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'If we don't support Ukraine, Ukraine will fall in a matter of days,' says Josep Borrell



By [Méabh Mc Mahon](#) & [Jorge Liboreiro](#) • Updated: 05/05/2023

Speaking in Florence, Josep Borrell reflected on the transformational changes that have swept the EU since the Kremlin launched the invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine will succumb to the invading Russian forces "in a matter of days" without military support from Western countries, Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said on Friday, insisting that the present situation inside the war-torn country is not conducive for launching formal peace talks.

"Unhappily, this is not the moment for diplomatic conversations about peace. It's the moment of supporting militarily the war," Borrell told Euronews' Méabh McMahon at the State of the Union event hosted by the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence.

"If you want peace, push Russia to withdraw. Push Russia to stop the war. Don't tell me to stop supporting Ukraine, because if I stop supporting Ukraine, certainly the war will finish soon," he went on.

"We cannot just finish because (if we do) Ukraine is unable to defend itself and it has to surrender. And the Russian troops will be in the Polish border and Ukraine will become a second Belarus. Do you want this kind of ending the war? No."

The foreign policy chief described the 10-point proposal promoted by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as "the only thing that could be called a peace plan" and dismissed China's 12-point document as "wishful thinking."

"Even if they are on the side of Russia, I think China has a role to play. China is a permanent member of the (UN) Security Council. China is the one who has the biggest influence in Russia," Borrell added.

"Let's face the reality. Like it or not, the reality is Putin continues saying: 'I have military objectives and as far as I don't get these military objectives, I will continue fighting.' So the peace plans are good but you need someone that wants to talk about peace."

During the conversation, Borrell reflected on [the transformational changes](#) that have swept the European Union since the Kremlin decided to launch the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, upending international law, food supply chains and energy prices.

Although technically the bloc's top diplomat, Borrell admitted he nowadays feels more like a "defence minister" because of the growing focus on supplying ammunition to Ukraine: the EU is rushing to fulfill its promise to deliver one million artillery shells over the next 12 months, which Kyiv urgently requires to mount its anticipated counteroffensive.

"I spend quite an important part of my time talking about arms and ammunition. I never thought that we were going to need to spend so much time thinking about how many shots of artillery we can provide," Borrell said.

This week the European Commission proposed [a €500-million plan](#) to ramp up industrial production of ammunition, which is currently hampered by a series of entrenched bottlenecks and shortfalls. The plan, dubbed ASAP, includes an option that would allow member states to put additional money on the table by redirecting a share of their allocated cohesion and COVID-19 recovery funds.

"We didn't want this war. We were not looking for it. But the war is a reality and you have to face it. And everybody wants peace. Yes, but for the time being, unhappily, Putin is continuing the war and Ukraine has to defend (itself)," Borrell said when asked about the possible use of recovery funds to boost Europe's arms industry.

"If we don't support Ukraine, Ukraine will fall in a matter of days. So, yes, I would prefer to spend this money increasing the well-being of the people, hospitals, schools, cities, etc. But we don't have a choice."

The industrial plan is the latest addition to an ever-expanding list of consequential policy decisions the bloc has taken in the past 15 months, many of which only came to fruition after protracted, tortuous and [sometimes divisive negotiations](#) between the 27 member states.

Still, Borrell seems pleased with the final result and believes that, despite internal bickering, the EU remains united in its support for Ukraine and its opposition to Russia's aggression.

"The war has united us. There is nothing that can unite you more than an enemy, a threat, and the feeling of facing a threat. A real existential threat has united us more than any speech, any theoretical approach about the need for integration," Borrell said.

"One of the mistakes of Putin was to think that the Europeans would not be united because of the energy dependency, for example, and that the public opinion in Europe would get tired of supporting Ukrainians and that the US and Europe would quarrel about who does what and which shares the burden. This is not the case."

Borrell then defended the effectiveness of the 10 rounds of sanctions the bloc has imposed on Russia and which critics claim have failed to dent the Kremlin's war machine.

"Certainly they work, but they are not instantaneous. It's like a diet: if you go on a diet, you're not going to lose 30 kilos in one week," the diplomat quipped.

Speaking more broadly about the shifting world order, Borrell expressed his personal desire for a better understanding between "the West and the rest," a reference to countries that are outside the traditional group of liberal democracies and [often refuse to embrace](#) their political viewpoints.

"The global challenges (are) not only climate. It's the debt and is development," he said.

"We still have a too much Eurocentric approach to the rest of the world."

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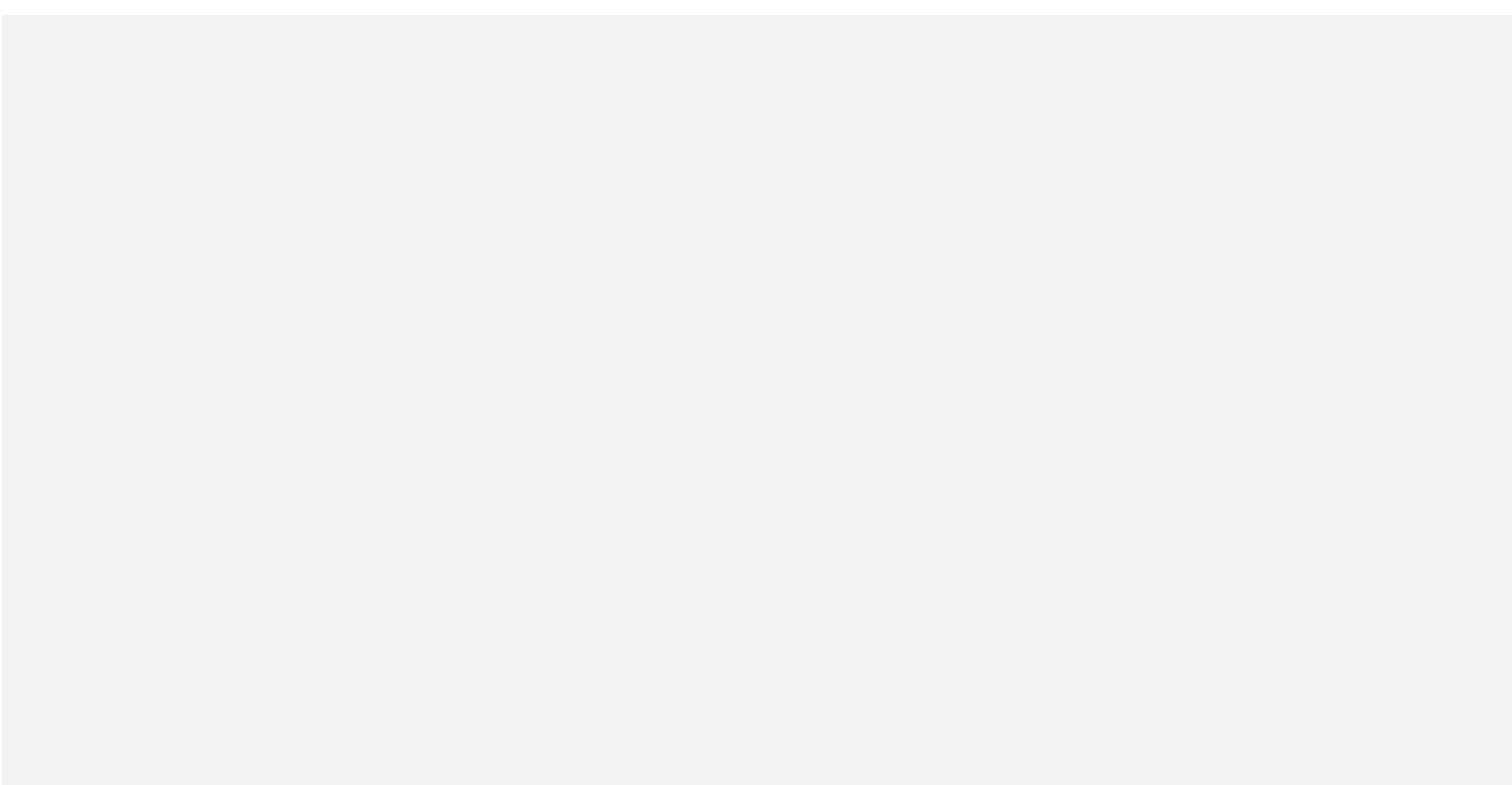
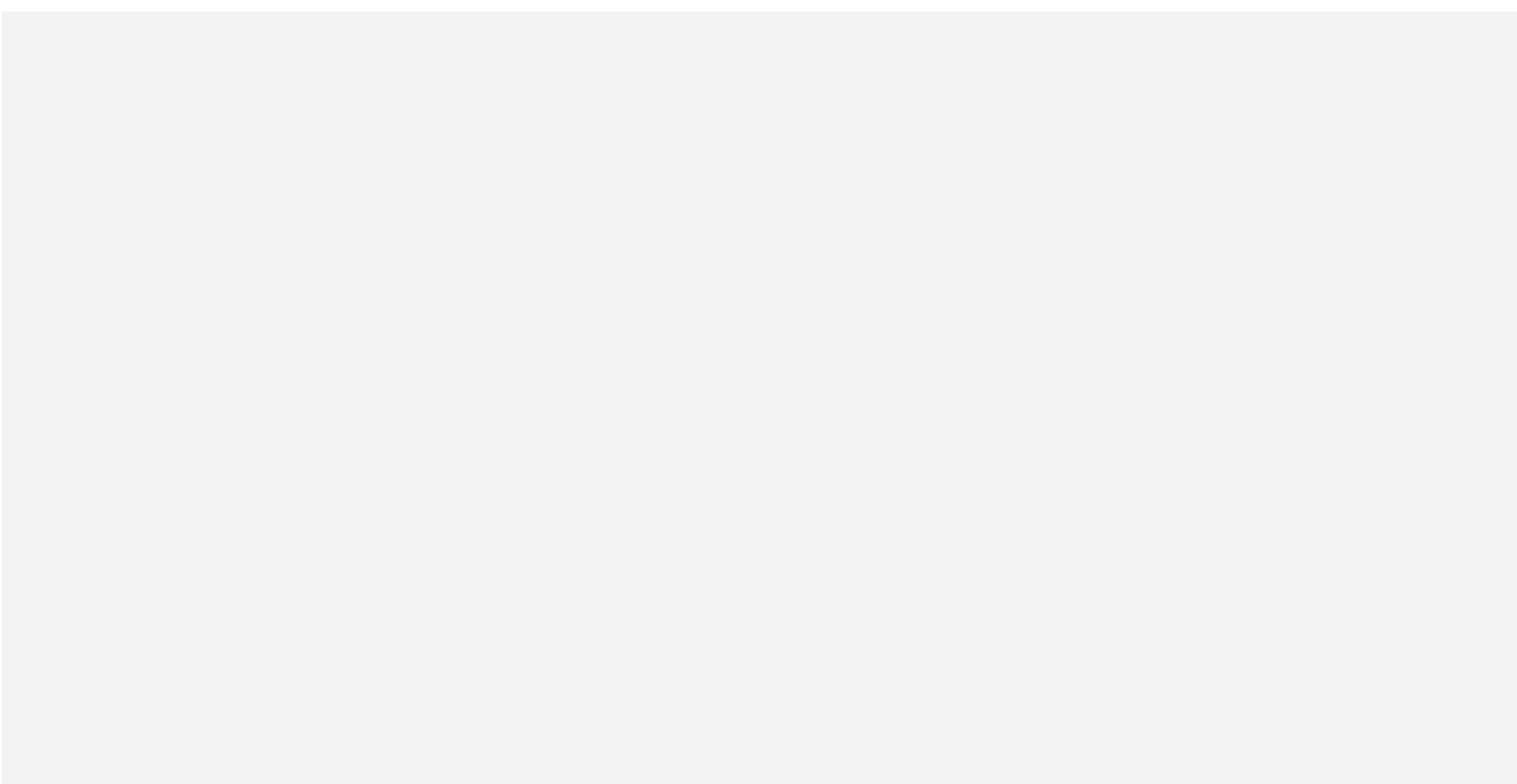
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