

## Five factors impacting the world today

The war in Ukraine calls for a re-examination of the values of the modern world. Over the past six weeks, we have witnessed a radical re-alignment of the geopolitical situation, which has triggered a change in our understanding of the modern world, as well as a shift in the players and factors driving contemporary geopolitics.

To begin with, the world has finally opened its eyes to the truth about Russia. For years, it had averted its gaze from this unpleasant reality. Poland and the Poles, who have in the past suffered tragedy after tragedy - the Partitions, enslavement, Siberian exile, the Katyn massacre, the gulags, and life under communism – had been dismissed as Russophobes. For the past six weeks worldwide public opinion has realized what is actually happening - although some remain slower to face the facts than others.

The things we have been warning the world about for years are now coming to light in Ukraine in the form of mass graves and dozens of brutally murdered corpses. The world today can see what Russia and the Russians are capable of. And I explicitly refer to the Russians here, because the conflict in Ukraine is not simply Putin's war. Its implications extend far beyond a single individual, just as Hitler himself was not the only man standing behind the horrors of the Second World War. No individual acts a sole perpetrator of such events. The political system that functions in Russia is equally insane. As such it is unpredictable and poses an enormous and deadly threat to humanity.

The world has seen a glimpse of this naked brutality.. Yet it still does not quite comprehend the ramifications of this truth, fails to gauge the fact that Russia will not stop until we stop it. It will not rest on its laurels in Ukraine or Poland. Instead, it will set its sights on Munich, Berlin and Lisbon if we don't stand firm. The only thing this regime understands is the argument of force. I recall Angela Merkel arguing how important it was to engage with Russia in dialogue. Talk is, of course, important, but communicating through strength and action is just as vital. And all of us today, in both Europe and the world as a whole, have a responsibility to formulate and express such force in material form. It has become clear to the world that something terrible is happening and the source of this deadly menace is Russia - this is the first new factor we must deal with in regard to the war in Ukraine. However, at the same time the world is rather reluctant to accept the aftermath of Russian aggression, thinking that maybe things will still somehow work out on their own, preferably at little cost (i.e., at the expense of the Ukrainians, possibly the Poles, and the Baltic States). Well, this approach will simply not work! Evil cannot be avoided if we do not act. And firm decisions must be taken now.

The second important new and valuable truth exposed by this war, and which I dare say changes not only the existing balance of power, but perhaps the entire paradigm upon which our civilisation is founded, is that the very existence of nations depends on the patriotism of their citizens, based on a community's readiness to defend itself. However, I do not know whether every European community, every society or every state is prepared today to defend its community at the cost of its citizens' lives.

The Ukrainians have shown that in order to preserve their society they have to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice - that of one's life for one's homeland. And it is mainly thanks to this faith that – so far – the Ukrainians have managed to defeat Putin. And it is this patriotism, this love of one's homeland to the bitter end, something entirely out of fashion elsewhere nowadays, that is driving the Ukrainians in their successful resistance. Their cultural identity and cultural background are what makes them capable of making sacrifices for their homeland, while others fail to do so. In tandem with this view is an awareness that defending one's homeland means defending one's own interests, one's own family, one's own children, and the things that are held most dear to them. It comes down to an unshakeable belief that the primary value is a sense of national togetherness and identity .

While some try to label our Polish or Ukrainian patriotism as a brand of nationalism, or even chauvinism, it is nothing more than a love of homeland. Just like the Ukrainians, we know that this attitude is vital to the future of our society. It can be clearly seen that the people of Ukraine find in patriotism the strength they need to change the rules of the geopolitical game. There is simply no denying it - the whole world had expected that within three days of their unprovoked invasion the Russians would capture Kyiv, install a puppet government, and the war would be over. The 'problem' would be solved and, 'peace would reign in Kiev', and the world would barely have even noticed that anything had happened. But for how long? If this scenario had played in real life, if evil had been allowed to triumph in three days, Putin would have been standing victoriously at the gates of Europe, ready to impose on us the ruthless terms of surrender. The Germans, at least those with the money to do so, would probably have emigrated to the Caribbean by now rather than face the prospect of Russian troops on their doorstep. But they didn't! They didn't have to flee, because someone else has rewritten the script. It turns out that the Ukrainians were able to overcome the danger of such fatalism through their wonderful dedication to the nation of their birth! Hope can be brought to the world through patriotism (not nationalism! not chauvinism!)! It is their willingness to shed blood for their nation that has become the real game changer in the contemporary world. The sooner the world realises this, the better its prospects for survival in this currently dangerous world.

A third and entirely new factor that has emerged in the current conflict is the fact that this powerful wave of Ukrainian patriotism is completely devoid of any traces of nationalism or Banderism. Although we Poles have viewed this trend as something refreshing, it has been a painful blow to the Russians, who wanted to paint Ukrainian patriotism in the colours of Nazism, nationalism and the brutal Banderist movement of the Second World War. Instead, the Ukrainians' faith in their country is modern, civic and pro-European in character.

We hope that the new myth underpinning Ukrainian society, currently being remoulded before our very eyes, will be rooted in precisely those values: modern, mature, democratic, civic and European. I believe that this is a trend we all support. After all, contrary to the lies being promoted via Putin's propaganda machine and Russia's soft power exerted in the West, this philosophy also lies at the heart of Polish, republican patriotism.

A fourth aspect, and one which I believe is an important game-changer at the present time, has been Ukraine's access to an effective military defence based on new and modern means of warfare.

I should point out that the world of weapons technology has changed to such an extent that nowadays defence on the battlefield is becoming extremely effective. Above all, I have in mind here electronic weaponry, anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons as well as drones - which have changed the face of contemporary combat. Massed columns of iron and metal and massed ranks of soldiers have turned out not to be as threatening as one might have thought in the face of modern defence systems and highly trained and morally and patriotically motivated small groups of mobile defenders. The traditional offensive tactics of conventional armies can be countered with great efficiency. Technological change and training (we know that the Ukrainians have been drilled by experts from NATO states) have thus also been vital in changing the status quo of the contemporary world. Regardless of how this war unfolds, the Russian army has already been discredited and stripped of its aura of invincibility - a brand new variable in the geopolitical system.

Finally, we come to the last factor of extraordinary significance. Paradoxically, this is the negative impact of certain cultural changes in Western Europe and the world in general, often criticised from a conservative point of view. This new approach, by dismantling old axioms and hierarchies of values, first introduced the dogma of axiological relativism (liquid modernity) and then, in an attempt to escape complete nihilism and anomie, promoted contemporary post-modern morality based mainly on empathy and the ethics of emotions. This left-liberal quest for new axiological foundations has highlighted, for example, the concept of "tenderness", to which Olga Tokarczuk dedicated her Nobel lecture. And yet,, for two thousand years we have been familiar with something more interesting and more profound than tenderness, notably Christian love . However, perhaps it is a good thing that the drifting, post-modern left is now earnestly seeking some kind of permanent moral reference. As a consequence ,

empathy and the ethics of emotions represented by the left-liberal , along with the sensitivity and love of one's neighbour espoused by Christianity, i.e. values close to my background, both preclude in the contemporary world any acceptance of the events currently taking place in Ukraine.

It is impossible to remain indifferent to the horrific discoveries made in Bucza . And from here stems the hope that worldwide public opinion will in some paradoxical way unite in protest against the evil perpetrated by the Russian Federation and force governments to take real action. I, therefore, also hope that by invoking basic human reactions to evil, both believers, committed to the Christian tradition, and non-believers, affiliated with the liberal-left tradition, will not only condemn what is now happening in Ukraine, but will also seek a more general conclusion regarding this new Evil Empire. The world faces tough decisions and must take real and concrete steps if it is to stand up to evil. If we fail to do so, then – beware Germans and Europeans -the consequences will catch up with us one day, even if were to escape to the most remote corners of the globe. We have no choice. We must act now and take advantage of the precious window of time afforded us by the Ukrainians through their heroism.

All five factors briefly outlined above are not only new but are also having a largely positive impact in terms of bringing about changes in the way we view the modern world and contemporary international politics. The fact that all five factors have powerfully come to the fore during the present drama at the same time creates a unique opportunity for positive global socio-political change. It is upon their basis that we need to confront Russian aggression and the brutal war in Ukraine. The same conclusion applies to all: the world, Europe, our politicians, and our individual communities. We should take a bolder and more determined stand in defence of Ukraine and the world today against Russia. This involves engaging in even more explicit military action, pursuing all-embracing sanctions in the political, economic, sports and cultural spheres, as well as embracing new solutions such as a peacekeeping mission and bolstering the effectiveness of international organisations.

Today, the Ukrainians are fighting for us. They are a new asset, a nation that is shifting the vectors of present-day politics and the world. But it is imperative that we adopt new, more daring approaches and strategies, because otherwise we will be unable to halt this evil. We face the danger of a domino effect, where evil engulfs us all if we do not stop it. The world must be on the lookout for new and bolder solutions.

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