



AGENCY FOR  
PEACEBUILDING

BOLOGNA  
PEACEBUILDING  
FORUM

# Peace in Europe and Beyond

2-3-4 May 2023  
Bologna, Italy

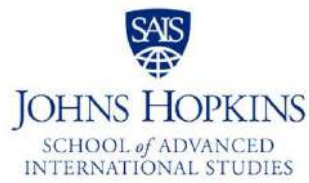
**BOLOGNA  
PEACEBUILDING  
FORUM 2023**

**Event Report**

---

June 2023

## WITH THE PATRONAGE OF:



## WITH THE SUPPORT OF:



Ministero degli Affari Esteri  
e della Cooperazione Internazionale



## ABOUT THE AGENCY FOR PEACEBUILDING

The Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote conditions to enable the resolution of conflict, reduce violence and contribute to a durable peace across Europe, its neighbouring countries, and the world. AP is the first Italian organization specializing in peacebuilding. This allows us to occupy a unique role in the European landscape: on the one hand, we interpret and synthesize relevant topics for the benefit of Italian agencies and institutions working on peace and security; on the other, we highlight experiences, capacities, and resources specific to the Italian system, which can contribute to the resolution of violent conflict.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present report has been assembled under the coordination of Mariachiara Giaccai, AP project officer and coordinator for the Bologna Peacebuilding Forum, and Bernardo Venturi, AP director. The report also benefited from the contribution of Alejandra Flores Renteria, one of AP's volunteers for the Forum and a Master's candidate at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS Europe). AP would also like to express its gratitude to Giulia Caravita, Shiya Grace Huang, Serena Garufo, and Alejandra Flores Renteria for their contributions as volunteers, and to Selvi Akdeniz and Cyrielle Trebosc, AP's intern. Lastly, the authors wish to thank Bernardo Monzani for his support in finalizing this report.

[www.peaceagency.org](http://www.peaceagency.org)

[www.peacebuilding.eu](http://www.peacebuilding.eu)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION _____	5
SESSION 1: WAR IN EUROPE AND PATHS TO PEACE _____	7
SESSION 2: EUROPE AND THE GLOBAL PEACE AGENDA _____	11
SESSION 3: A VISION FOR PEACE IN EUROPE _____	16
KEYNOTE EXCHANGE: TOWARDS A NEW EUROPEAN PEACE COMMUNITY? _____	19
APPENDIX 1 – PROGRAMME _____	21

# INTRODUCTION

Since 2019, the Forum has become a prime venue for peacebuilding discussions in Italy and internationally. It aims to encourage reflection on current peacebuilding challenges and dynamics. A distinctive feature of the Forum is the convergence of theory and practice: scholars and practitioners working in the field can strengthen their networks to improve policy-oriented research and fieldwork. The Forum also aims to open up the peacebuilding domain to a wider international audience.

This year, the fifth edition of the Forum offered a platform for debating the possible trajectories for peace on the European continent, from the Mediterranean to the Caucasus. It took place on 2-4 May 2023 at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS Europe) and in other prominent venues in Bologna. The Forum was multi-event and it engaged different audiences and provided multiple opportunities for reflection.

- The Forum started with the roundtable “Grantmaking for durable peace” on the primary role foundations play in the transition from violence to a peaceful reconstruction of society in countries emerging from violent conflicts. The event was held in collaboration with Ariadne.
- The second event was the launch and presentation of “Italy and the Triple Nexus” a research report on the Development, Humanitarian and Peace Nexus conducted by AP with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
- The last event of the Forum was a workshop on the relationship between media and peacebuilding held for university students with the participation of journalists and experts on peacebuilding.
- The second day was dedicated to the international conference “Peace in Europe and Beyond” with the participation of international scholars, practitioners, and policymakers from local, national, and European institutions.

The present report will focus on the international conference, and it will provide a brief summary of the contents presented during the panels and discussed at the event.



*Forum registrations (Credit: Rosa Lacavalla/ AP).*

The war in Ukraine has generated an impressive disruption in Europe and its effects are re-shaping global peace and security governance. Peace advocates have had to reconcile solidarity toward Ukraine and a call for diplomatic solutions. International organisations, from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to the United Nations (UN), have struggled to find their role in the crisis and have remained marginal so far. This marginality could reshape the global multilateral peace and security system. At the same time, the European Union (EU) has clearly defined its position and role. Yet, its choices will affect its financial and political capacity to build partnerships with countries from North Africa to Southeast Asia, from the Caucasus to Southern Africa. New multilateral formats are under discussion or taking shape, such as the European Political Community that gathers the countries of the Eurasian continent. The Forum provided the opportunity to analyse these scenarios and possible future trajectories, including how civil society organizations (CSOs) and societies are adapting and which role they can play in the future. The Forum also discussed how the ongoing war in Europe has impacted the rest of the world and the EU's capacity and instruments to work for peace abroad.

# SESSION 1: WAR IN EUROPE AND PATHS TO PEACE

The first session discussed the current European war and possible trajectories for peace looking at the role of international organisations and civil society. The three invited speakers were Sergey Radchenko (Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor, SAIS Europe), Stephanie Fenkart (Director, the International Institute for Peace), Ivan Vejvoda (Head of Europe's Futures Project, Institute for Human Sciences), and Vlada Lisenco (Professor, University of Tiraspol). The session was moderated by Emiliano Alessandri (Senior Advisor, AP).

## Guiding Questions

How can some international organisation reshape the whole multilateral peace and security system? How civil society organisations and societies are adapting and which role they can play in the future in peacebuilding and mediation? Can mediation still play a transformative role in different crises? In particular, should states and international organisations invest and rely more on back channels and silent diplomacy?

**Sergey Radchenko** (SAIS Europe) opened the first session by presenting the concept of the slippery slope. According to the slippery slope argument, which is used in political rhetoric, when a person or a party makes one rational decision, that party will logically be forced to make another, directly consequential to that one, and so on. All of these small steps lead to a series of interconnected events that have a significant, generally negative, outcome. The slippery slope model presented during the first session of the conference examined a possible political scenario that started from a wonderful world and ended in the apocalypse. The only way to prevent the party from deciding not to engage in the negative effects would be an early action from other involved parties and stakeholders. The Cold War has been a historical example of a negative slippery scenario. In that case, both sides pushed their actions to the edge, until they realised the upcoming consequences were dramatically alarming, so the actors involved moved back and re-started to build trustful relations.

Radchenko contextualised this theoretical scenario by looking at the current war in Ukraine, which he describes as a very peculiar situation since one of the major nuclear powers is waging a war it defines as existential. Radchenko argued that in Ukraine a similar slippery situation is happening, and the conflict is moving in a very dangerous direction. Therefore, in Radchenko's perspective not finding room for conversation in a war context is irresponsible. Following the flow of the conversation, when asked about

the role of alternative voices in the current conflict, he pointed out that the issue brings up the question of “other”. Now it is extremely difficult for Ukraine to engage with Russia, and at the same time, Russia somehow fears that the Europeans want to be accepted in a certain way. The speech left some open questions: how can we avoid a drastic negative slope in the European war? Since it seems that a dialogue with Russia is not an option yet, how can this be overcome?

The panel continued with **Stephanie Fenkart** (International Institute for Peace) who opened her speech by reflecting on the fact that it has been more difficult than ever to work with peace in these days of conflict in Europe. She argued that it is becoming more challenging for both peacebuilders and institutions to understand the whole complexity of the wars and the process of adapting to this. Indeed, when examining the possible scenarios for a peaceful future in Europe, it is necessary to take into account all facets of the war context: currently, there is a war in propaganda and one in infrastructures, and there are several actors involved with different aims, and there are different historical narratives also within Ukraine. All these issues are difficult to be addressed comprehensively and, for the parties involved, it is also hard to talk about peace negotiation. Fenkart argues that both Ukraine and Russia still think that they can win on the battlefield, and, since the war is now in an unprecedented phase of militarisation and rearmament, how can this scenario bring us to a lasting peace situation?

The EU has been the response to a belligerent era; it is a peace union based on “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities” (Article 2 of the Treaty of the EU). Fenkart recognizes that in the last year, there has been significant unity and respect for its values in the way Europe acted through sanctions or in the fact that the EU granted candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova. The EU still has transformative power, and it should pair with other actors to address through a complex strategy a complex war scenario. In this sense, according to Fenkart, it is crucial to bring along international actors such as the UN, as well as single states that may have the power to put some pressure on Russia, namely China. She argued that Brussels should not dismiss entirely the role of China, however, it should find a way to cautiously cooperate. The longer the war, the more difficult it will be to put human security into focus and restart to talk about peace.

The third speaker, **Ivan Vejvoda** (Institute for Human Sciences), presented a reflection on peace and war through the thought of distinguished political philosophers and, having had personal experience in the Yugoslavia war and post-war reconstruction, he focused on the Balkans’ perspective as a case study. According to Hegel, war can be a positive movement where a state asserts itself establishing its rights and interests. Even if the history of the world is a history of war, the EU represents a counterpoint, since it



has been one of the most successful peace projects, and indeed all the Balkan countries wanted to join the Union. However, the process has not been easy. Indeed, the “seventy years of peace in Europe” refers just to the West and does not consider Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Vejvoda continued by reflecting on the concept of peace and compromise, pointing out that, as Bernard Crick wrote in his “In defence of peace”, there is a high price of peace. The price of peace is due to the compromise that parties have to reach, the compromise implies that parties have to give up on their maximalist demands and find a middle ground where no one will be happy nor totally dissatisfied.



First panel speakers (Credit: Rosa Lacavalla/ AP).

Furthermore, Vejvoda drew a focus on one key aspect of the peace and conflict discussion: politics, democratic institutions, and the role of civil society. Countries with democratic institutions have checks and balances that allow them to avoid war, whereas authoritarian countries without those checks and balances will more easily engage in a conflict for their egotistical aims. Sun Tzu, also suggests that a party might fight a war out of necessity, and looking at the current war in Ukraine, Vejvoda recalled that this is what Kyiv has been doing, defending itself from nuclear power. Stating Machiavelli, who wrote about the necessity to ponder how to act to achieve a positive outcome by applying virtue to fight against fortune, he highlighted that the role of civil society is crucial. Civic resistance may re-direct political leaders'

choices, however, in authoritarian countries, this process is much more costly and difficult than in a democratic one.

Finally, **Vlada Lisenco** (University of Tiraspol) provided an insightful reflection on the effect of the current war in Ukraine from the perspective of a neighbouring country. After the separatist Transnistria war in 1992, Moldova experienced 30 years of frozen conflict between Chişinău and Tiraspol, and the war in Ukraine deepened these grievances. Neighbouring countries such as Moldova have been impacted by the refugee crisis (Moldova experiences the highest per capita influx from Ukraine compared to any neighbouring country). Moreover, the conflict has had negative consequences on infrastructure, social order, and the health system. Despite the peace agenda declaring that each state should decrease its warfare budget, the war in Ukraine forced many countries to increase their defence spending.

International organisations in Moldova have been challenged by the Ukraine situation, nevertheless, they remain useful, since they are resilient and changing; the EU itself is changing and it is becoming a more capable security actor, also by accelerating the process of enlargement. Alongside international support at high-level policies, Lisenco stressed the need for supporting activities at the grassroots level, which are now playing a very crucial role in peacebuilding. She noted in conclusion that research and expertise on the field of Triple Nexus projects, and methodologies on cooperation among NGOs and associations, would also benefit countries in the transition toward peaceful negotiations.

Following the panellists' interventions, participants were invited to ask questions. The discussion focused on **civic resistance and the role of alternative voices** in the current conflict compared to the ongoing governmental narratives. In history, alternative voices in civil societies had a role in how the war unfolded for example by shifting the public debate. Some argue that the Russian civil society sector is currently playing an insufficient role, and there still is considerable public support in favour of the war. This might be because the government has been able to win the struggle of narratives presenting the war as existential. Even if dialogue is not currently an option, the alternative voices present in the Russian opposition should not be underestimated. According to the panel, not finding room for conversation in this war context is irresponsible, and we should promote dialogue initiatives. An absence of conflict would then open a long peace process where the discussion over unreconciled communities is fundamental.

## SESSION 2: EUROPE AND THE GLOBAL PEACE AGENDA

The second panel looked at the EU as a global peace actor from the perspective of other countries and reflected on what the EU can and should do for peace outside of its borders. The session was moderated by Giorgio Comai (Senior Researcher, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa). The speakers were Donata Garrasi (Former director of Political Affairs, UN), Huma Saeed (AP Member and MADRE Consultant), Sanna Harty (Integrated Approach for Security and Peace Directorate, European External Action Service), and Hashim Pondeza (AP Senior Advisor and Executive Director, Center for Youth Dialogue, Zanzibar).

### Guiding Questions

How has the ongoing war in Europe impacted the rest of the world and the EU's capacity and instruments to work for peace at the global level? Is the EU still attractive as a peace champion? How can the EU support middle-range peacebuilding and grassroots everyday peace efforts globally?

The first speaker was **Donata Garrasi** (UN), who shared a reflection about three key outcomes of the current crisis that matter for where the EU is going. First, she pointed out that after experiencing the war in Ukraine, we are realising that the international institutions and their instruments for peace and security are not working in crises. Secondly, she raised the issue of a polarised world, meaning that there are some blocks such as the East, the West, China, the EU, and the USA whose positions are usually known, and some other countries that either remain silent or not take positions, yet influence where the global peace and security agenda is going. The last key outcome she raised was the fact that the current EU crisis has demonstrated a big limitation in how the EU has been addressing the peace and security policies and a big mismatch between the rhetoric and all the policies, the funds, and the economic capacities applied. Therefore, according to this view, the EU has not been an effective peace mediator.

Garrasi deepened her reflection on the actions deployed by the EU so far, and on what role it should play. The EU already has large, structured institutions with significant economic capacities and it has a large presence worldwide through its delegations, which make it able to develop policies and strategies on various aspects of peace and security. Moreover, she noted that there is a significant proliferation of peace initiatives at very different levels of engagement and very active personnel. This considered, she asked how all these initiatives can be translated into an actual capacity of having an impact and how can Europe play a key role as a peace mediator. In Garrasi's view, the EU has the potential to play a positive mediation role to help in preventing conflict and crisis, however, its role is not fulfilled yet. The EU

should reflect on how to play a better role in peace by going back to focusing on its soft power, such as diplomatic and economic capacity. In addition, it should invest in rebuilding the economy that can support peace processes also at the political level.

**Hashim Pondeza** (Center for Youth Dialogue, Zanzibar) looked at the EU as an actor of peace from the African countries' perspective; he reflected on what the EU is doing for peace outside of its borders and what it should keep on supporting. Specifically, the presentation moved from the fact that the war in Europe is impacting the Global South as well, therefore, looking at the EU is relevant in terms of peace, especially if we concentrate on how the EU can support NGOs at the grassroots level.

The EU is one of the biggest actors for peace in the world and it is investing in Africa to support infrastructure, social growth, and security. At the same time, Pondeza argued that we can observe a sort of competition coming from other actors who are now investing in Africa (such as Russia and China). However, first, we should pay attention to how each group is contributing to the economy of peace; second, we should take into consideration that neighbouring countries making blocks within the African Union (AU) may not support each other. This may be an interesting reflection connected to what is going to happen with major groups in the world.



*Participants listening to the second session (Credit: Rosa Lacavalla/ AP).*

Furthermore, to a certain extent, the current war in Ukraine has been impacting some African countries, for example through food prices that exacerbate existing problems. These situations negatively influence these countries creating economic instability that could impact on social and political life. The economic frustration especially affects young people who, lacking possibilities, join extremist groups. Developing countries are vulnerable and the role of civil society investing in Africa is a very important point. According to Pondeza, it is necessary to build a narrative from a solid understanding of the correlation between the precarious condition of youth and extremist groups. Violent extremism is a global problem but only has local solutions. Indeed, the support coming from the EU to grassroots-level organisations that work on strengthening the peace mechanisms is fundamental.

The third intervention of the panel was delivered by **Huma Saeed** (AP and MADRE). Saeed shared her perspective as a researcher on transitional justice and as an Afghan citizen who directly experienced war. The reflection also touched on the role that the EU played in Afghanistan and how it has been adapting to different geopolitical scenarios. According to Saeed, whenever we talk about peace, it is necessary to connect this concept to the broad idea of justice, because peace without justice or accountability can not last in any country. Specifically, we should account for the meaning of transitional justice and what can be done in countries that are coming out of war or dictatorship where the society also has to reconnect with its past. Afghanistan is a clear example. It has been in conflict for 45 years, and in the early 2000s, there was an opportunity to work on justice. The EU played a very positive role in developing peace mechanisms and in supporting the national war victims network. However, some other big actors only prioritised security and it was not enough since the country collapsed in 2021. According to Saeed, it is also necessary to keep a high focus on gender justice. For example, what is happening today in Afghanistan is gender persecution, which under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is a crime against humanity. Since gender crimes have been hardly judged as such, and to avoid them being left unjudged, Saeed argued that documentation of persecution is fundamental, especially in countries under dictatorships.

Currently, the role of the EU in Afghanistan changed because of one external factor, the impact of the war in Ukraine, and one internal driver, the restoration of the Taliban's regime. First, there has been a 48% decline in EU aid in Afghanistan due to the war in Ukraine, secondly, there have been repercussions on the issue of the increase in refugees due to the war. Indeed, up to six million people are living outside of the country, and not all of them are regularly registered. A significant number of them are in Europe and this has impacted the asylum-seeking cases. Thirdly, the internal situation hindered European intervention in the country. The EU still has its presence on the ground and supports local initiatives. Local civil society still exists and the EU and the UN are somehow supporting them, however, given the

circumstances, local actors are keeping a low profile. In conclusion, Saeed recalled that anybody dealing with peace needs to concentrate on all the elements of accountability including community restoration, restorative justice, gender justice, and international support to local initiatives.



Q&A time during the second session (Credit: Rosa Lacavalla/ AP).

**Sanna Hartly** (European External Action Service) reflected on the fact that the global security environment has deteriorated dramatically since the Russian invasion. At the same time, the EU still fears the potential for escalation of the war and the threats to its security architecture. According to Hartly, the EU should strengthen its geopolitical role as a global peace actor, and this includes the need to reinforce its ability as a security provider. Focusing on the policy and strategy that the EU implemented, in March 2022, right after the Russian invasion, the EU adopted the Strategic Compass on Security and Defence. The Compass includes practical proposals to increase the EU's joint capacity and willingness to act decisively. From the conflict prevention and mediation support angle, Compass highlights that we need a much more dynamic approach to address future challenges.

The Russian invasion changed the European outlook prompting it to take unprecedented political decisions in several fields such as security and defence, sanctions, and financial support. So far, the EU is delivering

all these with political unity and it is continuing to strengthen its role as a peace actor. Therefore, the core values on which Europe was founded, such as the notion of cooperation to reduce violence and the commitment to peacebuilding, remain key elements of its foreign policy. In 2020, the EU established the concept of peace mediation, and during the last decades, the EU has assumed a mediator's role in most national peace processes. Nonetheless, the EU acknowledges the fact that there are some challenges and it is addressing them by being as operational as possible. When seeking peace the EU is focusing on two key aspects, first, how to better prepare for preventing new violent conflict, and second, how to mediate existing conflicts and settle them. This is done through the reinforcement of its peace tools such as early warning, horizon scanning, and joint analysis. Harty concluded by recalling that the EU is not completely neutral, but by being transparent on its foreign policy interests, defending universal values, and by increasing cooperation with partners, the EU may have an effective contribution to peace.

When asked about concrete examples of EU peace efforts, Harty highlighted the role of the high representative who facilitated the proximity talk on various occasions, such as the Iran nuclear talks or in the dialogues about the South Caucasus, where the EU wants to remain a credible and constructive actor in contributing to the prevention of peaceful settlements of the region. Moreover, Harty mentioned the EU efforts for peace and reconciliation in the Horn of Africa, where there has also been a focus on transitional justice.

## SESSION 3: A VISION FOR PEACE IN EUROPE

The conference's third panel focused on emerging visions of peace exploring the role of youth and humanitarian voices. The discussion was moderated by Celina del Felice (AP member) and involved the following speakers: Marjús Cevoli (Representative, United Network of Young Peacebuilders), Alessandra Morelli (Former staff member, UN High Commissioner for Refugees), Serge Stroobants (Director for Europe and the MENA region, Institute for Economics and Peace).

### Guiding Questions

How could the “European peace project” be shaped in the middle run? What opportunities should be harnessed by the European states to build a more efficient multilateral architecture in the next decade? In which ways can the European Political Community represent an alternative and inclusive new form of peace community?

The panel was opened by **Marjús Cevoli** (United Network of Young Peacebuilders) who discussed the importance of youth voices in politics and policy decisions. As an Italian-Albanian, his interest and background shifted him to work with the Western Balkans and throughout the Mediterranean. First, he outlined the importance of positive peace - the attitudes of institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. When discussing peace, he described his experience as a young person and the lack of youth voices in current decision-making. Then, he mentioned some positive examples already in place fostering the role of youth in peace, such as UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (2015), which recognizes the positive contribution of youth to global peace and security and the Young People for Mediterranean Cooperation at the European level. According to Cevoli, these tools are fundamental to creating mechanisms that can allow young people to actively participate in peace processes and provide young people with a bigger role in decision-making at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

**Serge Stroobants** (Institute for Economics and Peace) provided a second perspective centered on international development and diplomacy. He cautioned that the future of peace in Europe faces threats stemming from a reluctance to adapt and cooperate. Stroobants highlighted that global peace is currently at its lowest level, with projections indicating a further decline due to increased militarization and the emergence of a new world order. To exemplify these challenges, he pointed to the destabilisation along the Eastern border and the potential ramifications of Sweden and Finland's entry into NATO. Stroobants



also underscored the Russian sphere of influence as a pressing issue, citing the case of Crimea to highlight the consequences of Russian intervention.

Stroobants acknowledged that while peace can be easily destroyed, it can only be rebuilt gradually. He expressed his belief that Europe still holds the most peaceful vision of the world and has a responsibility to uphold and spread peace. However, he acknowledged several concerns. The rising investment in defence, which currently accounts for approximately 11% of global GDP, signifies a shift away from peacebuilding towards a realist focus on state security. Moreover, the transition from Western liberal dominance to a more vocal international community as the Global South and other actors call for more respect and dignity. Stroobants went on to explain how Europe has lost global influence, partially due to its refusal to acknowledge its mistakes and double standards for the Global South.

According to Stroobants, what is left to do then is to invest in positive peace and avoid ignoring the need for systemic changes. He calls for Europe to diversify investments, formulate realistic contingency plans, and increase strategic security analyses. Above all, he urged Europe to accept and adapt to these changes, and actively build peace in its surrounding regions and peripheries, because if it fails to do so the existence of the EU could be jeopardised.



Speakers of the third panel (Credit: Rosa Lacavalla/ AP).

Lastly, **Alessandra Morelli** (UNHCR) offered a call to action from a humanitarian standpoint. She concurred with Stroobants' observation that the system is evolving and that peace is no longer at the centre; however, she went further to say mankind has stopped being at the centre. Morelli stressed that when discussing geopolitics, crisis, and peace we are forgetting the real victims, who are always the same. She argued against politicising humanitarian crises and implored humanitarians to step forward and play a crucial role in shaping and influencing positive change by addressing uncomfortable issues and integrating them into mainstream discourse.

Morelli shared her own experiences in creating spaces that counteract meaninglessness and hopelessness. She emphasised the importance of preserving open borders, as they serve as the first line of protection. However, with the rise of globalisation, there has also been a rise in marginalisation. Morelli expressed deep concern over the criminalization of movement and the waning of solidarity as a political value, both of which represent significant challenges. According to Morelli, Europe sees the rest of the world as “containers” of individuals, from whom it must defend itself. Morelli urged for the unreserved embrace of solidarity. To invest in regional planning, and community-based approaches, and to allow absorption capacity to do what it does to avoid unnecessary conflicts. She contended that Europe bears the responsibility of fostering peace because it was created as the guardian and custodian of peace. And though peace is not at the centre, understanding that the essence of peace is the capacity to tailor relationships is essential to restoring it.

Overall, the panel collectively called upon Europe and the broader international community to accept the evolving global landscape. They advocated for decision-making guided by core values, the meaningful shaping of attitudes, and the forging of stronger connections across borders. It is through these concerted efforts that a peaceful and prosperous future can be realised.

## KEYNOTE EXCHANGE: TOWARDS A NEW EUROPEAN PEACE COMMUNITY?

This year, the Bologna Peacebuilding Forum concluded with a keynote exchange featuring Ambassador **Lamberto Zannier** (former Secretary General, OSCE) and journalist **Maria Cuffaro**. The exchange commenced with a reflection on the evolving discourse of peacebuilding in the contemporary world. Throughout, Zannier and Cuffaro extensively discussed the complexities and transformations within the international system, offering insights into the Ukraine conflict and prospects for the future. The discussion underscored the importance of well-rounded communication, enhanced risk analysis, and adaptability amidst the ongoing transformative period.



*Lamberto Zannier dialoguing with Maria Cuffaro (Credit: Rosa Lacavalla/ AP).*

The first part of the session focused on the changing global landscape and its relevance to understanding the Ukraine conflict based on lived experiences. Ambassador Zannier explained how the 1990s were a period of passive transformation. Following the signing of the OSCE Charter of Paris, which declared an end to the Cold War, a new phase of collaboration began. He emphasised Russia's hesitancy in embracing

the series of policy reforms, as well as the United States mission of democratic transformation, which resulted in Russia feeling sidelined and notably detached. This sentiment of resentment was further exacerbated by the rise of nationalism in Moscow and the desire to regain control over former Soviet states. In Ukraine, the EU's demand for Ukraine to distance itself from Russia without providing a transitional period further complicated the situation, representing a "technocratic response to a highly political issue".

The need for Russians and Ukrainians to engage in negotiation, along with the broader imperative of effective communication, was another critical aspect explored. Both Cuffaro and Zannier described how, today, there is a polarised state of affairs, where the world is pressured to take sides, and this leaves little room for neutral spaces and peace talks. Zannier adds that part of the problem is the players themselves. Both Ukraine and Russia are too stubborn to compromise and the most realistic scenario seems to be an exhaustion of resources or effort. This de facto ceasefire would end a resolution of territorial integrity. Currently, however, there is no political will to begin discussions. Zannier suggested adopting a pragmatic approach that identifies specific issues to be addressed as a starting point for dialogue.

Discussing the role of the international community, Ambassador Zannier outlined the current situation. He observed that today, power politics have gained dominance, leading to a weakening of multilateralism and international institutions. The global system has become less structured, more intricate, and increasingly hazardous. The anticipated level of mutual respect is lacking. Looking ahead, Zannier emphasised the need for improved negotiations focused on realistic objectives and modest expectations.

Within the European context, Zannier highlighted the rise of nationalism and the lack of communication as pressing issues requiring attention. These concerns are part of the broader set of challenges confronting the world. Global issues, such as migration, have become highly politicised, and internal divisions are becoming more visible. The EU needs to enhance its political analysis capabilities and develop effective communication strategies to address global issues and the Ukraine conflict, particularly when contemplating diplomatic engagement with Russia. In conclusion, the overall situation is deeply concerning, and achieving progress will necessitate profound transformation, adaptability, and strong leadership.

# APPENDIX 1 - PROGRAMME

**Tuesday, May 2**

## **How can European funders contribute to social cohesion, peace, and security in Europe and beyond? (invitation only)**

Roundtable convened by the Ariadne Network and Agency for Peacebuilding with the participation of international and Italian foundations, as well as experts in the field of peacebuilding

## **Beyond rhetoric: the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in action**

Public launch of the AP research on the Triple Nexus was realized with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

- Bernardo VENTURI, AP Director and research co-author
- Fleur JUST, Peaceful Change Initiative
- Lucio DEMICHELE, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Opening remarks by Annalisa BONI, Municipality of Bologna

Moderation: Laura Silvia BATTAGLIA, journalist

*Venue: Sala Anziani, Palazzo d'Accursio, Piazza Maggiore, 6, Bologna*

**Wednesday, May 3**

## **International Conference: Peace in Europe and Beyond**

Public conference to discuss the possible trajectories for peace on the European continent. Starting from the war in Ukraine and the disruption it generated, the conference will analyze its effects and consequences, and how the conflict is reshaping global peace and security.

*Venue: Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS Europe), Via Andreatta, 3, Bologna*

### **Conference Agenda**

#### **Session 1 - War in Europe and Paths to peace**

- Sergey RADCHENKO, Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor, SAIS Europe
- Stephanie FENKART, Director of the International Institute for Peace (IIP)
- Ivan VEJVODA, Permanent Fellow, Head of Europe's Future Project, Institute for Human Sciences
- Vlada LISENCO, University of Tiraspol

Moderation: Emiliano ALESSANDRI, AP's Senior Advisor

#### **Session 2 - Europe and the global peace agenda**

- Donata GARRASI, Political and security strategist, former director, of political affairs

- Huma SAEED, AP Member and MADRE consultant
- Sanna HARTY, EEAS
- Hashim PONDEZA, AP Senior Advisor and Executive Director of the Center for Youth Dialogue, Zanzibar

Moderation: Giorgio COMAI, Senior Researcher, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa

### **Session 3 - A Vision for Peace in Europe**

- Marius CEVELI, UNOY Peacebuilders
- Alessandra MORELLI, former UNHCR
- Serge STROOBANTS, Director of Europe & MENA region, Institute for Economics and Peace

Moderation: Celina DEL FELICE, AP Associate

### **Keynote Exchange - Towards a New European Peace Community?**

- Lamberto ZANNIER, former Secretary General, OSCE, in dialogue with Maria CUFFARO, RAI Tg3 Mondo

## **Thursday, May 4**

### **Workshop: Media and Peacebuilding** *(limited participation)*

Workshop organized for university students and youth to stimulate collective reflection on the role of media in conflict and peacebuilding. Journalist Emanuele Valenti will lead the workshop, with the facilitation of AP.

Venue: *Ex Emeroteca - Sala dottorandi, Palazzo Hercolani, Strada Maggiore, 45, Bologna*



AGENCY FOR  
PEACEBUILDING

---

[www.peaceagency.org](http://www.peaceagency.org)

[www.peacebuilding.eu](http://www.peacebuilding.eu)