



Notes on the Problems of Modern Parliamentarism

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The war is showing how difficult it is in democracies to change the attitude towards the aggressor.

On the one hand, the European Union adopted six ‘economic sanctions packages’ during the first half of 2022. This was a slow process. However, Russia’s war crimes primarily involve the violation and contempt of human rights and freedoms, so our attention is turning to legislators in all countries.

Citing Russian propaganda media and Ukrainian news reports, the BBC quotes a supposed Russian child human rights defender about taking Ukrainian children from the occupied territories: ‘When we brought them to the territory of Moscow Oblast so that they could recover a bit, the story started that they spoke negatively about the president [Putin], said all kinds of nasty things,¹ sang the Ukrainian national anthem, ‘Glory to Ukraine’ and so on,² said Maria Lvova-Belova at the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on 27 September 2022. However, according to the article, ‘soon after the children were placed under the care of foster families in Russia (with Lvova-Belova taking one of them herself), the children’s attitude, according to her, quickly changed.’³ Since the Russian parliament has given consent to go to war, no other statements justifying the crimes surprise us. When the International Criminal Court in the Hague finally issued arrest warrants in March 2023 for Lvova-Belova and the Russian dictator who started the war for the abduction of Ukrainian children, she said that she saw ‘a clear confirmation that they have no other way to intimidate the country.’⁴ Due to the fact that an arrest warrant has been issued, Lvova-Belova’s ‘team’ now travels around the world in her place—she confirms this in an interview with the Russian propaganda mass media. In other words, when sanctions are imposed not on the institution committing the crime, but on the head of the institution only, its other employees can act freely.

On the other hand, the slow reaction to the organiser of the war shows just how strong Russia’s influence is in the structures of democracies.

¹ Уполномоченная по правам ребенка: дети из Мариуполя говорили гадости про Путина. *Mignews.com*, 28-Sep-2022. Retrieved from <https://mignews.com/news/politic/upolnomochennaya-po-pravam-rebenka-deti-iz-mariupolya-govorili-gadosti-pro-putina.html>

² [Когда мы их привезли на территорию Московской области, чтобы они немножечко восстановились, началась история, что они негативно отзывались о президенте [Путине], говорили всякие гадости, пели гимн Украины, «Слава Украине» и все такое] Rus. – *ibidem*.

³ Уполномоченная по правам ребенка Мария Львова-Белова рассказала о том, как сирот из Мариуполя в новых семьях учат любить Россию. Детей не хотят возвращать их законным представителям, несмотря на требования Украины. *BBC.com*, 28-Sep-2022. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/russian/live/news-62949139/page/3>

⁴ Мария Львова-Белова рассказала об ограничениях из-за ордера МУС и преследовании ее близких. *Rg.ru*, 31-Jul-2023. Retrieved from <http://vybor-naroda.org/lentanovostey/244773-lvova-belova-rasskazala-ob-ogranichenijah-iz-za-ordera-mus.html>

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In the second half of 2022, both the United States Congress and some national parliaments in Europe began to consider whether to recognise Russia as a terrorist state.⁵ When asked by reporters on 6 September 2022 if Russia should be designated a state sponsor of terrorism, President Joe Biden responded publicly:

– No.⁶

Poland, which was holding the presidency of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, informed Russia that it would not allow Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to attend the meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in December,⁷ so all the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation could do was proclaim: ‘The decision of Poland, which is the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, to deny Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov participation in the meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Łódź on 1-2 December of this year is unprecedented and provocative.’⁸ The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs went on to call the ‘Polish attack’ on Russia ‘an anti-treasonous culmination.’ This story is significant in that the Standing Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly that met in Warsaw did not amend the statute—as had been proposed—to suspend the participating State of Russia as an aggressor nation (allegedly due to an ‘uncoordinated procedure’). Vilija Aleknaitė-Abramikienė, a member of the Lithuanian delegation, stated: ‘We cannot put procedure above truth and false diplomacy above conscience. And I am sure that consensus [regarding the decision] is less valuable than conscience.’⁹ Aleknaitė-Abramikienė gave the reason to leave Russia as a member of the OSCE at the Political Assembly of the European People’s Party: ‘Old arguments were used that the OSCE is a unique platform for dialogue.’¹⁰

In 2023, following diplomatic protocol, demonstrating tolerance towards Russia and ignoring international sanctions, Austria admitted the delegation to the OSCE session; then, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Latvian Saeima Rihards Kols first said: ‘We talk right now that we stand up to our principles and values and statutes. We don’t. I mean, there’s an elephant in this room, which is called by the name of the Russian Federation delegation. ... If somebody asked me—who is the war criminal? Well I would point to the back benches in this room. It’s just a disgrace. It’s a disgrace that this delegation is here. Particularly the delegation that consists of members who are sanctioned individuals, who voted to annex an independent country’s territories. Donbass, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia oblasts, Luhansk ... and we’re sitting like nothing happened. ... I will quote the Ukrainian border guards: Русский военный корабль, пошёл на хуй [‘Russian warship, go fuck yourself’].’¹¹

When the Ukrainian offensive began, its president Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the parliaments. In his first addresses on the 24th and 25th of February, he repeated what he had said to the leaders of Western countries, who were allegedly surprised by the Kremlin’s audacity. After a speech to the British House of Commons on 8 March, Zelensky spoke to the parliaments of the EU Member States, the United States, Israel, Canada, South Korea and Japan—24 in total. He addressed the British and the Italians twice:

⁵ Congressman Cohen Introduces Resolution Calling Russian Actions in Ukraine Genocide. *House.gov.us*, 27-Jun-2022. Retrieved from <https://cohen.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressman-cohen-introduces-resolution-calling-russian-actions-ukraine>

⁶ Biden Says No to Appeals to Designate Russia a State Sponsor of Terror. *Voice of America*, 06-Sep-2022. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/biden-says-no-to-appeals-to-designate-russia-a-state-sponsor-of-terror/6734357.html>

⁷ Polska nie wpuści Ławrowa na szczyt OBWE. Rosjanie są wściekli. *Rmf24.pl*, 19-Nov-2022. Retrieved from https://www.rmf24.pl/raporty/raport-wojna-z-rosja/news-polska-nie-wpusci-lawrowa-na-szczyt-obwe-rosjanie-sa-wsciekl,nId,6421453#crp_state=1

⁸ Решение Польши, являющейся Действующим председателем ОБСЕ, отказать Министру иностранных дел Российской Федерации С.В. Лаврову в участии в заседании Совета министров иностранных дел (СМИД) ОБСЕ в г.Л одзь 1-2 декабря с.г. беспрецедентно и провокационно. See Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. *Telegram*, 19-Nov-2022. Retrieved from https://t.me/MID_Russia/24223

⁹ Aleknaitė-Abramikienė, V. *Facebook*, 25-Nov-2022. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/vilija.aleknaiteabramikiene>

¹⁰ Aleknaitė-Abramikienė, V. *Facebook*, 05-Dec-2022. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/vilija.aleknaiteabramikiene>

¹¹ “Krievu karakuģi, ej...” Rihards Kols pasūta Krievijas EDSO delegāciju. *TVNET/LETA*, 23-Feb-2023. Retrieved from <https://www.tvnet.lv/7719181/video-krievu-karakugi-ej-rihards-kols-pasuta-krievijas-edso-delegaciju>

in both cases—the parliaments, as well as in honour of the British during the visit of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and once—to the participants of a rally in Florence.

Austria, Bulgaria and Hungary have refused to listen to Ukraine's head of state, and these will remain interesting cases in terms of the concept of parliamentarism, because the representatives of the nation, by refusing to listen to the leader of a country under attack on the same continent, have a prejudice that they try to justify with relatively weak arguments, even though listening to the address in itself would not oblige them to respond to it—this is Ukraine's attempt to provide information and ask for help. For example, the Austrian parliamentary majority justified its position with 'neutrality' and its supposed unwillingness to 'escalate' the situation, as reported by the Austrian mass media about the reasons given by Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) parliamentarian Axel Kassegger.¹²

It would be very important for us to open our pages to the discussion of the problems of contemporary political structures of democracy and corresponding research topics—the war has shown that parliamentarism is the basis for discussing and adopting laws for human and nation rights and related decisions, rather than the tolerance of evil by simulating 'peace.'

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¹² FPÖ will keine Rede von Selenskyj im Parlament. *Vienna.at*, 19-Apr-2022. Retrieved from <https://www.vienna.at/fpoe-will-keine-rede-von-selenskyj-im-parlament/7382065>