

THE US TOP MILITARY AUTHORITY ASSUMES A TIE IN UKRAINE

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The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Armed Forces, General Mark Milley, the highest military authority of his country and of NATO, is not an improvised man.

Beyond his professional merits, in mid-2020 he accompanied then-President Donald Trump, dressed in combat uniform, when, faced with the racial riots that had erupted in Washington over the death of an African-American at the hands of the police, he went out with his team to defend with a bible in hand, an evangelical church that was attacked meters away from the White House.

This situation generated discomfort in the Armed Forces. A few weeks later, correcting his attitude, at a military graduation ceremony he said: "The only book we defend is the Constitution." It was not an inconsequential event.

When on January 6, 2021, the supporters of Donald Trump violently took over the US Congress; the question was raised as to what the attitude of the Armed Forces would be in the face of the chaotic scenario that was opening up. Two days later, led by Milley, the eight most important chiefs of the active Armed Forces spoke publicly in the face of this exceptional event, with a brief statement: "As for more than 200 years, our commitment is and will be the defense of the Constitution". The message was clear: they were already obeying the President-elect, Joe Biden.

Milley continued in his position with the new government, not because of any political preference or affinity of his own, but because in the United States the Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces are deliberately appointed every three years without coinciding with the change of government in order to accentuate their political neutrality.

In 2021, Milley gave a public response to a relevant strategic-military event: the launch of the Chinese hypersonic missile. He then said that this new weapon had surprised the United States, as much as in 1957 the first space flight of the

USSR did. He pointed out that then the American response took twelve years to materialize, with the arrival of the first astronaut on the Moon, which implied the American victory in this area.

The war in Ukraine, which broke out with the Russian invasion, gave Milley an important role in organizing and leading the military, and several times he made informative public statements.

But on November 10, 2022, he made his most important public expression since February 24, when the invasion began. He maintained that both Russia and Ukraine had lost 100,000 soldiers each - dead and wounded - in the eight months of war. He called for the need for "mutual recognition that victory -in the strict sense of the word-is unlikely to be achieved by military means, so other methods must be sought."

He added, "A window of opportunity for negotiation arises," which could begin to be explored at the G20 Summit that begins on November 14 on the island of Bali, in Indonesia. Putin will not be there, but his foreign affairs minister, Sergei Lavrov, will. On the other hand, a Biden-Xi meeting will take place, at a time of tension between the two powers.

There are those who have seen imprecise gestures in the same direction. They mention Washington's refusal to deliver advanced Gray Eagle MQ-1C drones to Kyiv, as Volodymyr Zelensky had been calling for. On the other hand, faced with the Russian withdrawal from Kherson, there are those who have interpreted it as the first step to allow a dialogue table.

But the statement by the US military chief is clear, concrete and casts away any doubt. General Milley has said what the Pentagon and the Secretary of State do not yet say.

However, the fact that this definition has been publicly accepted is perhaps an indication that an instance of negotiation can be opened, at a time when the world seems to have fatalistically assumed the stagnation of a chronic war.

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