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Chaos by Interests

Political Ideologies in the Context of a 'Value Shift' During the Russian-Ukrainian War

The statement that humanity is sliding into the Third World War best describes the end of the first quarter of the 21st century. The dismantling of the global security system established after World War Two, the helplessness of international institutions, the loss of the ability to listen and understand one another, the hybrid nature of friendship and enmity, the mockery of education amid the rise of populism and magical thinking, and ultimately, the erosion of such fundamental values as truth and justice – all these characterize our time. There is nothing one can be completely confident about.

There is not even consensus on whether World War Three has already begun or whether we are merely standing on its threshold. The crisis of confidence in all previous agreements, seemingly compounded by every other unresolved problem, increasingly resembles the "perfect storm" of the Bronze Age – an era marked by the simultaneous convergence of all possible negative circumstances – and today more than ever threatens to evolve into a new, qualitative dimension.

Careless Attitude toward Words

The first thing to note under these circumstances is the public rhetoric with which political opponents attack one another. Presidential, congressional and parliamentary elections around the world are taking place less in a sphere of ideological confrontation and more between competing forms of populism and a lack of leadership on the opposing side – or between populist agendas and the stance of political leaders who have not yet lost their ability to be guided by an internal moral compass.

In the latter case, politicians often do what they must under extremely unfavorable circumstances, using their leadership to fill the gaps for which their ideological opponents would formally be responsible. The mere fact that a politician labels him/herself as right-wing, left-wing, or liberal means very little. If in the 20th century ideological clashes and conflicts of interpretation led to real "hot" wars, we are now witnessing a chaos that oscillates between the fetishization of ideologies and the superficiality of post-truth.

We completely ignore the fact that in every historical period, some politi-

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cians have sought to mislead the masses under the guise of ideological slogans. Nor is this a discussion about maintaining the balance of a political system through the correction of its "imbalances"— the right being necessary where there is too much left, and vice versa. The fetishization of any ideology is inevitably tied to an authoritarian impulse: the tendency to identify, condemn, or even neutralize those who are different – those who think differently. Since ancient times, this strategy has been defined in simple terms: "whoever is not with us is against us."

In such a context, the idea of social harmony gives way to a strategy of exclusivity. Thus, coercion toward liberalism – including that associated with the concepts of so-called "political correctness" and "cancel culture," which "global conservatives" once vehemently opposed – is now being replaced by an opposite coercion toward conservatism, employing the same arsenal of mass-consciousness manipulation characteristic of the post-truth era. This mutually exclusive confrontation renders social dialogue impossible and undermines the ability of state institutions to respond adequately to societal needs.

The president of the United States and the dictator of Russia simultaneously declare their commitment to conservative ideology, including an emphasis on family values, while European right-wing politicians, rooted in deep national traditions, attempt to distinguish themselves from the "far right" by presenting themselves as "center right." The "global conservatives" I mentioned (a clear oxymoron, since conservatism is always grounded in specific, nationally defined cultural and political traditions) regard liberalism as a form of Satanism, whereas the advocates of the "fetishization of liberalism" tend to label any alternative political position as fascism.

At the same time, European leftists, firmly embedded in their national political systems, resist being branded as "far left," even though in practice it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate them from the "far right," especially considering that both extremes are, to a large extent, financed by Russia.

Putin's regime – just like the global Bolshevik-Leninist movement of the past – remains the most skillful political marketer of our time, the chief beneficiary of mass consciousness manipulation, and a major international corrupting force. Russia's political leadership portrays itself as a defender of conservative values, but in reality, it is composed of Russian imperialists and chauvinists, or of former communists who reinvented themselves after 1991– individuals whose ideological affinity the European left would prefer not to acknowledge.

The "moderate left" or "center-left" in Europe increasingly identifies Putin's regime as fascist – rather than as a system that, during the Soviet era, many once viewed as an alternative to the "unjust" Western capitalist society. Who is who, and who relates to whom, in the Western world from an ideological perspective remains a big question – or rather, a whole set of questions.

The hybrid mismatch between political ideologies and the substance of real actions defines the space of post-truth, which essentially signifies the absence of truth. Moreover, the source of such problems lies not only in authoritarian politicians but in a networked, interest-fragmented mass audience that *wants* to be manipulated – choosing not to comprehend the broader picture of the world or seek reliable information, but instead preferring news that feels

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convenient and comfortable. Social networks now satisfy the informational needs of various groups that are no longer divided by national borders, but by social, digital, and cultural boundaries.

It is important to remember that words not only reflect reality but also shape it. As a result, people are increasingly losing a shared understanding of the world they live in and the values they hold. The ethical dimension of political interaction is likewise becoming relative, trust is eroding, and only those who consciously strip political rhetoric of its superficial ideological differences retain a sense of confidence.

Glasses of National Interests

The geopolitical weight of China, whose political culture has been modernized on the basis of Russian-style Soviet Marxist rhetoric, serves as a backdrop for the evident inability of Western politicians to find common ground in rebuilding the international security system. As in Russia, the adaptation of Marxism in China has only reinforced national collectivist and imperialist traditions.

We should always look through the lenses of our national interests if we do not wish to be misled by yet another wave of populist rhetoric. Accordingly, we should note that the concept of the nation-state remains highly relevant in today's globalized world.

Among the main arguments in favor of the national factor is, in particular, the ability to exercise freedom of speech and other political rights and freedoms within a society that demands and values them. There are no "global" freedoms beyond those protected by national legislation. In other words, each nation secures only what it desires and is prepared to defend within its own borders.

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Until the very moment of its collapse, the Soviet Union was regarded as

a “great ally” of the West in the anti-Hitler coalition during World War II. At the same time, the USSR itself waged an entirely different, self-invented “Great Patriotic War” to divert public attention from its earlier collaboration with Nazi Germany. Through this hybrid narrative, the world’s first “country of councils” effectively obtained indulgence for political repression, genocide, communist obscurantism, Russian chauvinism, and imperialism.

Later, the Cold War unfolded as an idealistic confrontation between the states of the “free world” and those of the “socialist camp.” However, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the vast markets of the post-Soviet space and the so-called “developing countries” (“Third World,” “Global South” — the terminology keeps changing) quickly and effectively corrupted the “free world.” The factor of values seemed to fade into the background.

A Shift in Values

Ukraine burst onto the geopolitical scene through the tragedy of the Chornobyl disaster, the futility of its nuclear disarmament, three revolutions (the Student Revolution on Granite, the Orange Revolution, and the Revolution of Dignity), and the global shock caused by the Russian-Ukrainian War. The ideological resilience of Ukrainians and their remarkable capacity for self-organization, without exaggeration, demonstrated a profound shift in their worldview and system of values.

It cannot yet be said that the world has changed for the better. In fact, few have been willing to abandon the familiar patterns of confrontation. The psychological trauma experienced by the intellectual and political West after the collapse of its previous misconceptions about friends and enemies has proven so deep that the USSR – and now Russia – still occupies an important place in its collective imagination.

At the same time, the current Russian-Ukrainian war is no longer merely about values in the abstract. Participants in the political discourse increasingly feel compelled to reflect on “who we are” in the modern world. There arises a pressing need to choose between the Ukrainian and Russian sides, with all the accompanying consequences. It is becoming ever more evident that national identity is inseparable from political identity.

In Russia’s case, national identity entirely coincides with imperial identity. This means that Russians, in a symbolic and historical sense, possess neither their own distinct history nor an authentic territory. In Ukrainian tradition, Russia has long been viewed as a “prison of nations.” Consequently, the value system on which Russian society is built is deeply flawed—it is composed of what has been stolen or falsified. This explains why Russia lacks democratic traditions and any genuine need for freedom of speech or other political liberties. Politically speaking, being Russian means possessing an authoritarian mindset, feeling comfortable in a tyrannical environment, being indifferent to law and justice, lacking an independent opinion, and being almost entirely devoid of human dignity.

A major question arises even regarding who can be considered Russian, given that the Russian army is simply composed of people holding Russian passports, the vast majority of whom belong to oppressed peoples whose homelands were occupied by Russia at various points in history.

Being Ukrainian, on the other hand, means demanding as much personal space as possible – including for one's own initiatives – having freedom of choice, the ability to express oneself freely, and, what is obligatory, maintaining a strong ironic distance from any authorities. Ukrainians recognize responsible leadership but under no circumstances accept tyranny, because they possess dignity. The current war underscores a civilizational divide in which Ukraine's pluralistic political culture stands in opposition to Russia's authoritarian one.

However, the familiar worldview that emerged during the Cold War still lingers. For many, it remains a mystery where Ukraine "came from." After all, everything seemed fine, especially when it came to dealing with the USSR and later doing business with Russia. And then, suddenly, this "new" country appeared – along with its history of national liberation – which, as it turned out, unsettled everyone who denied Ukrainians the right to have their own state. Yet, for those willing to look deeper, it was precisely within these traditions that one could find the roots of Ukrainians' ideological and military readiness to defend their state – a fact that came as a surprise to many.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the "socialist camp" it had created, it has become increasingly clear that some of Ukraine's neighbors were fighting for more than the restoration of their own statehood. That is why they are now haunted by the phantom pains of the "greatness" of their former imperialisms. Unfortunately, we can see that political populism is driving nations backward rather than forward. It is not about striving toward a shared European future, but about recreating a hostile past. By contrast, Ukrainian political tradition holds no old grudges to settle, no intentions to take revenge on former European occupiers, and no desire to turn back time in any way. In other words, it is impossible to build a political career on such sentiments.

Ukrainian liberation nationalism has always demanded "right-wing" attention to the roots and traditions that would form the foundation of the future Ukrainian state, while recognizing that the "left-wing" concept of social justice can only be realized under the condition of "national liberation," that is, the restoration of its own statehood. To this must be added the concepts of "freedom" and "justice," which hold a near-magical resonance for Ukrainians – the desire to be a free person living in a free country and to enjoy such "liberal" achievements as freedom of speech and freedom of choice.

The Ukrainian liberation movement is now losing its alternative status in relation to various occupying regimes and becoming the natural guardian of its own state, in particular by transforming itself into an (armed) critically thinking civil society. At the same time, experts note the subcultural, and to some extent even marginal, nature of many Western political movements of diverse ideological orientations, which are contributing to the creation of a dangerously irresponsible "chaos of interests."

Ukraine's Perspective on a World of Trust and Mutual Respect

We come to the conclusion that an effective Ukrainian state – with its long tradition of anti-imperial and anti-colonial resistance – requires balance across the entire political spectrum in order to strengthen its independence. Only under such conditions can we finally have a healthy social life. In turn, political

competition at the national level must be based on the premise of which political force can contribute more to Ukraine under specific political circumstances.

From this perspective, any "right-wing" internationals are just as dangerous as the "left-wing" international associations once initiated by the Soviet Union. This is because both deny the need to view the world through "the lens of national interests," thereby diverting attention from those who actually benefit from such "white noise."

Therefore, referring to the Ukrainian liberation tradition, we can assert the following:

First, we are now at the stage of preserving Ukrainian statehood rather than merely achieving it, which requires a healthy social environment and a shared sense of responsibility for our common future.

Second, Ukraine's sincere belief in freedom and justice – and in the idea that "truth exists" — makes the Ukrainian struggle both comprehensible and inspiring to the world.

Third, Ukraine's victory will make our world a better place – more humane and grounded in shared values.

At the international level, the main indicator of Ukraine's current and potential allies is not the political self-identification of their parties within national contexts, but the extent to which they respect Ukrainian sovereignty and understand Ukrainian national interests. It is not words that matter most, but actions – although words are important too, as they shape our reality. Mutual respect, from which trust grows, remains the key criterion for determining who Ukraine's true friends are – that is, those who deserve respect and trust in return. **Ї**