



The 1000 Days of the War in Ukraine: Humanitarian Emergency and Trump's Policy

November 18 marked 1000 days since the war in Ukraine began. Since the beginning of the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, international efforts have been generated to stop Russia's expansive policy, determined to invade a democratic and sovereign country. Not only does it mean a humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, but it also has implications for security within the international system; whereas a war in Europe is a threat to its security and stability.

Since the beginning of this conflict, both NATO and the West – and especially the White House – have questioned how to provide support to Ukraine without having to intervene in the conflict, confronting Russia directly. This seems to be the big question when it comes to helping the Ukrainian army, and part of the reason for the echo of the recent US weapons use authorisation.

After the failure of the international community to put an end to Russian aggression, the role of the White House as an important player in the development of this conflict emerges. On the eve of a new government presided over by Donald Trump, we may be facing a change in dynamics in

the international system that will be reflected in changes in the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The political development of the conflict

The reason for the Russian invasion has been discussed by everyone and under all possible political theoretical perspectives. Following Ukraine's efforts to pursue greater rapprochement with the West, Russia perceived it as foreign interference within its spheres of influence. The illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, as it was only the beginning of a Russian expansionist project that sought to invade Ukrainian territory, alluding to a reminiscence of the past: the Soviet Union. This is how Russia showed a return to power politics and spheres of influence – under a realistic internationalist theory.

The invasion of a sovereign territory directly violates Article Two of the United Nations Charter, which establishes the principle of sovereign equality among all its members. While Russia and Ukraine are so, it results in a violation of international law, and consequently has been rejected by the international community. Likewise,



a war in Europe has been perceived as a threat to the security of the region. Consequently, since 2014 the European Union has suspended bilateral agreements with Russia and adopted a long list of policies and sanctions aimed at the Kremlin and its most loyal allies. Despite the fact that Russia is one of the EU's largest trading partners in terms of energy and the EU's dependence on it, the Union prioritised its values of democracy and the rule of law, underlining its regulatory power already reflected in its foreign policy.

The European Union has also been one of the main actors in complying with the crisis arising from the Russian invasion. With the adoption of a comprehensive policy, it was established to provide assistance in military missions and a guide for the reception of refugees from the war, as well as sanctions aimed at Russia.

This is how Russia suffered international isolation from major actors such as the European Union and the United States, showing firm support for the Kiev government and its citizens.

Humanitarian emergency in Ukraine

After more than 1000 days of armed conflict following the full-scale Russian-led invasion of Ukrainian territory, it is important to pay attention to the dire situation faced by millions of people as a result of this situation. In the course of the conflict, the population has fallen to 30 million, 14 million of whom are vulnerable and in need of

humanitarian assistance. In other figures, this means that 1 in 2 Ukrainian families require this help.

According to United Nations data, some 12,162 civilians have been killed and at least 26,919 injured since February 2022. In addition, more than 3400 schools and hospitals have been damaged or destroyed and 10 million people have fled their homes. This humanitarian crisis increases its severity as we approach the third winter in war: struggling with disruptions to the supply of electricity, heating and water.

The Russian army's attacks have led to the destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure. Not only is the right to life of Ukrainians violated, but they are also prevented from living their lives in their place of origin.

Ukrainian children: from adoptions to forced deportations

Ukrainian children have been the target of violations of their rights – and alleged war crimes – since the beginning of the conflict. As a highly vulnerable demographic, it has experienced rapid international assistance and coordination to ensure its protection. However, they have also been the target of Russian political weapons, attacking their integrity and Ukrainian identity.

On the one hand, thousands of children have suffered the loss of their parents, being left alone



adrift during this war. Adoption has emerged as a measure to accompany them, and try to give them back the right to enjoy their infancy and childhood.

There is a need to ensure the protection of unaccompanied and separated children who have fled the conflict. In safe areas in Ukraine, child adoption has increased exponentially, from 752 in 2022 to 925 in 2023. Although the foreign adoption of Ukrainian children was banned due to the conflict, there were children evacuated abroad for their greater protection.

Given their geographical proximity, several European countries have turned to helping these children through foster care and adoption programmes. With the intention of protecting them from the conflict and their risks of being victims of violence, abuse, trafficking and exploitation, the initiative of organizations has emerged, together with the coordination of the competent authorities of that State, to create programs to provide this protection and a search for a safe place.

Likewise, efforts have been made to ensure alignment with the required standards and quality criteria and systematic monitoring during these processes, where the well-being of children lies in the main objective. By taking them away from conflict and providing them with a home and a new family, it is also about introducing them to the culture of their new country, favoring greater

integration to facilitate their development and adaptation. The best interests of this process must be reunification with his or her family, with adoption being the last resort given when this reunification has no place in the child's family context.

On the other hand, there has been a mass deportation of Ukrainian children to Russian territory. More than 700,000 children have been taken from their families in Ukraine and placed under Russian control, making up 1 in 5 children. This gesture is an attempt by Russia to eliminate the Ukrainian identity of these children through the



imposition of propaganda narratives.

Image1. Ukrainian girl deported by Russia. Source: Socialists & Democrats

The forced deportations of children to Russian territory, thus trying to end their Ukrainian identity, allude to a genocidal technique and are a violation of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, within the framework of the United Nations. After invading Ukrainian territory, the Russian army recruits children from occupied Ukraine and sends them to 'summer camps' in Russia. However, these 'camps'



do not exist, but this term is used to cover up deportations. These victims can end up in pro-Russian re-education centres, including military training; in hospitals or similar centres in an area under Russian control, or in family centres. On several occasions, moreover, they are granted Russian nationality, making it even more difficult for these children to return as they are now considered Russian citizens and reside under the guardianship of the state.

Currently, there are NGOs dedicated to returning these children to Ukraine with their families. These missions cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 each, slowing down the process due to their economic cost. Given the large number of deported children, a budget of 2,100 billion would be needed to be able to release them all, a fact currently unlikely both for the Ukrainian government and for the organizations dedicated to this purpose. Even so, since the beginning of the conflict, 523 children have been returned to their families. Likewise, efforts to address this problem also come from Ukrainian government agencies, mediating countries (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey) and individuals, both volunteers and public figures.

What about the International Criminal Court?

On March 17, 2023, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for the Russian president. This was in relation to alleged war crimes to the 'deportation and illegal transfer of

children from occupied Ukraine'. In addition, Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, Russia's Commissioner for Children's Rights, also received an arrest warrant. These crimes were allegedly committed in occupied Ukrainian territory since February 24, 2022, after the start of the Russian invasion.

Although neither of the two defendants carried out the actions directly, both are determined to be directly responsible for the acts, for failing to exercise key control over their subordinates or to stop these acts upon their knowledge. As authority figures before their subordinates and military, they respond to this superior responsibility.

However, these accusations are in line with the Rome Statute that led to the creation of the ICC in 1998. It should be noted that neither Russia nor Ukraine are party to this Statute, so they have not recognized the authority of the ICC. In this case, they cannot be detained within the borders of Russian or Ukrainian territory.

In September of this year, Putin travelled to Mongolia on a diplomatic tour that included several Asian countries. Mongolia, having ratified the authority of the International Criminal Court, should have complied with the arrest warrant and proceeded to arrest the Russian president for war crimes. However, he was reluctant to carry out this arrest under his territory.



Image 2. Russian President Vladimir Putin on his visit to Mongolia with Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh.
Source: France24.

A fact like this demonstrates the weakness of the agency due to its lack of order execution mechanisms. There is no place for a member state of the Court not to obey its orders and receive – with honours – diplomatic visits from alleged war criminals.

Biden's policy shift

One state that has certainly intervened in a relevant way during this conflict is the United States. In his last months in the White House, Joe Biden has decided to authorise Ukraine to use US weapons – long-range missiles – in order to hinder the advance of Russian troops while attacking Russian territory. This decision is key to US foreign policy towards Ukraine and Russia, and it is no coincidence that it was taken after Trump's victory in the elections.

The Kremlin shows that it has perceived this decision as an attempt to stoke tension and increase the dimension of the conflict, based on the

increased involvement of the United States in the war. In a statement, Moscow determined that the entry of a US missile into Russian territory would be considered a direct US attack, internationalising the large-scale conflict and a possible outbreak of World War III. As a result, Russia would have an 'adequate, appropriate and tangible response' if the missiles hit its territory, according to statements from the Russian Foreign Ministry. The fact that the United States is a member of NATO – which has shown a continuous defense of Ukraine against Russian aggression – means that an 'adequate, appropriate and tangible response' from Russia could activate Article Five of the Treaty. This states that the attack on one member of the organization will be interpreted as an attack directed at all members.

However, being alarmed right now is not necessary given the uncertainty that characterizes Trump's upcoming entry into the Oval Office; which could completely change the international scenario.

Trump and American 'pacifism'

Donald Trump's policy in the past has shown to have as its main objective the pursuit of a national interest within the United States; in such a way that the intervention of the power in foreign wars has no place in its political project. In his last term, Trump already showed an aversion to the deployment of US troops and materiel in conflicts outside the country. The national interest, therefore, is defined



according to its borders, while the greatest importance is the issues that happen within the country. As long as it is not determined that the US perceives insecurity as a result of the existence of a conflict, it remains alien to the national interest of the power and therefore resides outside its foreign policy.

Donald Trump's return to the Oval Office has rekindled hopes for progress in U.S. bilateral relations with Russia. In addition, Trump has publicly praised his political power, stating that his term would end the war in Ukraine. But what implications does Trump's policy have on the war in Ukraine?

The future president publicly stated that he would be able to 'end the conflict in just 24 hours', although he does not specify what his methods would be to carry it out. However, this could demonstrate a deficit in Kiev's negotiating capacity vis-à-vis Moscow, given that a third party would be having more power than they would be the main actors.

Both Zelensky and Putin have shown their rapprochement with Trump on several past occasions, and it has not been less after his recent re-election to the White House. Both presidents congratulated the Republican on his victory, showing a willingness to rapprochement that could also be perceived as a willingness to negotiate, with Washington taking on the role of moderator.

The return to a defensive foreign policy ('America First') suggests a shift in military relations between the United States and Ukraine. Control over arms shipments will pass into Republican hands in January, and given Trump's dislike of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and positivity toward a peace deal, it could spell an end to U.S. arms shipments to Ukraine. Since February 2022, the country has allocated \$108 billion to deal with the Russian invasion. Trump, under his slogan of 'America First', would cease this funding. The reduction in the budget of the Ukrainian army would also be a boost to the negotiator for a peace agreement, although under a condition of inferiority with respect to Moscow. Marco Rubio, proposed to be the new secretary of state under President Trump, also expressed the intention of pressuring Ukraine to pursue an agreement with Russia.

In addition, Trump has nominated Keith Kellogg, a retired lieutenant general, as special peace envoy to Ukraine. Its role is to lead the negotiations to end the war, adopting a moderator role. In past statements, Kellogg showed its defense with sending weapons to Ukraine to provide 'the necessary means to end the war'. Currently, his 'peace plan' is based on the threat to Ukraine to cease military aid unless Kiev agrees to negotiate peace with Russia. On the part of its rapprochement with Russia, Ukraine's membership in NATO would be delayed in exchange for a 'comprehensive and verifiable agreement with security guarantees'.



The future for Washington-Moscow relations

After congratulating Trump on his victory, Putin declared that "they are ready to talk to Trump." Various sources say that the two politicians have maintained contact after the departure of the Republican from the White House, a fact that suggests future negotiations between the two governments with a more positive outlook compared to the past.

During his election campaign, there were repeated allusions to restoring 'relations with Russia and ending the crisis in Ukraine', statements that drew the Kremlin's attention to a possible rapprochement with the White House following the Republican victory.



Image 3. Meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin.

Source: BBC.

Following Biden's relentless support for Ukraine, the Kremlin claims that ties with Washington are at an all-time low because of this support. In this line, the way is opened to re-establish relations in a cooperative and peaceful manner, as suggested by statements about the implications for Trump's re-election. Russia is confident in a paradigm shift where Trump's foreign policy will be disruptive to

the current relations between the White House and the Kremlin.

Conclusions

The war in Ukraine shows an inability of the multilateral frameworks established to prevent conflicts and ensure lasting peace, resulting in a crisis of legitimacy of multilateralism. How should a system be trusted to safeguard peace and security when it is showing a deficiency in ending a war? No matter how many sanctions and international isolation have been made against Russia, the Kremlin has not ceased in its plan to occupy Ukrainian territory and attack its civilian population. It is important that, out of conflicts such as this one, systemic reforms can be considered in order to build stronger institutions for lasting peace.

However, the future change in U.S. foreign policy could finally bring an end to Russian aggression. Although Biden's decision to leave the situation with the consequences of this new scenario in the hands of his successor has recently caused a uproar of opinion internationally, Trump is showing firmness in his ability to end the conflict.

After more than a thousand days of conflict, Trump's return to US politics awakens a new vision of the future of the conflict and relations between Moscow and Washington. The change in US foreign policy will undoubtedly have an impact on the dynamics of the international system; and the will



to end the war in Ukraine is going to affect the conflict – whether or not it manages to end it. This is how we will certainly experience a change as powerful actors in the system are going to drastically change their position on the conflict; causing a possible disruption of the status quo.

Although no one is certain of the possibility of an agreement with Donald Trump, both Russia and Ukraine have a positive and hopeful perception that it will serve to end the long-running conflict. Ukraine, however, does not seem to contemplate the power dynamics that could underlie the negotiations and that would involve direct subordination to the wills of the United States and Russia.

Only time and the establishment of Trump's new presidency will tell what the implications of this event have been in the perpetuation of the conflict. Even so, there is still a need to fight for respect for international law and the protection of human rights, seeking to provide a solution so that the millions of people who have suffered and continue to suffer the consequences of war can fulfil their right of return and the right to a dignified life in their country of origin.

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