



## THE WAR IN UKRAINE AS A CHALLENGE OF GLOBAL DEMOCRACY

■ ALBINA AGAPISHVILI\*

Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani University in Tbilisi  <https://ror.org/01pnsd879>

### ABSTRACT

Why is the war in Ukraine seen as a challenge to global democracy? The author examines the geopolitical context of this war, drawing parallels with events from 2014–2015, including the annexation of Crimea. Russia, as an international player, disregards democratic principles and is currently seeking to suppress Ukraine's democratic aspirations.

### ■ THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY

Perhaps everyone knows that democracy was first conceived in ancient Greece, in Athens, around 508–507 BC, and means the 'rule by the people'. We are also aware that over time it somehow changed, improved and considered the best of all existing types of government today. That's why I decided to pay attention to the challenges of democracy.

When I talk about the challenges of democracy, I mean not only the problems but also the difficulties whose overcoming will contribute to instilling the value of democracy and give the state a better chance to become democratic. All democracies and states aspiring democracy must constantly fight

\* Student at the Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani University in Tbilisi (Georgia).

against and eliminate these issues. I will discuss the main challenges of democracy below.

### ► **Corruption**

In my opinion, corruption represents the greatest threat to democracy because it is based on a policy of bribery, which leads to mistrust among citizens. Therefore, democracy cannot exist or grow in a society where bribes are accepted for any services.

### ► **Elections**

Unfair elections can also be regarded as one of democracy's challenges; specifically, vote manipulation suggests undemocratic governance. If the government and governing body are not chosen by the people, how can this kind of state be considered a democracy?

### ► **Economic dilemma**

The state's economic crisis, which prevents the growth of small and medium-sized businesses and is closely correlated with low public welfare, can be seen as a threat to democracy.

### ► **Political Instability**

Political instability is a democratic problem as well as a major concern. There are numerous items in it. No democratic state can exist as long as there is internal political chaos, human rights and freedoms aren't acknowledged and supported, people aren't allowed to express their opinions, they can't pick the government they believe in, and other similar conditions exist.

## ■ **A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR**

Ukraine and the terrible war that is going on there have become the subject of global discussion. As we all know, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine on the morning of February 24. In response to incorrect claims that Ukraine was associated with Nazism, Vladimir Putin announced a "special military operation" to "demilitarise and denazify" Ukraine. Following the launch of rockets

and airstrikes across all of Ukraine, including the capital Kyiv, a significant ground invasion from multiple directions occurred. Immediately Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, enacted general mobilisation and martial law. As a result, the northern front from Belarus towards Kyiv, the north-eastern line towards Kharkov, the southern front in Crimea, and the south-eastern front towards Luhansk and Donetsk were the first targets of Russian attacks. Additionally, the advance against Kiev was stopped, and Russian forces were withdrawn from the northern front while taking Kherson in March and Mariupol in May on the southern and southeast fronts. In the Donbas, Russia began a fresh offensive in April, and by July 3, the Luhansk region had been totally seized. Russian forces continued to bomb both military and civilian targets when they were far from the front lines. In August, Ukrainian forces started a counteroffensive in the south, and in September they launched another counteroffensive in the northeast.

We wonder what was going on in the world at that time. What were the USA, NATO, the European Union, and the whole of the so-called Western world doing at the time? What actions have the UN and other international bodies taken? Were they indeed merely observers?

These incidents have received a great deal of worldwide condemnation and are startling and evident. The UN General Assembly approved a resolution condemning the invasion and calling for Russia's military instantly withdrawal. The International Court of Justice ordered an end to Russian military operations, and Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe. Numerous countries have adopted sanctions against Russia and Belarus, which supports the invasion. The sanctions impact world and Russian economies. A large number of countries, including Georgia, have also provided military support and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Protests took place almost the whole world; in Russia, they were met with heightened media restrictions, including a ban on the terms "war" and "invasion", as well as mass arrests. In response to the invasion, around 1,000 companies have left Russia and Belarus. Since 2013, the International Criminal Court has launched an investigation into the war crimes committed during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Then Europe has become more difficult for Russian citizens to accept visas and many European countries have closed their borders to them. Russia stopped supplying gas, which led to a dramatic increase in gas and fuel prices throughout the West. Despite this crisis, the war still going on, innocent people

are still dying, but Russia did not stop there, on September 21<sup>st</sup> it announced partial mobilization, which caused an influx of people, mostly males, leaving the borders of Russia. I wonder why these people are running away instead of fighting for the life and peaceful country they want to live in. Why don't they all protest against this war together? Their problem is the fear for their lives and of course, they can also be understood. But only a large number of people with one goal can change the course of events. Ukrainians are an obvious example of this. We saw how Ukrainians showed and still show their brave spirit and fight. Even women defended their homeland and their children's bright future; it was very brave of them. I think their solidarity and courage helped them earn worldwide support and gain volunteers around the world who are fighting for the survival and democratic future of Ukraine.

## ■ THE GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE WAR

As for me, this whole war is a huge geopolitical conflict. In my opinion, this is not a war between Russia and Ukraine at all. It is a geopolitical and ideological war between Russia and the Western world, particularly the USA, but it chose Ukraine as a battlefield. I would follow Kotkin in saying that the Cold War never ended. But you can see for yourself how 'cold' it is. The concept of the Cold War can be defined as a confrontation between two different ideologies, politics and the world. The fundamental issue of this conflict is that while these giants are unable to divide up territory and power among themselves, innocent people are dying.

I want to find out why Ukraine is involved. What is the actual reason? According to Applebaum, "Ukraine matters as a symbol of the lost Soviet Empire. Ukraine was the second-most-populous and second-richest Soviet republic, and the one with the deepest cultural links to Russia. But modern, post-Soviet Ukraine also matters because it has tried – struggled, really – to join the world of prosperous Western democracies." It is quite possible to share this opinion and think about it. Consequently, Ukraine can be understood in an enormous geopolitical sense by Russia. This conflict was unavoidable because Russia would not permit Ukraine to become a democratic state, participate in NATO, or join the European Union. To support my claims, I'll draw a parallel to the events of 2014–2015, such as the annexation of Crimea. The phenomena are repeated but

in a worse form. And if we go deeper, both events had similar prerequisites; in both cases, Ukraine aspired to the West.

## ■ RUSSIAN FEDERATION AS A GLOBAL PLAYER, WHO DOES NOT CARE ABOUT DEMOCRACY

Russian Federation never supports the democratic aspirations of Ukraine. I share Applebaum's opinion, and I believe the reason for such an approach is as follows. Russia actively encourages autocracy in place of democracy, strives to divide society rather than unite it, and encourages xenophobia in place of open societies. They encourage scepticism and nihilism rather than giving people reason to hold out hope. There are no restrictions on Putin's power under the law. Without checks and balances, ethical guidelines, or any sort of transparency, he and those around him conduct their activities. The most appropriate example, with which I can support my opinion, is the arrest and raid of demonstrators, the right not to express their opinion, and finally, 'crown' all this with the announcement of partial mobilization, which caused citizens to leave the territory of Russia. It emphasizes how much he does not care about people's opinions, and he does not share the principles of democracy as an essential human value. One thing is pretty clear: Russia is not fighting the Russian demonstrators but the supporters of world democracy. He tries to ignore and suppress their desires.

## ■ WHY WAR IN UKRAINE IS A CHALLENGE OF GLOBAL DEMOCRACY?

The research question of this paper is why this war can be considered a challenge to global democracy. The main reason for this is Russia's struggle with global democracy, i.e. the Western world, which is regarded as the proponent and defender democracy. If anyone believes that the Russian Federation is at war with Ukraine, they reject it. Russia uses every effort to keep its possible 'enemy', or the democratic world, away from the border. Russia is aware of how

strong the desire for democracy is and how much of a threat it could become. But what has this war brought to Russia? Nothing good! Besides the economic crisis brought on by sanctions, the war has also increased anti-Russian sentiment practically everywhere. Putin is battling the proponents of global democracy as he continues to persecute the protesters.

The president of Ukraine has repeatedly stated that his country is not just fighting for itself but also for world peace and democracy. In my opinion, the fall of Ukraine will be seen as the collapse of democracy and its existence. However, I don't see either side winning this conflict outright. Furthermore, it is difficult to predict how, when, and with what outcomes it will terminate. At the same time, Secretary Blinken believes that "One man chose this war. One man can end it. Because if Russia stops fighting, the war ends. If Ukraine stops fighting, Ukraine ends."<sup>1</sup>

## ■ CONCLUSION

To summarize, the UN is one of the international institutions whose key target is world peace. However, right now, we can only dream of it. I am so upset that we still have to deal with war, which is the worst thing that can happen. As I already mentioned, this war is a major geopolitical conflict and continuation of the Cold War. If we examine this conflict from an ideological standpoint, it is clear that Russia is fighting against global democracy. Years ago, the United States attempted to defeat communism by trying to promote liberalism and democracy across Europe and themselves. Specifically, the more similar the nations you are surrounded by, the easier it will be for them to coexist. Drawing conclusions about the termination of the war and its outcomes is difficult for me. The world has turned against Russia, and Russia, in turn, is not eager to end the war. I would like to believe in the upcoming negotiations, but I don't know how likely they are to succeed. I would like to have faith in a positive outcome.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Russia: Secretary Antony J. Blinken at the United Nations Security Council Ministerial Meeting on Ukrainian Sovereignty and Russian Accountability, <https://ru.usembassy.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-the-united-nations-security-council-ministerial-meeting-on-ukrainian-sovereignty-and-russian-accountability>, access date: 22.08.2022.

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### Wojna na Ukrainie jako wyzwanie dla globalnej demokracji

#### Abstrakt

Dlaczego wojna w Ukrainie jest postrzegana jako wyzwanie dla światowej demokracji? Autor analizuje geopolityczny kontekst tej wojny, wskazując na analogię z wydarzeniami z lat 2014-2015, w tym aneksję Krymu. Rosja jest międzynarodowym graczem, który nie dba o demokrację, a obecnie dąży do stłumienia demokratycznych aspiracji Ukrainy.