

Political elites in the epoch of “warring democracies”

Pavel L. Karabushenko (0000-0003-2776-4089)¹⁽¹⁾

¹FSBEI HE “Astrakhan State University”, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Astrakhan, Russia

Abstract. The instability of the modern world is largely due to its current state – the state of conflict between the “warring democracies”. None of the parties involved in the conflict will ever admit that it (a conflict party) is not a democracy. Therefore, the level of trust/distrust of the society in the authority institutions will depend in many ways on how successfully a country implements its democratic project.

The democracies fight for the right to be considered a true democracy and for this they accuse and discredit their rivals of having a false democracy form. The elites successfully use this rivalry for their own purposes, both ideologically and geopolitically. Moreover, the very concept of “democracy” (as the sum of specific values) becomes a victim of axiological decomposition. At the same time, the democratic values themselves transform into victims of political demagogy and numerous political speculations.

The political elites abuse democratic values too often, seeing them as some effective mechanism to advance their speculative goals. They use civic “charm of democracy” to achieve their goals that are sometimes undemocratic. On the contrary, the maturity of civil society always shows the qualitative level of democracy itself. Any discrepancy between ideals and the reality leads to intraspecific conflict. In the rivalry, the elites tend to use unconventional means that do not deal with the norms of democracy.

Keywords: elites; democracy; war; conflicts; authoritarianism; fascism; oligarchy; demagogy; trust.

Introduction

The 20th century went down in history as the age of triumphant democracies; democracy came into fashion and the republican trend covered the entire world. Monarchies became unfashionable and tyranny turned out to be criminal. Democracy has transformed into a showcase of political success. It is growing into a political icon and there is a danger of its turning into a political idol. Political idolatry is the worst thing that can happen to scientific ideas. The example of “scientific communism” in the USSR is still remembered. The danger lies in the fact that the concept of “democracy” itself is developing into a speculative object, into an endless play on words, into a game of constant refinement of meanings. Most often there is no sense behind this sense clarification. Political rhetoric and sophistry completely emasculate the scientific content of democracy, turning it into an object of scholastic discourse. The more often politicians pronounce the word “democracy”, the less it takes place in real life. It is required that healthy civil society limits the arbitrariness of power and not allow washing out the meaning of the basic political categories and values of the democratic system.

¹ Corresponding author: pavel_karabushenko@mail.ru

Democratic diversity

Democracy authority relies on the trust of society in its authorities. As far as this trust brings government closer to or set it apart from society and society from government, one can judge how democratic such a system is or not. The author believes that *a state is power plus people, and not the opposition of a state to people*. Moreover, “people” means not the mass but the activity of civil society. This activity is the essence of democracy. It is unacceptable to oppose people to a state because *people are a state* not to a less (but even greater!) degree than government itself. The main sign of democracy is a developed civil society with its own model of behaviour and its own special system of values. This is a real form of interaction between authorities and competing civil structures. The historical vocation of democracy is to ensure people’s community and sovereignty. The state here is just means to guarantee the people’s sovereignty.

In terms of a state form, democracies are different: liberal, people’s, soviet, Islamic and even authoritarian... Each one considers only itself a genuine democracy, and other ones to be false and wrong. It depends on how adequately they understand the theoretical foundations of classical democracy and believe in its basic values, in other words, how much they trust themselves as democratic institutions of power.

The diversity of democracy experience makes us to classify its types as liberal (oligarchic), soviet (people’s), authoritarian (formal), Islamic (clerical) and even totalitarian (simulated). Each of these democracies has its own understanding of the essence of democratic order and its own assessment of achievements.

There is a democracy of uniformity (countries of the Western civilization) and a democracy of diversity (the rest of the world). The first one is rigidly determined by its system of values, the latter professes the principle of democratic pluralism; the first one imposes its model on everyone, the other asserts the principle of free autochthonous development.

The abuse of democratic values is clearly seen in the practice of those political elites that use these values as a mechanism of pressure on society. At the sametime, one of the elites should not be allowed to privatize democracy, establishing the monopoly (dictatorship) of its own understanding of democracy essence over the democratic concept.

In political reality, there is a practice of substituting concepts and meanings. The Western ideologues and politicians have been telling the world for years that there is no alternative to democracy. It is referred to the Western liberal model of democracy, so they immediately reject all other options and forms of democracy. This manner has developed since colonial times when their right to be strong as an elitist exclusivity developed. Currently, the vast majority of the world community requires democracy in international affairs, does not accept any form of authoritarian dictate of certain countries or the groups of states. This is the direct application of the democracy principles at the level of international relations.

The democratic “civilized” West should welcome such a natural striving for the freedom of billions of people. However, in practice, the opposite is true. “The West considers this aspirations the disruption of the liberal order based on the rules, starts economic and trade wars, sanctions, boycotts and colour revolutions, prepares and conducts various kinds of overthrows”. Thus, democracy gradually transforms into its authoritarian format, not noticing how it becomes the opposite of itself. The very *dialogue character trait primarily distinguishes democracy from authoritarianism and totalitarianism where leaders deliver speeches most often*. Therefore, the deficit dialogues most important marker of the democracy crisis. Genuine democracy in a multipolar world primarily involves the freedom of any people, any society, any civilization to choose their own path and their own socio-political system. If the West has such right, all other countries of the world definitely have it. Dictating to other nations what values they should accept means authoritarianism, not liberalism.

Democracy and Totalitarianism (Fascism)

In classical theories (M. Weber, K. Popper, and others), it is generally considered that democracy is a mortal enemy for authoritarianism and especially totalitarianism. However, the contemporary political

history shows that authoritarian-totalitarian regimes quite successfully used not only democratic rhetoric, but also individual democratic institutions for demagogic purposes.

It is enough here to recall the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century which actively flirted with their masses, successfully disguising themselves as democracy. The political regimes of A. Hitler, B. Mussolini, I. Stalin and Mao were dressed in the robe of democracy... Yes, they were carnival democracies and then they did not go beyond political rhetoric but the citizens who lived in those societies firmly believed that that was a genuine democracy. It was impossible to convince them.

Totalitarianism is a regime of political deification of a state. It would be appropriate here to recall the words of B. Mussolini that “... *everything within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.*” [5] In meaning, this is an “inverted” formula of democracy: “*democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people*” (Abraham Lincoln). [2] The latter means that society is the main and principle source of power in a democratic state.

Totalitarian regimes practiced democratic values only for their demagogic purposes. Consequently, the author defines them as imitation democracies (they willingly talk about democracy, but do the opposite). Nevertheless, their populism was stronger than the Western bourgeois democracies which were often blamed for their oligarchic tendencies. The trust of people in such totalitarian elites was also total. The masses of people blindly followed their political leaders, and so they were more greatly disappointed with them.

Moreover, the political experience shows that fascist forces (of the right wing) successfully develop in democratic regimes while communist forces (of the left wing which could successfully fight them), on the contrary, are suppressed for purely ideological reasons of the “Cold War” logic.

Currently, the source of fascism turns out to be not a far-right ideology but an ultra-liberal doctrine based on exclusivity and superiority. The democratic ideals are used again by these ideologues for their own purposes (e.g., Bernard-Henri Levy). [4] Besides, they allow both outright forgery and falsification for promoting liberal values. [1] Many things appear to be so provocative that it is not customary to remember them later.

In September 2022, the Conservative government of Great Britain (headed by Liz Truss) was accused by the former Prime Minister of the UK Gordon Brown of adhering to the “methods of Marxism-Leninism” and preparing a nationwide revolt in England with their crazy actions. Aggressive intolerance towards dissent, denial of any criticism addressed to them, extremist statements, adamant militarism and much more make such politicians the followers of Bolshevism. Their “buffoonery” more and more remind the revolutionary uprising when authorities cannot govern as before (although they really want to) and the masses do not want to live in the new way.

Democracy and Liberalism

Democracy is an opportunity for people to influence their government and government to both listen to people’s opinion and adjust its actions to it. In the USA, the government formally hear the opinion of their people but always act as their oligarchs tell them. The USA are ruled by “shadows” - the global shadow government (billionaire club) which is surrounded by the so-called “deep state”. Only in the third circle from the centre where are the official political elites and their formal leaders who often only voice the decisions of their “centre”.

What is happening to liberalism now reminds of its ideological degeneration. Ultra-liberalism is already assessed by many as neo-fascism and a number of their opponents agree with the assessments.

Behind the show window of liberal democracy there is an oligarchic system that uses democratic institutions as a folding-screen for its successful financial speculation. Such state of affairs took place in medieval Florence, Venice and Novgorod... All of them were essentially oligarchic republics with formal democratic institutions of power and at all times they actively applied demagogic speculation regarding the freedom and protection of people’s interests for their oligarchic purposes.

The liberal democracies have been saying for centuries that they bring freedom, democracy and justice to other nations but in reality, everything has been exactly the opposite: instead of democracy - suppression and exploitation; instead of freedom - enslavement and violence. The entire unipolar

world order is inherently anti-democratic and not free, it is deceitful and hypocritical through and through. This is well understood by those who support democracy as a folding screen for a political oligarchic regime.

The modern Western liberalism has reached the point of outright satanism, racism and neo-colonialism. At the same time, the liberalism usurped the right to talk about democracy. Moreover, this democracy is ceasing to be real and is increasingly transforming into a carnival one.

Conceptually, trust in authorities within democratic regimes is of a rational nature but this is far from the case. The irrational, immoral and illogical in ultra-liberalism simply go off scale. It (ultra-liberalism) behaves itself according to the patterns of totalitarianism and is not ashamed of anything at all.

Democracy and Conservatism

The conservative politicians also use democracy for their own purposes. They perceive democracy as a successful practice of their ancestors and insist that it is the only correct and acceptable type of political regime of power for everyone. Moreover, they sometimes go to extremes too, sacralising democracy, forcing to venerate it as a “sacred cow”.

The new United States’ National Security Strategy, which was published in October 2022, lays out that the democracy built in the USA is an experiment. The confirmation of the correctness of the experiment involves its repetition in other countries. If it is copied, then the experience is successful, if not - it is unscientific. The US is at a turning point of history: “We’re at a significant inflection point in world history. The terms of geopolitical competition between the major powers will be set.[8]

Fighting for power, the democratic politicians accuse each other of undemocratic behaviour and of betraying the ideals and values of “genuine democracy”. In this regard, the statement of the American congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (2013-2021) (Tulsi Gabbard) about her leaving the Democratic Party of the USA in October 2022 and denouncing the party an “elitist cabal” is worth mentioning. In her opinion, the US Democratic Party is controlled by warmongers: “I can no longer remain in today’s Democratic Party that is now under the complete control of an elitist cabal of warmongers driven by cowardly wokeness, who divide us by racializing every issue and stoke anti-white racism... I believe in a government that is of the people, by the people and for the people. Unfortunately, today’s Democratic Party does not. Instead, it stands for a government that is of, by and for the powerful elite. I’m calling on my fellow common sense, independent-minded Democrats to join me in leaving the Democratic Party.” Democracy is once again meant only for the elite. In fact, it is a folding screen for the US oligarchic circles. Naturally, the level of trust in such political regimes will be of a rating commercial nature. The conservatives hope for a “*conservative revival*” and in the conditions of “*liberal degeneration*” they have good prospects for this.

Epoch of “warring democracies”

The democracy is fighting against itself. More precisely, the democracy (as an idea and values) is fighting against various kinds of democracies (as a political form of its practical implementation). The war of values is already seen in the very fact of the divergence of ideal (theory) and reality (practice). This war is of hidden and deep nature but we should not be misled by its latency. In fact, the war of the elites has developed into the war of their formal democracies.

If there were no variety of democratic experience in the world, then there would be no subject matter of the dispute. The war of democracies is a war of autocratic-type democracies against oligarch-type democracies. From the point of view of political Platonism, both types are wrong because they “distort” the ideas of democracy in their own way.

In the political backstage of the Western regimes, a real war between a unicorn and a lion is witnessed. The puppeteers are clashing for the right to control themselves the jesters and clowns of the political carnival and the carnival is growing, expanding the area of its existence.

A war of democracies starts with a war for the true definition of values, and ends with the usual military and economic confrontation. There is a threat of discrediting the values of democracy and its

new misuse, i.e., for demagogic purposes. At the same time, democracy turns from an aim into a means, the means of a very speculative type. As a matter of fact, the epoch of “warring democracies” is a speculative struggle of various elites for power.

The disputes between the politicians about who of them is more a democrat and who just hides behind democracy like behind a fig leaf do not still subside in all democratic societies. Here, the famous quote of G. Orwell is recalled: “All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.” [3] Democracies do not fight for democracy but for real resources of power. They only cover up their militaristic goals with democratic values.

What does it threaten? First of all, it is the loss of national identity and sovereignty. In Europe, the Atlanticists were trained in American institutions. The liberal segment in Germany, for instance, moved to the green agenda and actually dissolved in it. For the sake of their globalist project (oligarchic international), these neo-Trotskyists are ready to sacrifice the national interests of their own states. Behind the nightmarish energy crisis in the UK, a revolt against the failed elites is expected. The politicians are practicing outright demagoguery and refuse to solve serious problems. [6] The pessimism is only growing and is fuelled by a series of fatal political mistakes.

It is political carnival nature that is turning into a distinctive feature of modern political elites, increasingly immersing themselves into the process of “warring democracies”. This condition differs in that the warring parties have completely lost their meaning and have not understood the reason for a long time for what it is happening. Illusion and surrealism are becoming the norm of this theatre of the political absurdity. Political carnival is a world of endless provocations, fakes and substitutions. Here, everyone does not trust each other and everyone always betrays everyone. Thus, political carnival is a marker of the minimum level of trust and order.

Political carnival

When unsolved problems and fatal mistakes accumulate in policy, the situation arises that was designated as a political carnival in scientific literature (when objective reality is distorted and turns into its complete opposite). A carnival political situation occurs when politicians turn old rules and laws upside down with their practices; when a real leapfrog reigns in government and rulers change without having time to properly realize their promises; when rules change along the way, without even having time to settle; when there is even no agreement in understanding the rules of “double standards”...

In the Western Europe, Americans have developed a special type of politician - an Atlanticist who works to the detriment of their own nation-states but in the sake of the prosperity of their overseas hegemon. In political history, such politicians were commonly referred to as “epigones” but in this particular case, the situation is much more serious. It is about the intensification of the trend of carnival political culture in the professional activities of the elites, destroying classical examples of politics as a profession. Such (non-regular) behaviour undermines not only their own authority but also the authority of the democratic institutions which allowed such characters to enter power structures. The political game of “I believe - I do not believe” acquires frankly speculative and provocative features.

The political carnival manifests it self in the violation of all existing norms and rules of big politics. Here, everything is turned upside down and turned inside out. This is not only a violation of diplomatic etiquette and protocol of international relations but also a constant change in the “rules of the game” when they no longer meet someone’s interests; it is a distortion of the meaning of concepts that cease to be recognizable; these are double and throne standards and the disregard for logic and reliable information.

The modern warring democracies compete in the background of the political carnival, putting the incompetence of their political elites to be derided by the public. Moreover, the society does not pay attention to the negative selection of the elites and coming of unvarnished kakistocracy to power. “...the U.K. has been gripped by a crisis of crushing stupidity, one that has gone beyond all the turmoil of Brexit, Boris, even the great bank bailouts of 2007... Today, we had the absurd spectacle of a prime

minister... This all in aid of a vain and surely doomed attempt to cling to power, after the markets concluded that her (Liz Truss's) policies were insane...." [7]

The laws and rules of the political carnival itself are subject to the "*Torquemada's formula*": *indulgence allows you not to see the obvious and do the incredible*. "Indulgence" is the irresponsibility generated by impunity, the right of the strong to create arbitrariness, setting its own rules. Besides, in comparison to the international law, no one has ever seen these "rules" since they are an attribute of political tradition and belong to the category of "unwritten law" (in fact, this is the policy of "double morality"). The behaviour of the political elites causes a sarcastic reaction which is plainly mocking. The critics call such a political elite a "ship of fools" or an outright "political circus". [See: 9-10]

Conclusion

The politicians often pronounce such words as "democracy", "freedom", "equality", etc., transforming them into a kind of spell of their politics. For them, they have become not a reality (filled with a specific meaning) but a certain idol, the subject of blind worship. The more often they say these spell words, the less they come true. Democracy gets stuck, remains to be words and gets confused in unnecessary scientific discussions as meaning is lost in political populism and demagoguery.

The war of democracies represents not just a crisis of the old democracy based on its formal implementation in the interests of the oligarchic elites but also the emergence of its new informal types (and even subtypes). In today's "classical democracies", too many vestiges of the past have accumulated which prevent them from being upgraded. For example, the Russia's political system self-renewed seven times only within the 20th century. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the upgrades were minor. The contradictions that have accrued for the centuries hinder the normal development of these systems now. Relying on the mentioned above, it should be assumed that, for example, Great Britain expects not only a strong social shock but also an anti-monarchist revolution - *the war of the republican unicorn against the crowned lion*. There is a progressive Ukrainization of Great Britain when it is developing into a political carnival chimera. Therefore, the epoch of warring democracies should be understood as the time of their search for new more viable forms, the search that doesn't give them a positive answer...

Acknowledgments

The scientific paper was written based on their search findings within the framework of the state assignment of public service delivery No. 075-01287-22-02 dated 19.09.2022. (Agreement on the grant from the government No. 075-03-2022-201/2 dated 21 September, 2021).

References

1. Bremner, Charles. Bernard-Henri Lvy. A laughing stock for quoting fictional philosopher. – The Times. 09.02.2010.
2. Brian Lamb, Susan Swain. Abraham Lincoln: Great American Historians on Our Sixteenth President. –PublicAffairs, 2008.
3. George Orwell. Animal Farm: A Fairy Story, Harvill Secker. 1945. – 86p.
4. Lévy B.-H., Kundera M., Rushdie S., Jelinek E., Pamuk O. and 25 others. Fight for Europe – or the Wreckers Will Destroy it. - The Guardian. 25.01.2019.
5. Mussolini B. Opera omnia / Acura di E. e D. Susmel. – Vol. XXI. – Firenze: La Fenice, 1956. – 569 p.
6. Sherelle Jacobs. Behind the Nightmarish Energy Crisis, Expect a Revolt Against the Failed Elites- The Telegraph UK. 03.08.2022.
7. Tom McTague. The Liz Truss Travesty Becomes Britain's Humiliation – The Atlantic. 14.10.2022.
8. 2022 National Defense Strategy, 27.10.2022. – 80p.
9. Tucker Swanson McNear Carlson. Politicians, PartisansandParasites: MyAdventuresinCableNews. –Grand Central Publishing, 2013. – 115 p.

10. Ship of Fools: How a Selfish Ruling Class Is Bringing America to the Brink of Revolution by Tucker Carlson. Hardcover. 2018. – 244p.