

ATHENA

FOREIGN POLICY SPEECH

MSc Course

"The EU and the Post-Soviet Space"

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AS

**A Ukrainian Human
Rights activist**



Co-funded by
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ATHENA
- Jean Monnet Chair -



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This “foreign policy speech” was originally written for the ATHENA Jean Monnet Chair MSc Course “The EU and the Post-Soviet Space” taught by Dr. Olga Burlyuk. It is published as part of our mission to showcase peer-leading papers written by students during their studies. This work can be used for background reading and research, but should not be cited as an expert source or used in place of scholarly articles/books.

Context:

On the 17th of June 2024, the EU announces it is retracting its sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine. This motion, which has been brewing in the EU since the formation of the new Dutch government headed by the extreme right, was initiated by the new Dutch Prime Minister, Geert Wilders, strongly backed by Georgia Meloni and Viktor Orban. The motion passed as the majority of the member states voted for the retraction. The reason given for the retraction mainly focuses on the inefficiency of the aid in the war effort in Ukraine and the growing cost of these policies for the EU's economy. This speech is given after the announcement by a well-known (fictional) Ukrainian Human Rights activist on the Instagram platform of Amnesty International.

Dear all,

Today, we witness once again the hypocrisy of the European Union. A Union claiming to be the leader of the free world, where the rule of law, democracy, and freedom should prevail. A union claiming to support democracies abroad, ... but it won't help us. It won't help us in our war against Russia to support those values it claims are close to its heart.

Today, on the 17th of June 2024, the EU announced it is rescinding its sanctions against Russia and its military and financial support for Ukraine. Their argument: they cannot afford to anymore; it is costing them too much.

And although I know it has been hard on the common European to see prices for gas and food rise, we, Europeans, cannot afford to let Russia win either. This war is not only our war, it is a war for freedom, self-determination, and democracy. But today, the EU has let us know it does not care for these values anymore, at least not enough to sustain the costs. But the costs will only be higher if Ukraine falls.

The EU is being hollowed out from within. How can it still claim to be the leader of the democratic world when it elects extreme leaders one after the other? Hungary, Finland, Italy and recently, the Netherlands all fall into the hands of the extreme right, promoting policies that undermine the values of the EU.

Democracy is faltering.

Today, we are seeing these leaders undermining democratic values by stopping the flow of aid towards our country, by stopping their support of self-determination, rule of law and sovereignty. What a precedent to set for all the autocratic rulers of the world!

EU Prime Ministers and Presidents, don't you understand that by stopping to hold Russia accountable for its actions, you are giving free passes for China to invade Taiwan or for Israel to eradicate Palestinians from Gaza? I thought you stood for freedom, not oppression; for equality, not domination; for sovereignty, not colonisation. Do you want all this blood on your conscience? Stop making empty promises and holding us to standards you are not even keeping yourself. Keep the EU a strong economic and political alliance before it dies from shame, and we won't even bother joining.

My fellow Europeans, we are asking you to hold your leaders accountable. Ask them to uphold the democratic principles we have fought so hard to get and are fighting so hard to

keep. Democracy is not solely about listening to the people, it also requires upholding democratic values, which are attacked from all sides.

My fellow Europeans, call on your leaders to fulfil the promises of the EU, a union which stands for a free world.

My fellow Europeans, do not get caught up in the rhetoric of populists. Protest against fascism. Vote for democracy, for equality, for the rule of law. Vote for leaders who will help Ukraine fight against Russia in our collective war for a free world.

Thank you.