published in Brazil in Portuguese: Osvaldo Coggiola (ed.), *A Era do Imperialismo*, Sao Paulo: LF Editorial, 2004, pp. 633-649. We republish it here with the editor’s permission.

bly only temporarily, but more likely for good. The EU's² proto-state nature shows itself from the get-go, with an initial set-up that was meant to end up in a state-like formation.

The orientation of Jean Monnet, one of the main architects of the predecessors of the EU, leaves scant doubt as to this original intention. Not for nothing, following his presidency in the European Coal and Steel Community (ESCS), and just in the wake of the two Treaties of Rome in 1957, respectively forming the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), Monnet spearheaded the Action Committee for the United States of Europe.³ Monnet's intention seems to use partial economic integration and a customs union to lay the groundwork for a complete political union, not unlike the customs union (known as Zollverein) before the German unification in the 19th century, initially advocated by Friedrich List. Indeed, the very modeling of the ESCS seems to be conceived as a transitional program for political union. The following remark by George W. Ball, a US official who took a role in the establishment of the ESCS, attests to this vision:

“All of us working with Monnet well understood how irrational it was to carve a limited economic sector out of the jurisdiction of national governments and subject that sector to the sovereign control of supranational institutions. Yet, with his usual perspicacity, Monnet recognized that the very irrationality of this scheme might provide the pressure to achieve exactly what he wanted—the triggering of a chain reaction. The awkwardness and complexity resulting from the singling out of coal and steel would drive member governments to accept the idea of pooling other production as well.”⁴

Yet, rendering the federalist vision of its founders feasible—few regions in the 20th century lacked visionaries who elaborated on forging regional polities, yet one would be hard-pressed to find today any trace of these projects on the world map—was the structural ground laid by the relative decline of European imperialism, starting in the interwar period and making a qualitative leap after World War II.

The years between the two worldwide conflagrations unfolded as a transitional period where the leadership of world imperialism slowly but steadily inched away

2 I will be using the EU as a shorthand for the EU as it has existed since 1993, as well as its predecessors ESCS, EEC, the “Common Market”, and EC to avoid cumbersome digressions about the changing names throughout the text.

3 Gilles Grin, “Jean Monnet, the Action Committee for a United States of Europe, and the Origins of the Treaties of Rome,” *Relations internationales* 136, no. 4 (2008): 21–32.

4 Alex Callinicos, “The Internationalist Case against the European Union,” *International Socialism* (blog), May 10, 2015, <https://isj.org.uk/the-internationalist-case-against-the-european-union/>.

from its former European heartlands towards North America. The massive debts incurred by the French and British empires to their wartime ally, the US, was a symbolic but not yet decisive sign of the changing geography of world imperialism.

The same period also witnessed the rise of another challenge to the imperialist world order with its center in Europe. This time, the challenge put into peril not only the internal configuration of imperialism, but its very existence. The October Revolution in the former Russian Empire not only gave a jolt to the working class movement all across Europe and rendered the socialist revolution in imperial metropolises a concrete possibility, but also formed a unique state structure, the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, capable of unifying would-be workers state across Europe (and beyond) under a federal structure.⁵ The revolutionary wave that came on the heels of the October Revolution would come to a halt in Europe in 1923 and in the colonial world in 1927, and the newly victorious bureaucracy in the Soviet Union would recalibrate the Soviet Union away from the nation-less world socialist state in germ and towards a state among states. However, Europe could not rewind the clock back to pre-WWI. The constant threat against European imperialism by both the potent workers' movement in Europe – often led by Soviet-aligned communist parties – and the rising Soviet power, whose economic, military and scientific development – thanks to the acquisitions of the Soviet Revolution – put its European counterparts into shame, would shape the entire 20th century of Europe.

The Second World War would mark a watershed event in the process of European imperial decline. By the end of the war, continental Europe was ravaged by the impact of the most extensive destruction in its history. On the contrary, the US, whose homeland saw no actual fighting, was leaving the war unscathed for all intents and purposes, ready to flex its muscles and assume the role of uncontested hegemon of the capitalist world. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had to endure an unprecedented loss of human lives and industry as the main theatre of the world war. Yet, as the big victors of the war, the USSR cast a long shadow over Europe, with good chunks of Eastern and central Europe as well as the Balkans under its sphere of influence owing to the Red Army's exploits and asserting itself as the world's foremost force of conventional warfare.

In sum, yesteryear's world empires faced the second half of the 20th century as secondary imperial powers whose very survival against the mighty workers states

⁵ For more on this point, see Sungur Savran, "Lenin as alternative", *Revolutionary Marxism*, 2024: <http://www.devrimcimarksizm.net/tr/sungur-savran-lenin-alternative>; For a shorter piece on the same theme, this one in Portuguese, see Sungur Savran, "O Legado do Lenin Negado", in *O Legado do Lenin. Cem Anos da Morte de Vladimir I. Lenin (1924-2024)*, Osvaldo Coggiola (org.), São Paulo: Livreria de Física, 2024.

in the East seemed to depend on the protection of the US. Under these conditions, Europe's imperialist survival depended on it being able to pool up sources to maintain a leeway between two bigger players on the world scene. It was this quest for imperialist survival, (That is to say, surviving as an imperial force with a fighting chance in world politics, not defending its existence as individual states) that explains the drive towards European unification. After establishing this, one could have no doubt that the internal peace that the EU established in Europe in the post-WWII period is the direct result of the EU's *raison d'être* as an organization of competition against other imperialists and imperialism's challengers such as the Soviet Union.

Pax Europaea: European Union as a colonial project

Yet, any analysis of the EU's evolution—as an imperialist project, in our case—would be incomplete without attention to its position as a colonial empire. The European Union's role as a colonial power was a distinctive feature and one of the most transparent aspects of its nature as an empire among empires. This aspect of European imperialism shows itself both *de jure* and *de facto*.

On the first level, the newly emerging union assumed its colonial role by ensuring its numerous founding documents and treaties were colonialism-compatible. Not coincidentally, the EU predecessor EEC's founding document, the Treaty of Rome, dedicated the whole part four of the treaty, consisting of six articles, to “overseas countries and territories.”⁶ These “countries and territories”, which is but a euphemism for the EEC's colonial empire, are also listed on the treaty's Annex IV to leave no doubt as to the demarcation of the new colonial empire in town. The extensive list includes the majority of sub-Saharan Africa just before the peak of decolonization in Africa in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, and spans from the French colonies in West Africa to Belgian Congo, from Italian Somalia to the Dutch New Guinea (not to be mistaken with Papua New Guinea, as the Dutch colony was on the western side of the same island, and then was later to be incorporated into Indonesia).

Not only saving the remnants of erstwhile imperial empires, but the European Union has also clearly moved to ***preserve power relations of the colonial epoch in a world in the throes of decolonization***. If we were to paraphrase the oft-repeated words of Tomasi, the EU's work during this time of decolonial transition was a bid to change everything so that all remained the same. Indeed, as a relatively recent book on the EU and Africa illustrates based on archival research, the approach to Africa was central for the EEC, in its authors' words, as “a European subject which,

⁶ Traité instituant la Communauté Economique Européenne, 1957: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:11957E/TXT>.

worried about its future viability on the economic and geopolitical levels, turns towards the African object to offer itself a new lease of life.”⁷

The policy of preserving a neo-colonial yoke on formerly colonized countries, and particularly the sub-saharan African ones, has been a persistent underlying theme in the EU’s history. Particularly with a number of African countries (but not all of them, as the continent was rocked by often Marxist anti-colonial revolutionary movements, expectedly antagonistic towards the former European colonizers), a series of conventions would constitute the legal infrastructure of neo-colonial domination. The start of these conventions was the Yaoundé Convention, signed between 19 African countries and the EEC in Cameroon’s capital in 1963 – that is to say, at the peak of African decolonization. The Lomé Convention in 1975 extended the same framework to 71 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries (known as the ACP countries) and then further expanded to 79 countries, first with the Cotonou Agreement in 2000 and the Samoa Agreement in late 2023. Whereas particularly the latest iterations of these agreements were sugarcoated with the habitual shiny language of sustainability, democracy and such, the gist of these agreements is the maintenance of an unequal relationship between European imperialists and former colonies. The rebranding of the colonial situation with a fancy lingo could already be seen as early as the above-mentioned Treaty of Rome, where the ACP countries in question were still officially colonies and where the rapport between the colonial overlord and the colonized countries was coded as the “special relationship” in the obnoxiously euphemistic language of imperialists.

Let us conclude this part on the European Union as a colonial empire with two concrete examples. The first concerns the EU’s function as an apparatus of colonial warfare. A most obvious example is the Malvinas (Falklands) war, which stands out as an episode of colonial war that the EU faced after its foundation period as an entity with well-defined contours. In 1982, Argentina occupied the Malvinas Islands, about 350 kilometers off the Argentinian coast and 12,350 kilometres from the UK – which is around as long as the world’s diameter. Margaret Thatcher’s government in the UK, in a political impasse in domestic politics after the previous decade’s onslaught against the working-class, decided to make a stance to defend its colonial possessions half a globe away by dispatching a fleet. Due to the clearly colonial nature of the conflict, Argentina could garner the backing of the “third world” countries, particularly those gathered around the Non-Aligned Movement, whereas

⁷ For the quotations, see Peo Jonsson and Stefan Hansen, “L’Union européenne fut aussi un projet colonial,” *CONTRETEMPS* (blog), June 26, 2024, <https://www.contretemps.eu/union-europeenne-projet-colonial-eurafrique/>; Also see, Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), particularly pp. 147-238.

the UK benefited from the backing of the US under Ronald Reagan's administration and, expectedly, the EEC. The theatre of war was too distant, and the military power between the belligerent sides too lopsidedly in favor of British imperialism, hence the EEC did not need to provide any military backing, but by mobilizing its heaviest sanction arsenal against Argentina, the organization clearly showed where its loyalties lay when push came to shove, notwithstanding all the veneer of equal partnerships.⁸

The second concerns the European Union and North Africa and the way European imperialism is willing to engage with what is now known as the Global South. In 1987, Morocco, as a significantly pro-Western country, applied for membership in the EEC. The application was bluntly rejected, with the explanation that Morocco was not part of Europe. This simple reasoning might make some sense at first glance. Yet, let us recall that Morocco's eastern neighbor, Algeria, had been included in the framework of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, not as one of the overseas countries and territories cited above, but as a special case pointed out by its name throughout the text. Of course, this did not mean EEC membership for Algeria, but rather a *sui generis* status to include this crown jewel of the French colonial empire – whose legal status was also different than other colonies – in the EEC. In addition to Algeria's brief stint in the EEC, two coastal cities in Morocco, under the colonial domination of the Spanish State, Melilla and Ceuta, are currently part of the European Union. Hence, taking the EEC's explanation at its face value and sticking to a definition of Europe whose southern borders extend from Gibraltar across the northern shores of the Mediterranean would create an awkward situation, given that a quick look into the map of North Africa would leave no doubt that, neither Melilla and Ceuta nor Algeria are any more European than Morocco. How to square this circle? The explanation is plain and simple: the Third World could belong to Europe, but only as colonial possessions and not as equal partners *This way, we also establish as the second level of analysis that the European Union's purportedly peaceful existence is only made possible through economic and direct violence against the Third World.*

The point on Melilla and Ceuta should also serve as a reminder that not only European Union's past is that of colonial domination, but it still is very much a colonial entity in the present. Including but not limited to its extant colonies. The colonial possessions belonging to EU nations extend all over the globe, where France has the dubitable honor of holding the biggest chunk from New Caledonia in Oceania, Guyane, Guadeloupe, and Martinique in Latin America and the Caribbean and Re-

⁸ About the sanctions, see Lisa L. Martin, "Institutions and Cooperation: Sanctions during the Falkland Islands Conflict," *International Security* 16, no. 4 (1992): 143–78, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539190>.

union in the Pacific. All in all, *the difference with Europe's colonial past* – when smaller European nations dominated colonial populations many times their own size – *is a quantitative one, in the sense that the* European colonial empire controls manageable, smaller-sized colonies, *but not a qualitative one* where the EU ceased to be a colonial entity. The latter, will only come true when the EU ceases to exist, *tout court*.

Is the EU an internationalist panacea against nationalism?

The troubling question, perhaps, is whether the European Union constitutes an internationalist alternative to nationalism. This seems to be the underlying assumption for many who, even if willing to take a stance against punctual policies of the EU, find it distasteful to question the merits of its existence, lest they be taken for backwater provincialists, from Negri to Žižek.⁹

Our initial argument against the EU was the one formulated above: that is to say, the dialectical connection between European internal peace and the imperialist competition abroad. Yet, one should take a step further and challenge the assumption about the inherent contradiction between the European Union as a form and jingoist nationalism as the content. In other words, we want to point out the spurious nature of an implied connection between pro-EU politics and internationalism. In that regard, several tendencies in Europe in the last decade or so have incontrovertibly illustrated that the European Union could very well accommodate and even serve as the bedrock for various forms of European nationalism and fascism.

The immigration crisis in the last decade and a half, triggered first and foremost by the reactionary civil war in Syria, provided an initial path in the reconciliation of mainstream European Union politics with European fascism. The rise of anti-immigration politics in various EU countries, spearheaded as expected by fascist or proto-fascist forces, led to numerous European governments trying to co-opt these tendencies by selectively adopting parts of the traditional proto-fascist playbook. Crucially, the most prominent expression of European mainstream politics caving in the face of rising anti-immigration rights was the repressive immigration policies, commonly (but not officially) called “Fortress Europe”, in reference to the homonymous Nazi policy of European border defense during the World War II. Beyond the details and gruesome impact of these policies – which turned the Mediterranean into one big mass grave – what matters here is that under the impact of rising fascism and the Third Great Depression, the EU proved itself highly compatible

⁹ Antonio Negri, “From the End of National Lefts to Subversive Movements for Europe,” *Radical Philosophy*, no. 181 (2013): 26–32; “Slavoj Žižek on Brexit, the Crisis of the Left, and the Future of Europe,” openDemocracy, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/slavoj-i-ek-on-brexit-crisis-of-left-and-future-of-eur/>.

with border policies that would give Donald Trump a run for his money. Moreover, by outsourcing the dirty work of keeping migrants out of Europe's border to countries such as Turkey, Tunisia, and Libya, the EU is turning the Mediterranean zone into one big concentration camp. To be clear, these barbaric policies, which even some magnanimous liberals would find distasteful, *are not a sign of the EU failing to live up to its ideals*. Rather, it is the flipside, *or the dialectical counterpart of Schengen policies, which ensures red-tape-free travel within Europe at the cost of tens of thousands of black and brown people lying dead around the border of the "Fortress Europe."*

It is important to underline that these policies were implemented by the so-called moderate governments in the main EU nations, where the fascist and proto-fascist groups held no decision-making post and only exerted what is known in sociology as a radical-flank effect. Rather than just one-off tactical compromises, it should also be recalled that overcoming the EU's crisis by borrowing from the fascists's playbook is advocated by some prominent pro-EU public intellectuals as a new strategical orientation.¹⁰

The second tendency that disproves the myth of the inherently internationalist EU is the fact that proto-fascists of Europe are increasingly cozying up with the EU. Whereas one should talk about a tendency, years in the making, and not a clear-cut turnabout, arguably 2017 stands as a crucial juncture in European fascism's newly-found appreciation for the EU. It was in that year that Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French proto-fascist party then known as FN (National Front), faced off Emmanuel Macron in the second round of presidential elections, only to get an underwhelming score following a debate debacle. Mind you, this electoral campaign was marked by a starkly anti-EU stance by the FN, including dropping the Euro as France's currency. But following the electoral defeat, possibly as a result of long-simmering internal problems, the party parted ways with Florian Philippot, then Le Pen's right hand and the main standard-bearer of the anti-EU orientation of the FN. The following years saw the tacit embrace of the EU institutions by the FN, and shelving of any debates about a potential Frexit. Giorgia Meloni and her FdI (Brotherhood of Italy) soon followed suit, carving themselves a sizeable space within the EU institutions such as the European Parliament and coveting an influential role within the EU framework. Even though Meloni's initial ambition to serve as a kingmaker was rebuffed by the better-than-expected showing of the European People's Party, that is to say, traditional right-wing parties in the EU, a precedent is already set. European fascism, currently suffering from a division of its forces with

¹⁰ Iyan Krastev, *After Europe*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020, 107–13.

three different groups in the European Parliament, is the biggest contender to obtain the plurality of the seats there in the next elections. Their willingness to play ball, so to speak, by negotiating with the likes of Ursula von der Leyen, is graciously reciprocated by their counterparts. This puts the prospect of an EU led by the disciples of Mussolini within reaching distance. So much for the EU, that mighty beacon of liberal democracy!

Current crises and the changing odds of European imperialism

For the better part of its first three decades of existence under a new name, the European Union emerged as a new model coveted by many, seemingly on track for unbridled success. The formation of the new Union in 1993, with the Maastricht Treaty, was to serve as the counter-example of the collapse of the Soviet Union – a couple of years after the latter came undone at the seams with multiple nation-states emerging from its ashes, Europe was creating a new unity out of its nation-states. In other words, the EU was to be the incarnation of the brave new world promised by the end of history following the implosion of the Soviet Union and the other bureaucratically degenerated worker's states. The EU as a spuriously progressive model without the baggage of communism and the inconveniences of anti-imperialism, was further cemented by the victory of European Socialists in 1994, in what was the first European elections.

The halo of success and the promise of wealth and democracy were soon mobilized to reshape European geopolitics. After the admission of countries like Austria, Sweden, and Finland in the 1995 enlargement, the EU's newly-found prestige was weaponized to absorb the successors of Eastern European worker's states into European imperialism's orbit. The following three enlargements (2004, 2007, and 2013) focused almost exclusively on bringing former worker's states to the fold – with the exception of Malta and Cyprus in 2007. Thus, the political credit of the EU had served, for the most part, to decommunize vast swathes of Europe. As part of this drive to reshuffle European geopolitics, even the age-old Balkans were re-baptized with the cumbersome name of Southeastern Europe to leave no doubt as to their gravitation point.

The lot of the EU as an imperialist power ascendant was to take a drastic, if initially hard-to-perceive downturn under the conditions of the Third Great Depression after 2008/9 with the increasing tendencies towards war, fascism, and popular rebellions it entailed. The impact was particularly pronounced in the southern European countries commonly abbreviated as PIGS (Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain) or PIIGS, with the addition of Ireland. The fragility of these economics made the EU a weak link in the chain of imperialism.

No doubt, the nadir of the European Union's crisis and the moment of biggest uncertainty around its viability was the so-called Brexit referendum in 2016. The leave vote in this referendum was overwhelmingly supported by working-class constituencies in the country and after a campaign spearheaded by the British proto-fascist party, then named the UKIP in coalition with a faction of the Conservative Party – counting, among others, the future prime minister Boris Johnson. This was, on a smaller scale, the EU – whose official foundation came on the heels of the buoyant mode of European imperialism due to the Soviet Union's implosion – facing its own 1989 moment. Indeed, the Brexit vote triggered an array of “-exit” movements all across Europe – the most considerable one was the “Grexit”, in a Greece in the throes of a profound economic crisis – mostly led by fascist or right-wing organizations. If the EU's internal bleeding came to a stop – or perhaps more precisely, a hiatus – it was due to the changing orientation of European fascism (see above) and not the EU's resilience.

Yet, even if the EU has survived the immediate ripple effect of the Brexit crisis to live another day, it now finds itself mired in multiple military conflicts to preserve its unofficial sphere of influence – and, as it becomes increasingly clear, fighting losing battles on most of these fronts. The following is a cursory and inevitably schematical glance into EU imperialism's current theaters of conflict, in an increasing order of importance.

The first could be encapsulated as the *direct anti-colonial tendencies in the remaining European colonies overseas*, in addition to the increasingly vocal aspirations for self-determination of regions and minorities in the European continent. Particularly the overseas French colonies experienced various recent waves of rebellion, particularly French Guyana in 2017, Martinique and Guadeloupe in 2021-2022, and New Caledonia in 2024. The contents of the demands differ a great deal between these cases – in Guyana further investment to the country's infrastructure was the bone of contention, whereas in New Caledonia the rights of non-native settlers stood at the centre – and so does the level of militancy – in New Caledonia, the protests reached the level of a low-scale civil war, with militia formations in bud making their re-entry into the scene. But despite differences, the main point is that, notwithstanding several generations under the new refined forms of French colonialism, these “overseas territories” show impressive anticolonial vibrancy. The separatist tendencies in the European mainland, most developed in Catalonia but also present in Corsica and the Flemish region of Belgium, might in the future consolidate this internal centrifugal tendency in the EU – a potential that the latter clearly realizes, as they weaponize the loss of EU membership against Catalonia's independence aspirations.

On a second level, the EU and its constituents face an *anti-imperialist push* in some of the former colonies they hold under a neo-colonial yoke. The prime example in this regard is West Africa. The region has long been dominated by French imperialism, including through the CFA currency widely used in the region as a remnant from the colonial era. The anti-imperialist tendencies that emerged in the post-colonial period, not least the valiant leader of Haute Volta-turned-Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, were quelled by European imperialism, including through – overt or covert – military means. The tides have turned in the regions by 2020, with military takeovers in Mali, Guinée, Burkina Faso, and Niger with clear anti-French orientations (Chad, commonly uttered in the same breath as these countries is an outlier where another coup d’Etat did not bring about a clear anti-French orientation). The tendency was further strengthened in Senegal, where Macky Sall – a French lackey par excellence – lost the elections to an opposition that seems quite distanced towards French imperialism, if not openly antagonistic as the others cited above. Particularly after the abject failure of the projects for military interventions by France and Nigeria against Niger in 2023, this anti-French alliance seems to have consolidated itself in the region. Whereas Guinée stands somewhat apart, the other three countries are establishing a solid alliance, also supported by Russia, ever so impatient to carve itself some space. The creation of a loose confederation between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger was the latest sign of a deepening alliance. I consider the process in the first half of 2020s something akin to Latin America’s transformation from the US imperialism’s backyard into a bastion of anti-imperialism. What is afoot is *an incipient process of West Africa’s Latin Americanisation* – that is to say, France’s imperial backyard turning into its diametrical opposite. The process is only at its beginning with a less-than-certain outcome and the possibility of an abortive process. But if it could continue on its path, this bodes particularly ill for the interests of European imperialism in the region.

Whereas it deserves a standalone article of its own, I will not go into details about the ongoing genocide in Palestine and Europe’s involvement in it. But what is particularly important is that through its high profile – including state visits to Israel by almost all major European heads of state, in addition to Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission – and blatant support, the EU clearly sided with Israel in its genocidal warfare. The blank cheque offered to Israel by countries such as Germany and France – two countries that stand at the center of the EU as a political project – and the brutal repression of any form of pro-Palestinian mobilization in their cities had a decisive contribution in the disenchantment of many with the EU project. Moreover, this abject showing by the most important countries in the European Union also contributes to the deepening of internal fissures within the organization. Whereas Germany leads the charge in the

EU with an all-encompassing defense of Israel, from military contributions to the Israeli army to its legal defense at the International Court of Justice, other strands of relatively peripheral EU countries express an increasingly vocal disapproval. The biggest showing in that regard was the recent recognition of a Palestinian state by Spain, Ireland, Norway and Slovenia. Belgium and Malta have also been reported to be close to making a similar decision. Whereas these divergent positions have not turned into an open internal rift within the European Union, they certainly render a joint EU international policy less and less viable.

Last but not least, the main frontline whose outcomes might trigger profound questions about the EU is found in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine should be seen as the last step in the continuous expansion undertaken jointly by the EU and NATO towards the innermost parts of the former Soviet space. Whereas the direct stakes were Ukraine's NATO membership first and foremost, it is no coincidence that the EU also responded to the war with a *fuite en avant* and started the negotiations for Ukraine's admission into the EU. Yet the war also underscored the fault lines within the EU on several levels. The first concerns the EU's dependency on the US as a military deterrent, not least due to the series of shortcomings of the former as a proto-state. Even though the EU was able to undertake a more or less successful institution-building effort in certain fields – from the European Central Bank to the European Parliament – the military aspect of it always stood as an exception. The elusive project of a European army appears and reappears on the horizon every now and then, but NATO itself has been successful in pushing back. As a secondary military power, the EU and its constituents often tail-end the US – in some occasions less enthusiastically than others. The fact that the EU countries, particularly those who are geographically closer to Russia, bore the burden of the war's economic repercussions – from rising energy prices to the destabilizing impact of Ukrainian grains for the neighboring European countries - while the US called the shots came with some grievances. Also, and as crucially, the EU countries show varying degrees of commitment to a protracted war with Russia and the costs it entails. The most vocal in its opposition is Viktor Orbán's Hungary, which served as an obstacle to numerous European initiatives and refused to toe the European line vis-à-vis Russia. Even though Hungary remains in the minority, the prospect of a negotiated peace in Ukraine- becoming ever more likely by every passing day – is likely to deepen the internal fissures and deal a severe blow to European prestige.

Potential setbacks in any number of these fronts are likely to deal a blow to the already fragile stability of the EU and have an accelerating effect on centrifugal tendencies. As is, lending a new lease of life to the whole EU project and keeping it afloat following the crisis triggered by Brexit in 2016 was the change of hearts in European proto-fascism and fascism – and, by implication, a faction with the Euro-

pean bourgeoisie – with the conviction that the European Union and Europe provide and suitable platform in their bid against the globalist wing of the European bourgeoisie. In other words, a qualitative step in the long drift of supplanting Europe as the subject of a national project – in lieu of singular European states – kept the Eureka forces at bay for the time being. However, it would not be unlikely that the setbacks in the main initiatives of European imperialism, and most particularly the war in Ukraine, have a reshuffling effect and give the forces more willing to challenge the European framework a shot in the arm. One way or another, the much-vaulted epitome of liberal democracy, the European Union, as it currently stands, emerges as an imperialist power never shying away from neo-colonial reflexes, whose very survival depends on a historical compromise with fascism ascendant. Those who pro bono sang the praises of this entity from the left are up for a much-belated reckoning.

Friends of Palestine Against Imperialism and Zionism



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