
PM Fico attacked: resurgence of political violence. Russia-China threat confirmed

There are -evidently- no direct links between the despicable attack on Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico and the meeting in Beijing between Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. However, there may be some similarities. Juraj Cintula, the 71-year-old man identified as the shooter of the Slovak prime minister, has been declared a 'dangerous' person. He claims to oppose the decisions of the Slovak government and therefore resorts to violence. His record is far from transparent. Fico, who received immediate medical attention, is reported to be out of danger, but his conditions remains serious. European leaders have condemned the attack and sent messages of sympathy to the Slovak prime minister. The fact that Prime Minister Fico is a politician with a questionable profile is no justification for violence. He is an extreme nationalist, anti-European and a staunch supporter of Putin. He believes that freedom of expression and the rule of law can be circumvented for the sake of power and particular interests. His style and his government have little in common with the European Union. But the underlying problem remains: this is a new case of political violence, following a series of incidents of varying severity recorded in recent weeks. Several of these attacks occurred in Germany, but also in France and the Netherlands. This violence is the result of a tense political climate, characterised by extreme polarisation and an increasingly strident tone surrounding the election campaign for the renewal of the European Parliament, with regional and national elements and conflicts grafted onto it. In contrast, the political leaders and candidates running for election should be required to show moderation, a capacity for dialogue, and to argue instead of hurling insults at their opponents. This is what democracy is all about. It must be noted that anti-liberal political tendencies are once again at work in Europe: the cases of Hungary, Georgia and Belarus (the latter a murderous and menacing dictatorship) remind us of this. Moreover, in Spain-Catalonia and in the Netherlands (a new government with a strongly nationalist, anti-European and anti-immigration stance), political confrontation has been exacerbated, if only in its language. The pre-election debate in France, Italy, Poland and other EU countries has been characterised by heated political diatribes. Meanwhile, on the opposite camp, the Russia-China summit saw a friendly handshake between Putin and Xi (in the photo), two autocrats at the helm of hardline regimes with marked imperialist traits, united against Western democracies. Consider, among other things, Beijing's economic neo-colonialism and the tragedy of the war in Ukraine, unleashed by Moscow. Both are examples of politics that advocate a lawless world (or a world with its own rules), representing a threat to peace, to relations between nations, to fundamental rights, to economic freedom, accompanied - if these actors deem it necessary - by the use of military force. In this context, the Europe described by David Sassoli as a "beacon of democracy" appears all the more necessary, indeed indispensable, today. The world needs multipolarity, it needs rules, it needs a shared commitment for peace, for addressing climate change and the digital revolution, for confronting the excessive power of finance and organised crime, for healing the wounds of that vast part of humanity that struggles every day against poverty, hunger, disease and violence. The world still needs a united Europe.

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