

## We too totter on the brink of oppression. Let's not p...

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We have lived through a weekend where, I think to many people's surprise, Kiev did not fall. Instead, Ukrainian resistance to the Russian invasion appears to be strong. At the same time, there are question marks about what Russia's real intent is, and whether escalation to potentially devastating scale is likely in the foreseeable future.

I did not write blogs over the weekend, because the situation was so fast-moving. I also do not pretend to be an expert on Ukraine. In addition, much that I would have wanted to say on the economy, and the need for the government to react to the new environment in which we are living, [had already been said by me](#), last week. Its reiteration on Twitter seemed more important than another blog post.

That, however, does not mean that I, like I suspect almost everyone else who reads this blog, did not spend the weekend in contemplation. One of the tweets that I wrote said this:



It seems to me that a little apprehension is more than reasonable right now.

Another tweet explored that idea in a different way:



It is staggering that it is quite literally ordinary people, like you and me, who are facing the reality of invasion that challenges absolutely everything about the lives that they have lived, their identity, their freedom, and their futures. Is it surprising that they are reacting so fiercely?

The obvious question that many have asked is how we might have reacted in the same circumstance? Would we be willing to fight? Even (and I ask this as a Quaker), would we be willing to take up arms to defend ourselves against the freedom from fascist oppression, which is what Ukraine is facing?

Perhaps as importantly, do we have a government committed to that fight here in the UK, in whom we could believe?

Which then begs the question, what is that fight?

It is at this point that I can begin to answer the questions. The fight is, in effect, for democracy. That is, if democracy is to be considered meaningful, the fight for everyone to be treated with equal respect within the society in which they live and to be valued as if they are of significance.

This is an idea much bigger than the right to participate in an election, important as that is, and as important as fairness in that electoral process might be, including with regard to inclusivity, and the prospect of fair representation of the outcome.

What might be properly called a liberal democracy does something much more than deliver electoral justice. Its aim is to provide everyone with the chance to flourish without fear of discrimination.

Putin does, of course, fail this test. He is, in effect, a white Christian nationalist. That could be construed as another term for a fascist. It is as readily a description of the populism to be found on the far right in the USA, the UK (where Farage's parties and many in the Tories are now subscribers to this mantra), and in countries such as France, Germany and, of course, in Ukraine, where such a cause appears to have about 2% popularity with the electorate, which is much lower than it has here.

There are variations in this white Christian nationalism in the differing countries where it is followed, but the core theme is that those who might be described as believing themselves to be indigenous people of traditional views think that they are being oppressed, whether by feminists, the LGBTQ+ population, immigrants, those of others faiths, socialists, egalitarians, Jews and others. The followers are predominantly male, misogynistic, homophobic, racist, anti-Semitic and anti-egalitarian.

This is what this fight is about. It is about whether the views of a minority who are willing to use force to express their fear are going to be permitted to oppress a majority in society. As far as I can see it, this is as black and white as that.

Is that a cause worth fighting for? If it is not, what is?

But having suggested that is the case where are we in the UK?

We are a long way from electoral justice, and it is getting very much worse, and quickly.

Our rights to protest, which are fundamental to protecting this freedom, are being eroded by the day.

We have a government committed to making sure that those with least resources pay the highest cost, or almost everything, including the consequences of the war in Ukraine.

And this government is committed to corruption on behalf of its crony friends, as we have seen all too obviously during the Covid era, and now in government appointments that are intended to pack official positions with its supporters.

That we still have legal opacity on so many issues is evidence of this. That our libel laws are so oppressive is further indication of its intent. That the media is so biased is indication of a desire to oppress alternative views. That the rule of law is ignored suggests that nothing but power is of significance to this government.

In that case, is this in any way a government fit to stand up to the threats from Putin? I would suggest not.

There are others who would do better. But Labour also refuses electoral reform and denies the right of Scotland to self-determination.

Too many political parties are in awe of the power of wealth. They will deny freedoms to preserve it, it would seem.

We are a long way from anything like being the liberal democracy that we need.

Presuming that Ukraine survives, and the war does not escalate out of control (and those are big assumptions right now) the fact that we have a political system that is not stacked in favour of people, liberal democracy, equality and representative as well as social, economic and tax justice, are issues that we have to face.

I am very worried about the world right now. But those concerns won't go away now, even if the tanks roll out of Ukraine. We too totter on the brink of oppression. Let's not pretend otherwise.