



Research Paper

((Post)war impasse. Selected sociopolitical remarks on the situation after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022

Blazej Kmiecik, MA, Ph.D.

Associate professor
Department of Medical Law
Medical University of Lodz

Abstract

Russia's attack on Ukraine was an event that attracts the attention of the whole world. invasion that took place at the end of February 2022. led to very dynamic social and political changes. We are now in a situation where the vast majority of countries in the world have condemned this action. In Poland, where most of the people fleeing from Ukraine arrived, many important activities took place. On the one hand, we can see the activity of the society, which took in almost 2 million - mostly - women and children in a few months. On the other hand, we see very negative relations currently between Poland and Russia. There is also a third area that appears both in discussions taking place in Poland and abroad. What will happen next with this situation? How long will this conflict last? Is it possible to end it? Will an obvious violation of human rights force the international community to intervene? Do we now have an international penal system that can judge the war crimes we see in this conflict? Perhaps we are currently in a kind of stalemate?

Keywords: war, Ukraine, human rights, international policy, peace

*Received 06 Mar., 2023; Revised 17 Mar., 2023; Accepted 19 Mar., 2023 © The author(s) 2023.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org*

I. Introduction

The military conflict in Ukraine is certainly one of those events in recent history that will permanently change the socio-political reality. About two million people fleeing to Poland from the war conflict mentioned here had a direct impact on the everyday life of people living "by the Vistula". On the one hand, there was concern about the daily functioning of both cities, which had to accept thousands of immigrants overnight. On the other hand, also at the family level, there were a lot of unprecedented requirements related to the need to support people who had to leave their place of residence in Ukraine from day to day, and perhaps also from hour to hour. [1] Polish citizens decided to help these people with great commitment, most often calling them their "Ukrainian brothers and sisters". The attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine on February 24, 2022. however, it was the moment that provoked numerous questions about Poland's security. We are a country located on the eastern wall of NATO. In an almost natural way, questions arose about the real nature of the security guarantees offered to us by our alliances, including the relations between us and the states of the North Atlantic Alliance.[2]

These questions became of particular importance in the first weeks of Russian aggression. Poland has certainly become one of the main advocates seeking support for Ukraine from other countries, including those countries that are not members of the European Union. National security concerns became much stronger for a while when on November 15, 2022. Two rockets fell on the town of Przewozów, near the border with Ukraine, killing two Polish citizens. Many people probably asked themselves at that time: Is this the beginning of the war? Ultimately, most of the data collected in this case proves that these were not two "stray" Russian missiles, but missiles that the Ukrainian military fired in defense of a massive Russian artillery attack that took place on November 14, 2022. [3]. These situations make us agree with the thesis according to which we began - for the first time since the period of the "Cold War" - to live in a time of strong fears for our own safety. First, the Covid 19 pandemic has significantly changed the way we operate on a daily basis. For nearly a year, however, the awareness of the ongoing military conflict beyond the Polish border has caused strong anxiety. [4]

Here comes the question of further times. We naturally compare these actions to those war conflicts known to us from history. We are talking about both World War II and, for example, the more recent conflict in

the former Yugoslavia. Currently, however, the situation looks a bit different. It is true that in the conflict on Ukrainian soil we see horrific images of violence and even, as many point out, war crimes committed by the soldiers of the Russian Federation. This is certainly the first conflict that is so accurately presented in the media/virtual world. However, observing its course, thinking about further scenarios, we can come to the conclusion that we are in fact functioning at a historical moment that we can call an "impasse". It is worth expanding on this topic.[5]

(Not) permanent changes

The invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops was almost unambiguously recognized as a violent (terrorist) act. Both at the level of the UN, as well as NATO and the EU, it has been repeatedly pointed out that we are talking here about an unlawful attack of one state by another. Here, however, the key question arises: What next? Commonly known cases of discovered graves of people shot, numerous cases of torture, including civilian deaths, actions affecting, for example, medical infrastructure, clearly suggest - also based on history - that it will be necessary to judge similar acts. There is no doubt that the Ukrainian civilian population has directly experienced violence from the Russian side. Its intermediate form is also noticed. We are talking about the destruction of, for example, places whose proper functioning is responsible for providing the population with water, electricity, heating, etc. The above-mentioned examples of torture, physical and sexual violence are regularly noted by non-governmental organizations and international organizations. But who is able to judge such conduct? [6] After World War II, but also after the conflict in Yugoslavia or in Rwanda, special Criminal Tribunals were established, established by states (coalitions of states) that won a given conflict, or, using an international mandate, undertook actions to seek justice. Their purpose was to judge the crime committed by the rulers of individual states who issued the orders and their executors, both commanders, soldiers and officials signing the orders. [7] In the case of Russia, we have a completely different situation. On the one hand, there is a conviction indicating the need for similar actions. It is noted that both Russian President Vladimir Putin and military commanders should be tried by a criminal tribunal. After all, the armed aggression in Ukraine was not related to the protection of Russia's borders. The discovered war crimes committed against Ukrainian civilians clearly require action to be taken to clarify each of these cases in order to pass a fair verdict. From the other perspective, however, it should be noted that neither Russia's leaders nor its broadly understood political class accept such possibilities of action. To judge the above people would have to "lose" the conflict. However, no one - apart from Ukraine - conducts military operations in Russia. No one has taken action in the form of, for example, finding and arresting the Russian president in order to judge him. Moreover, after the attack on Ukraine, Vladimir Putin made many diplomatic trips abroad. He is not wanted on an international arrest warrant. Submission to a tribunal is therefore not realistically possible. [8] The crimes of Russian soldiers - which is already taking place - can be judged by Ukrainian courts when a person committing war crimes is caught. Unfortunately, these facts lead to an extremely tragic conclusion. Russia's aggressive actions towards Ukraine will never be fully judged. It is obvious that the EU and NATO countries have decided to take steps in the form of sanctions directed towards Russia. However, these actions have not been taken by some Asian countries, which still provide Russia with the possibility of commercial activities. Therefore, sanctions are not a real and effective way to influence the Russian rulers to change their actions.[9]

Situational impasse with anxiety

It is worth putting forward a thesis here. No one nowadays thinks about any military intervention directed towards Russia. There may be several reasons for such a position. First of all, it is worth asking yourself: What would such an invasion look like? Russia is the largest country in the world. It is certainly still a military power. What would conquering this country look like? Which part of it could be considered the most important, the part that would justify the claim that "Russia has been conquered"? Secondly, it seems that military aggression in Russia is an action that Western countries do not want from a purely political point of view. The collapse of the USSR led to dynamic, often difficult to predict changes that were associated with the emergence of many new post-Soviet states. Some of them had a nuclear arsenal left behind. The current division of Russia into smaller territories could, on the one hand, lead to the suspension of the influence of Arab states, including those in which the policy of radical Islam is beginning to have a strong voice. In addition, a military defeat by Russia would be a valuable historical event for China, which would gain easier access to the deposit-rich areas of Siberia. There is also the last element that makes it impossible to realistically assume an invasion of Russia by some state/allied group of states. This is the fear of the emergence of a nuclear conflict.[10] This particular "bogey" is increased by the awareness of the lack of full knowledge of Russia's nuclear arsenal. Today, we do not fully know in what conditions nuclear warheads are stored. We also do not know who actually has access to them. The fear of the consequences of aggression is therefore real here. This is why all international activity regarding the actions of this country is limited to only publicly spoken firm words. The only concrete military action that Western countries are currently deciding on is military support for Ukraine. Other activities of this type could be considered as an act of aggression against Russia, which, probably

supported by Belarus, would lead to the emergence of a new, perhaps unprecedented military conflict. (It must be admitted, however, that we are talking about modern military equipment sent by other countries motivated, among others, by the USA and Poland.) [11]

The prospect of change?

The geopolitical location of Poland is of particular importance. On the one hand, we are NATO's eastern flank. When two rockets (originally considered Russian weapons) fell on the territory of the Republic of Poland, we could see how the North-Atlantic Alliance reacted. The members of the Alliance immediately gathered together. Representatives of the US authorities also took action. It can be seen that the eyes of the countries of this group were turned towards their ally. On the other hand, from the Polish perspective, the question constantly arises: Will we be the next country to experience similar armed aggression? This question may raise serious concerns for people familiar with the history of the 20th century. In 1939 Poland had signed alliances, among others with Great Britain and France. These countries did declare war on the Third Reich. However, they did not take any military action to protect their ally, i.e. Poland. Poland's participation in NATO is of particular importance. Allied forces, including the US army, are stationed on the territory of our country. However, the proximity of a state that is carrying out a similar aggression against our neighbor means that the existence of international agreements may still be associated with the question: Will the alliances be implemented at the time of the attack? [12]

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is certainly an event difficult to compare with any other similar situation in recent history. This is a conflict that is very thoroughly covered by the media, including the lightning-fast social media. This is a surprising conflict. The great Russian army repeatedly suffers losses against the potentially much smaller Ukrainian armed forces. However, we can see here the extraordinary importance of the independence motivation of our eastern neighbors. This conflict is slowly entering the area of a specific "impasse" mentioned several times above. Its groundbreaking solution is not visible. It is not realistic for any Western country to join it. Certainly, the accession of Ukraine to NATO could change this situation. However, it is difficult to say when this country will join the Alliance. The political situation is also stalemate. Russia experiences sanctions. At the same time, however, Russia issued its own sanctions, e.g. on Poland, whose gas supplies were stopped. It is also impossible to bring to justice the Russian leaders (civilian and military) responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Ukrainian citizens. Certainly, these situations have led to many social changes. New refugee support systems have been created. Intensive measures have been taken to make European economies independent of Russian raw materials. New leaders have emerged in the discussion on Europe's security. It was certainly Poland, admired on the international arena for its specific aid activities. But will there be a breakthrough in the coming months? Will this conflict end with a victory for either side? We don't know that.

Bibliography

- [1]. Długosz P., Kryvachuk L., Dominika Izdebska-Długosz, War refugees from Ukraine - life in Poland and plans for the future, Academicon Publishing House, Lublin 2022
- [2]. Bendyk E., Buras P., Poland towards the war, Poland in the world after the war. Tasks for a new time. Stefan Batory Foundation, Warsaw 202
- [3]. Cable: Rocket explosion in Przewodów. Rzeczpospolita, source: <https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art37440381-wybuch-rakiety-w-przedwie-blaszczak-odpowiedzialnosc-za-te-tragedie-ponosi-rosja>
- [4]. Report: Poles on the war in Ukraine and the threat of nuclear weapons, Public Opinion Research Center, Warsaw 2022,
- [5]. Pawlak C. Geopolitical poker - stalemate in the war in Ukraine [OPINIA], Defence24, source: <https://defence24.pl/geopolityka/geopolitical-poker-impas-w-wojnie-na-ukrainie-opinia>
- [6]. Olchowski J., Russian crimes and their international context, Institute of Central Europe, Warsaw 2022,
- [7]. Drózd D. International Criminal Tribunals. Origin, jurisdiction, composition, proceeding, activity, source: <https://docplayer.pl/105200424-Mięczyznowe-trybunaly-kaerne.html>
- [8]. Communication: Ukraine: MEPs want an international war crimes tribunal, European Parliament 2022, source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/pl/press-room/20220517IPR29931/ukraina-poslowie-chca-establisz-an-international-war-crimes-tribunal>
- [9]. Lasota-Krawczyk J., Are sanctions against Russia ineffective? The value of exports increased, RMF24, source: https://www.rmf24.pl/raporty/raport-wojna-z-rosja/gospodarka/news-sankcje-wobec-rosji-sa-nieskuteczne-wartosc-eksportu-wzroslo.nId,6385313#crp_state=1
- [10]. Kacprzyk A., Nuclear threats of Russia during the invasion of Ukraine, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw 2022,
- [11]. Cable: "NYT": The West is taking more and more risks in defense of Ukraine, sending weapons that until now were considered too provocative, Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, <https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/swiat/artykuly/8634484,west-shipping-weapons-to-ukraine-risk.html>
- [12]. Material, 23 years of Poland in NATO. Poland is safe, National Security Bureau, Warsaw 2022, <https://www.bbn.gov.pl/wydarzenia/9324,23-lata-Polski-w-NATO-Polska-jest-bezpieczna.html>,

The article was written as part of the exam that the author took during his studies.