

## Philosophical reflections on the Russian-Ukrainian war and liberal international order

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Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, along with previous acts of the annexation of the Ukrainian territories (Crimea, parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblast), posed many questions about the effectiveness and reliability of the liberal international order along with the exact scope of questions but addressed to the current system of the international law as well.

Some of these questions are mainly about the support Western countries and other allies give Ukraine. The questions are primarily not about the efficiency and technological part of the process (even though it might be the case for the political turbulence) but how friendly countries put this type of Ukrainian request in their conceptual systems when deciding the best strategy for future actions. The biggest problem is a collective gap in the experience of the Ukrainian people and peoples from other countries as far as contemporary Ukrainians, as well as their ancestors, suffered from the imperialism brought up by Russia. The population of the countries that are friendly to Ukraine has mostly never experienced anything similar. Mostly, their ancestors were the citizens of the countries that did not suffer from imperialism but brought it up to other countries and societies.

This article examines how presumptions of imperialism are lasting in liberalism's theory frameworks, in particular international law and moral analyses of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Rather than a wholesale alternative paradigm, emphasis is placed in searching for significant examples where liberal thought inherently continues imperial legacies. The underlying problem is the manner in which contemporary liberal ideology classifies states as either strong or weak, seeing war through the lenses of actors merely choosing to invade errant states or economically aid weaker states. This vision appears to assume that liberal states themselves are invulnerable to territorial occupation – a suggestion that betrays deeper imperial traditions.

The central thesis argues against the way liberal theory excludes the voice of countries currently in conflict, those upon whom decisions regarding support or intervention are being made by outside liberal powers. This rigid model does not give suffering states their interests but rather proscribes positions from a distance from their world. Understanding the Russian-Ukrainian war in liberal terminology requires not the "liberal" anti-imperialism of the sort built by former empires, but a critique that opposes all imperialism, Russian in particular. In conventional liberal thinking, Ukraine, historically subject to a range of imperial forces, is simplified to another issue to be resolved by great liberal powers, its position already decided within their intellectual paradigm.

The analysis subsequently occurs in three parts: firstly, examining central ideas of liberal international order and their theoretical limits; secondly, scrutinizing Western public intellectuals' comments upon war, and particularly upon the Russian-Ukrainian war, as a way of showing how even morally good discourse has an imperialist accommodation (such as the Geneva Conventions' principle of distinction, Rawls's theoretical premises, and assertions by Nussbaum and Butler); thirdly, proposing how liberal international order and international law might be remade by avoiding imperialist theoretical inheritances, including by means of the "substitution argument" whereby international legal norms replace personal moral judgment when liberal systems fail to fit reality.

### KEYWORDS

*liberal dogmas,  
extended political  
liberalism,  
substitution  
argument,  
multilateralism,  
international justice,  
imperialism,  
principle  
of distinction*

### Introduction

It is a historical fact that most of the Ukrainian allies were imperialist countries in the past. Especially that aspect of their historical development brought some of them to the top of the contemporary power-dynamics

relations within liberal international order: "It is clear, nonetheless, that the contemporary period remains one in which the content and well as the legacy of these policies and practices continues to dominate world politics" (Williams, 2018: 95). Liberal international order,



like the current system of international law, was founded after the Second World War by the by the Winners' Party: "International law, though formally neutral among regime types, has mainly been a product of liberal democracies since World War II" (*Doug, Slobodchikoff, 2019: 221*). International law was used as a conceptual and juridical basis for promoting the liberal international order championed by the United States. The situation has changed starting from the end of the 2000-s when the tendencies showed that the world was moving towards a multipolar international order where China, Russia, and other authoritarian regimes would compete with Western countries, bypass rules, and create new centers of the power. According to Sloss and Dickinson 193 UN member states include sixty-six liberal democracies, seventy-five autocracies, and fifty-two hybrid states. It is clear that we live in the era of big challenges for liberal democracy and LIO is clearly endangered:

most autocratic states do not support a liberal international order, rooted in a principled commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Opposition from powerful autocracies, especially China and Russia, makes it increasingly unrealistic to try to maintain a global liberal order (*Sloss, Dickinson, 2022: 799*)<sup>1</sup>.

Such a state of affairs poses a very challenging task to those who consider themselves liberals or promote liberal principles in public policy or foreign policy, just in their arguments or during moral evaluation. The contradiction, which is no longer invisible, is that when Western countries justify their pro-Ukrainian policies, it might sound like they could be more attentive to the moral aspect of the current state of affairs. Another specific tendency is that liberal worldviews were presented as the one valid option for moral justification. If a position is dissimilar to the liberal argument, it will probably be marked as "inadequate"<sup>2</sup>. I assume this is so because of the inability of liberal optics to grasp the essential parts of the problem, not just the surface. I also assume that this is so because of the imperialist past of the liberal states and the hidden influence of imperialism based on contemporary liberal thought in the present day.

I aim to explicate the imperialist implications of liberalism (and liberal international order in general) in its theoretical framework, including the international law and moral evaluation of the Russian-Ukrainian war. I should clarify that I will not try to present consistent alternative theoretical account of liberalism and international law. What is essential is to scrutinize the most significant examples that support my hypothesis. However, some arguments from my position – extended political liberalism, will be presented.

Much literature covers the issue of war, especially just war, from the liberal standpoint. The hypothesis can be formulated that a liberal theoretical background might influence current frustrating acknowledgments concerning the Russian-Ukrainian war (and wars in general). The **research problem** is the lack of a precise list of the flaws in the theoretical background of the contemporary liberal views on war, which might unconsciously include imperialist historical heritage: treating countries as powerful and powerless, looking at the war from the standpoint of somebody who can only

either attack a rogue-state or support the weak state with money. This list is not final. Also, it seems that the liberal position rests on the understanding that the actual invasion of the territory of the liberal country is something impossible.

My **main objection** will be that contemporary liberal views about war leave minimal or no space for arguments and normative positions of the states currently in the war, those about whom liberal states decide to support or start an intervention. Liberal dogmatism cannot adequately represent the interests of the states that suffer from the war. Their standpoint is optional. They were already given one on the level of the liberal theory. Such a standpoint is prescribed by someone who decides whether or not there will be a war or whether to start an intervention. In this world, the real prospect that a liberal state could be attacked or engaged in full-scale war is almost impossible. It is a sign of the imperial heritage, which is implicit in this dogmatic idea.

Another argument here is that the Russian-Ukrainian war can be adequately understood by liberals only by revising current liberal discourse. However, not through "liberal" anti-imperialism invented by the former empires, but such that, in addition to the imperialism of Russia, will be critical of other signs of imperialism. Through such "liberal optics" Ukraine itself, which has always been under the strong influence of various empires, appears as another enigma for the "powerful liberal states" to solve. Thus, Ukraine, for example, already has a particular place in such optics a priori. Considering everything mentioned above, I will state that manifestations of liberal imperialism should be analyzed and criticized.

In Part 1, I will present my interpretation of the basic notions for understanding the liberal international order and its flaws in theoretical background.

In Part 2, I will analyze some documents, texts, and statements of the liberal Western public intellectuals concerning the phenomenon of the war, with particular attention to the Russian-Ukrainian war. I want to show that these sayings out of bad intentions still include an imperialistic component.

In Part 3, I will conclude and share some ideas of how liberal international order, international law, and liberalism as their theoretical framework can be improved by leaving aside imperialistic theoretical heritage.

### Research methods

In the article, I am focusing a lot on the conceptual analysis. Throughout this method, I explored, clarified, and defined concepts central to this article in a precise manner: liberal international order, empire, imperialism, liberal imperialism, and dogma.

When writing the article in political philosophy, I should also state that this text and its arguments are written within the non-ideal theory approach. My task was not to present the principles for an ideal society, but rather to address the current state of affairs in the world and its actual problems.

When analyzing and critiquing liberal evaluations of the wars, I employ a practice-dependent method – one that evaluates theoretical frameworks in light of their actual implementation. Furthermore, in the case of the discussed topic, the inability to address the aggression of rogue

<sup>1</sup> For this discussion, also see (*Kundnani, 2024*).

<sup>2</sup> "Claims to universality have a long history in Western political thought, but a belief in the universality of moral values must be tempered by the acknowledgment that other viewpoints may val-

idly challenge them, or it will lose the very quality (doubt) that indicated a free, liberal, mind in the first place. This is the internal contradiction of liberalism — it must fight against domination while it must inevitably become controlling" (*Bishai, 2004: 53*)

states towards smaller democratic states and their more general activity to disrupt the liberal international order.

While presenting my own position – extensive political liberalism, along with a substitution argument, I used a normative reasoning method.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Definitions

I must distinguish this text's aim from the other texts standard to the decolonization theory. Even though I use the same understanding of some basic definitions and present critical directives for liberalism, decolonization theory is also part of the status quo. It might be misleading for the aim of this text. Thus, I will analyze some definitions from famous authors and present my understanding of them, which will determine my argument in the following sections. I know these chosen definitions and citations can only cover some topics. However, they seem very representative.

**Liberal international order**<sup>3</sup> is an «open and rule-based international order» that is “enshrined in institutions such as the United Nations and norms such as multilateralism” (*Ikenberry, 2011: 56*). This definition is very vague and confusing in some ways. Furthermore, if the second part of the definition is more accurate and explicates norms on which LIO is based, the first part poses questions such as: “What is an open and rule-based international order?”. If we accept the rules stated in the documents and governing juridical norms, the criteria for openness are still unclear. Does it include authoritarian regimes? Does this opener require equality (factual and not formal) of all the members of this order, and what are the criteria for this state of equality? The biggest problem for me here is that such a vague definition might be inconsiderate to the fact that new members of the LIO might not be equal to the present members. What is perceived as an unbiased and transparent norm of the law might justify a more complex process, which is the influence of more powerful states on less powerful. This problem is usually reflected in economic relations between the countries. This leads to the practical issue when the member of the LIO (Ukraine) is attacked by a powerful authoritarian country (Russia), which also might be a member of that order, and this problem cannot be resolved because norms of the LIO that suggest actions to prevent unjust wars are brought up in the air. After all, any possible solution includes negotiations between powerful countries that support LIO and powerful states, not including the small country that was attacked<sup>4</sup>.

#### **Empire and imperialism.** Empire

is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social or cultural dependence. Imperialism is the process or policy of maintaining an empire (*Doyle, 1986: 45*).

The vagueness is also the problem of this definition. For example, it is pretty hard to say what cultural dependence is in the era of globalization and the Internet. Argument about cultural dependence seemed to become obsolete and it's radical manifestation might sound bizarre nowadays. That something like cultural imperialism: “takes

place without the use of force, as some kind of «unbearable lightness of enslaving” (*Radojković, 1995: 82*).

However, other parts of the definition are still worth our attention: force, political collaboration, and economic and social dependence. The best part of this definition is that empire as a system of relation might be formal or informal. As I mentioned, imperialism in the LIO and liberalism are usually hidden and repeat themselves unconsciously because of conceptual limits.

According to these essential characteristics of the empire, the USA, the UK, and almost every Western European country can be defined as an empire. Even if we cannot see all the characteristics of the empire, it would be enough to bring up the case of the economic relations between these countries (and their businesses) and less powerful countries when the situation goes beyond formal equality, and we are talking about the expansion of the markets. The process that seems beneficial for both parties might take the form of outsourcing when usually we can state violating human rights, bad working conditions, and small salaries (compared to the standards of salaries and social guarantees in Western societies) for the citizens of less powerful countries.

In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian war, we can see how Ukrainian allies potentially might control its sovereignty through economic help (including credits and debts), support with weapons, as well as political collaboration and social dependence (pressure when making domestic policy decisions, for example when choosing juries or ratifying international treaties).

According to Doyle, the definition of imperialism is quite simple and accurate. Nevertheless, it would not be redundant to highlight another aspect of imperialism: “An imperial policy, therefore, usually means a deliberate projection of a state's power beyond the area of its original jurisdiction with the object of forming one coherent political and administrative unit under the control of the hegemon” (*Evans, Newnham, 2018: 244*). Putting together LIO and economic relations in the globalized world, we can better see how imperialism (even implicit) reproduces itself farther than the empire's borders. Nowadays, any part of the globe is unprotected from empires and imperialism. This is because of the state of affairs of contemporary capitalism when international institutions (like the UN), international law, and political collaboration are put together, leading to the universalistic cosmopolitan ethics that is a conceptual background for LIO, international law, and contemporary capitalism. This ethical background can easily be used not to justify and maintain the equality between the different members of LIO but to let the most potent players expand in any possible way by framing the mere conceptual framework. Sometimes, it leads to paradoxical practices that should be brought to light to understand the whole picture. For example, in the realm of international law: “we are faced by a fundamental paradox: although imperialism has been crucial to the development of international law, it has not been a central concern of the theory of international law for much of the last century” (*Anghie, 2016: 2*).

**Liberal imperialism** “is the doctrine that a state with the capacity to force liberal political institutions and social

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter LIO.

<sup>4</sup> In the case of the Russian-Ukrainian war, it seems not so obvious because of the foreign policy principle «Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine,» which is satisfied according to the words of

the Ukrainian representative Andriy Yermak on the Jeddah Summit in 2023: “There is no reason to doubt that the principle 'Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine' is being disrupted” (*The Business Standard, 2023*).

aspirations upon nonliberal states and societies is justified in so doing" (Ryan, 2012: 107). This definition specifies imperialism for the aims of this text, so we limit imperialism to liberal imperialism, extending paragraph 2.

**Dogma** is just the limit of any theoretical framework or position that might remain invisible to the bearer of such a position. Here, I present my definition, which will be applied to the LIO dogmas (in my opinion), so we will talk about liberal dogmas in the next section.

## 2. Identifying imperialism in liberalism

According to David Williams (2018: 98), the post-colonial critique of liberalism (that still has imperial implications) usually takes the form of two arguments: 1) liberalism is a conceptual framework based only on the experience of the Western states, 2) liberalism as a conceptual framework is very committed to the abstract rationalism, political and moral individualism, political pluralism with hidden imperial attitudes. To develop Williams' structure, I propose to limit such a critique to the notion of "dogma," which I presented in the previous section. Let us examine some of the examples of such dogmas that are present in liberalism. The hypothesis is that by explicating such dogmas, it would be much easier to understand the weak spots of the LIO, liberal international law, and liberalism in general and set new foundations for their theoretical framework.

I will cover only four examples. Two more of theoretical nature and two as examples of the sayings of the Western public intellectuals whose sayings are flawed and biased. My argument is **substituting the personal moral evaluation with norms of international law**<sup>5</sup>. They all purport my hypothesis that all these statements might be imperialistically biased not out of bad intentions but of the limits of conceptual limits of liberalism and contextual and historical contingency.

The **first example** of liberal dogma is the so-called **principle of distinction**, which is a part of the Geneva Conventions and one of the cornerstones of international humanitarian law:

To ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives (*Geneva Conventions, 1977, Article 48*).

The problem is that what was meant to be a navigating line for the trials and organizing the process of war became a part of the worldview of many people in their daily lives, including public intellectuals who shape public opinion in so many ways. I will prove it with the analysis of the following examples. With no connection to the trials or the means of war and the process of war in general, the principle of distinction became the justification for the individual normative judgments which, in their totality, in some way guide the political decisions. We will see the influence of the principle of distinction on political and philosophical thought in the following example.

The **second example** is theoretical takes from the prominent political philosopher John Rawls, who presented a liberal account of international relations. He, in my opinion, follows the logic of the principle of distinction when proposing to distinguish three groups in an outlaw state:

In the conduct of war, well-ordered peoples must carefully distinguish three groups: the outlaw state's leaders and

officials, its soldiers, and its civilian population. A well-ordered people must distinguish between an outlaw state's leaders and officials and its civilian population. Since the outlaw state is not well-ordered, the civilian members of the society cannot be those who organized and brought on the war. This was done by the leaders and officials, assisted by other elites who controlled and staffed the state apparatus. They are responsible; they willed the war; and, for doing that, they are criminals (Rawls, 2001: 94-95).

The logic of this argument is understandable, which is to divide the major groups of the outlaw state population and turn them against each other to create political and social instability and collapse the authoritarian regime. It is also important to consider individuals who do not support the actions of their state. So, such a principle and Rawls's theoretical take make it humanistic and attentive to the details. He explicates his argument further: "But the civilian population, often kept in ignorance and swayed by state propaganda, is not responsible. This is so even if some civilians knew better yet were enthusiastic for the war" (Rawls, 2001: 94-95) and "...it is the leaders, and not the ordinary civilians, of nations who finally initiate the war" (Rawls, 2001: 94-95).

As I mentioned before, the logic of such an argument is obvious and understandable. However, it is doubtful that it can be applied to authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, or Iran. Only because these countries are not liberal (well-ordered in terms of Rawls) does not permit their population to oppose and fight their criminal governments. The same goes for the search for information and truth. In the case of Russia, their population never had problems with access to information. However, it might change after 2014-2015 and might be challenging these days; Russians voted for Putin and did not oppose the outlaw actions of the Russian state. Even though there were many protests before 2014-2015, they were usually held in big cities such as Moscow and did not represent the opinion of most of the Russian population. The situation changed for the worse because, according to sociological research (that still might be doubtful because of the level of state control in Russia), the majority of Russians support unjust intervention and the Russian war against Ukraine:

The level of support for the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine remains high and hasn't changed significantly since the beginning of the conflict: in October, 76% (73% in September) answered that they definitely support or rather support. Do not support – in total 16% (in August – 20%) (Levada Center, 2023)<sup>6</sup>.

Such information (that still needs verification and more data for the purporting hypotheses like mine) makes applying the principle of distinction and Rawls's theoretical takes problematic. If the majority of the population supports their leaders and supports unjust wars as well, it would be irrational and absurd to perceive the majority of this population as those who are waiting for liberation and LIO to come. Implementing it in the current system of LIO and international laws is the most challenging question. Here, I want to show the tendencies and facts that might be used as motivation for posing and answering this type of question.

I also remind you that Rawls (and the principle of distinction, too) are talking about actions during the conduct of war. So, using these optics during the absence of war is optional. However, as we will see with the following examples, this logic reproduces itself when public intellectuals from peaceful liberal countries evaluate wars not in their

<sup>5</sup> Hereafter – substitution argument.

<sup>6</sup> For additional data on Russian public opinion, see Volkov and Kolesnikov (2023).

countries or wars in which their countries are not participating but between another liberal country and an outlaw state. In the case of a Russian-Ukrainian war, it would be Ukraine and Russia.

The **third example** is even more influenced by the principle of distinction and Rawls' ideas. Famous American philosopher Martha Nussbaum made a short statement where she supported Ukraine and Ukrainians. Nevertheless, we can see the same logic as previously in her second sentence:

But what I believe is that if the nations of the West stand together with you we will prevail in the long run. Putin has shown his inability to inspire courage even in the Russian army, who are thinking like decent human beings and often refusing to fight (*Nussbaum, 2022*).

Not to mention that it is just morally incorrect to mention the decency of small amounts of Russian soldier-deserters and covering the injustices done to the Ukrainians by the same Russian armed forces; it is another example of dogmatism mentioned previously. My **substitution argument** is more explicit here as far as within the dogmatic liberal view; it is always needed to make distinctions again and again, even though it might not be accurate in reality as there was no data about Russian deserters during the publication of Nussbaum's statement. How the norm of international law became the basis for the personal evaluation that is preconditionally biased is an obvious example of liberal dogmas that have imperialist implications in their very theoretical framework.

The **fourth example** does not concern the Russian-Ukrainian war case but the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is worth attention as far as Israel can organize powerful military operations in Gaza (Ukraine cannot do the same with Russia, at least for now), and there is a problem with the casualties in the civilian population, which might not support Hamas.

My previous argument is an attempt to destroy any possible distinction within the outlaw Russian state. However, I am not doing that. What should the area of trials be, the area of trials and rigorous investigations? However, it does not give any cause for moral evaluation in terms of the principle of distinction logic before any trials or in the case of the outlaw states whose unjust actions are supported by the majority of their citizens. Still, Judith Butler's critique below makes us think about how not to do wishful thinking by desiring to see outlaw states and their citizens who support them as existing in the logic of the principle of distinction from the very beginning, as well as how not to the lost ability for humanity and attention for those who are trying to oppose their outlaw government or dominant political power and resist despite all the hardships of resisting living inside outlaw state:

The media moves quickly, as do complicit states, to conflate Hamas (its military wing) with all forms of Palestinian struggle, to destroy the distinction between civilians and militants, and to call an armed struggle "terrorism" rather than a resistance to an increasingly violent state and military apparatus. But those who understand and accept armed struggle usually make a distinction between civilian and non-civilian targets (*Butler, 2023*).

To conclude, the principle of distinction should not be changed or reformulated. What should be reconsidered is its application to authoritarian states where the vast majority of the population might support their leaders, so the application of this principle seems problematic as far as reality is different and staying with the principle of distinction in the case of Russian-Ukrainian war is an

example wishful thinking that might lead to the inadequate foreign policy strategies for the powerful countries who are the members of LIO.

### 3. Toward an imperialism-free liberal international order

Here, we explore liberal international order more deeply and think about how one can reimagine it without the specter of imperialism hanging over it. It is crucial to appreciate that historical baggage may vitiate the evolution of liberal values. For this reason, a tactful appreciation of power relations and an ethic of de-hierarchization must be woven into the very fabric of the liberal international order. International law as juridical and conceptual basis of the liberal world order is also tainted by historical imperialism. International legal frameworks must be reconsidered and revised to achieve a more balanced and fair system. Hence, I shall not continue with the step-by-step unpacking of the new LIO but show how some ideas can develop into more intricate guidelines for individual evaluation as well as for foreign policy measures undertaken by LIO members:

#### 1) Promoting cultural sensitivity

One of the most crucial aspects of the liberal international order free from imperialism is the movement of cultural sensitivity by the state. Both observing and appreciating countries' unique history narratives is crucial for the creation of a more universalistic worldview. Liberal virtues need to be practiced with an earnest respect for different environments, and not one-fits-all. The Ukrainian experience and the common experience of the people of Ukraine are a benchmark here.

#### 2) Multilateralism as basis for international governance

Adapting to an actual multipolar from a unipolar system is needed in an effort to escape imperial pressures. Adopting multilateralism and globalizing governance can enable cooperation among nations on the basis of shared values and not superior-inferior relations of power:

leading democracies should establish new plurilateral agreements and institutions that bring together liberal democracies around the globe to reduce states' exposure to Chinese and Russian economic coercion and Chinese and Russian information warfare (*Ginsburg, 2020: 808*).

This approach reinforces collective decision-making to ensure that no nation controls the world agenda.

In the longer term, a liberal plurilateral order will be more effective if codified as new treaties and institutions. Thus, the war in Ukraine makes it a necessity for new plurilateral treaties and institutions to enable cooperation between liberal democracies of Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas (*Sloss, Dickinson, 2022: 799*).

A new consolidation trend in the LIO countries. Such alliances would redefine LIO and international law to prevent autocratic regimes from gaining new sources of resources for unjustifiable expansions of power and wars.

#### 3) Fixes to sovereignty respect and power imbalances

One of the most critical aspects to remember is the skewed power sharing of the liberal international order. The power of states historically has made sure that a hierarchical model of the top-down type still dominates, which is something that is consistent with imperialist ideologies. An intentional strategy has to be followed to establish a more balanced power play, with the voice of all nations, irrespective of their past, being heard and vocalized.

#### 4) Equal representation in global institutions

For the dissolving of imperialistic legacy, there must be



adherence to equitable representation in international organizations. Giving voice to diverse opinions in institutions such as the United Nations helps in an inclusiveness-based and balanced decision-making process.

#### 5) Human rights as a universal standard

Intrinsic to the body of international law is the promotion and assurance of human rights. However, exercising these rights should be applicable to everyone and not discriminatory in nature because of geopolitical interests. Strengthening observance with human rights as an international standard can render the international legal order more just. Abusive war and interventions resulting in injury to civilians, displacement, or other human rights abuse. It must be decied and addressed accordingly.

#### 6) Reconciling «business as usual»

There should be economic justice provided in the new LIO, with emphasis on fair and equitable economic relations between nations. The critics can complain of economic exploitation or unfair trade due to the policy of imperialism and widespread economic relationships with autocratic powers such as China or Russia.

It must be pointed out, however, that the new LIO standard is not a monolithic or universally accepted position within the broader liberal ideology. Liberals, like any political group, will inevitably disagree about international relations and the use of military force. Whereas liberals oppose recognized imperialistic actions, there are some who are supportive of interventions under specific circumstances, such as for humanitarian reasons or to counter threats to global stability. It is better to think of this position when considering extended international reflective equilibrium. Lastly, rethinking the liberal international order and international law requires a widespread and contemplative approach. Noting and attempting to rectify the imperialistic foundations embedded within these frameworks can allow nations to build a more morality-based and equitable world order. The Russian-Ukrainian war calls us to take stock, prompting us to reconsider the present conventions and look for a superior future where the ideals of liberalism are dissociated from the shadow of imperialism.

### Conclusion

Here, in this paper, I have tried to address the issue of liberalist consequences in liberalism, the liberal international order, and international law in general. My aim was not to take another definition of the anti-imperialism and add to the already systematic colonialism argument. I had more utilitarian goals, such as a

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine offers the backdrop in which to examine the imperialist origins of the liberal international order. Through a critical examination of the past and an examination of modern liberal discourse, this article attempts to expose the unconscious imperialism embedded in the theoretical construction of liberalism. These weaknesses must be faced and remedied in an attempt to construct an international state more equitable and morally superior to its imperialist heritage.

In Part 1, I had noted the basic definition which constituted my understanding of the subject matter. While that definition might not cover the whole spectrum of problems, they were enough to point towards imperialism-based inclinations, which were crucial to explain for me.

In Part 2, I gave four examples of how imperialism is embedded in liberalism's theory, LIO, and international

law's regime. Two were more theoretical and two more empirical. This section chiefly outlines my reflection on the principle of distinction, one of the yardsticks of international law. I also presented a substitution argument.

In Part 3, I presented a set of ideas that may potentially lead to LIO without imperialism. I had no desire to give systematic account of reformed LIO; I merely wished to illustrate some primitive ideas which took form in the last decade with the rise of authoritarian regimes.

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## Філософські рефлексії про російсько-українську війну та ліберальний міжнародний порядок

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Повномасштабне вторгнення Росії в Україну у лютому 2022 року, разом із попередніми актами анексії українських територій (Крим, частини Луганської та Донецької областей), поставило багато питань щодо ефективності та надійності ліберального міжнародного порядку, а також до чинної системи міжнародного права. Частина цих питань стосується переважно підтримки, яку надають Україні західні країни та інші союзники. Ці питання пов'язані насамперед не з ефективністю та технологічною складовою процесу (хоча це може мати значення у контексті політичної турбулентності), а з тим, як дружні країни вписують цей тип українських запитів у свої концептуальні системи під час визначення найкращої стратегії майбутніх дій. Найбільшою проблемою є колективний розрив у досвіді українського народу та народів інших країн, оскільки сучасні українці, як і їхні предки, страждали від імперіалізму, принесеного Росією. Населення країн, дружніх до України, здебільшого ніколи не переживало нічого подібного. Переважно їхні предки були громадянами країн, які не страждали від імперіалізму, а самі його насаджували іншим країнам і суспільствам.

Ця стаття досліджує, як імперіалістичні презумпції зберігаються в теоретичних рамках лібералізму, зокрема в міжнародному праві та моральних оцінках російсько-української війни. Замість того, щоб пропонувати цілковито альтернативну парадигму, акцент робиться на пошуку значущих прикладів, де ліберальна думка за своєю суттю продовжує імперіалістичну спадщину. Основна проблема полягає в тому, як сучасна ліберальна ідеологія класифікує держави як сильні або слабкі, розглядаючи війну крізь призму суб'єктів, які лише обирають між вторгненням у держави-ізої чи економічною допомогою слабшим державам. Такий погляд, здається, припускає, що самі ліберальні держави є невразливими до територіальної окупації – припущення, що видає глибші імперіалістичні традиції.

Центральна теза заперечує те, як ліберальна теорія виключає голос країн, що перебувають у конфлікті, — тих, щодо яких зовнішні ліберальні сили приймають рішення про підтримку чи інтервенцію. Ця жорстка модель не враховує інтересів держав, що страждають, а радше приписує позиції на відстані від їхньої реальності. Розуміння російсько-української війни в ліберальній термінології вимагає не того «ліберального» антиімперіалізму, який побудували колишні імперії, а критики, що протистоїть усім формам імперіалізму, зокрема російського. У звичайному ліберальному мисленні Україна, історично підпорядкована різним імперіалістичним силам, спрощується до ще однієї проблеми, яку мають вирішити великі ліберальні держави, її позиція вже визначена в рамках їхньої інтелектуальної парадигми.

Аналіз здійснюється в трьох частинах: по-перше, розглядаються центральні ідеї ліберального міжнародного порядку та їхні теоретичні обмеження; по-друге, ретельно аналізуються коментарі західних публічних інтелектуалів щодо війни, особливо російсько-української, як спосіб показати, що навіть морально благий дискурс містить імперіалістичну складову (як-от принцип розрізнення з Женевських конвенцій, теоретичні засади Ролза та твердження Нусбаум і Батлер); по-третє, пропонується, як ліберальний міжнародний порядок та міжнародне право можуть бути переосмислені через відмову від імперіалістичної теоретичної спадщини, зокрема за допомогою «аргументу підміни», згідно з яким норми міжнародного права заміняють особисті моральні судження, коли ліберальні системи виявляються неадекватними реальності.

**Ключові слова:** ліберальні догми, розширювальний політичний лібералізм, аргумент підміни, мультилатералізм, міжнародна справедливість, імперіалізм, принцип розрізнення.

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