

SCARS OF WAR

Migration, Security and
Sustainable Future

Edited by Maria Anita Stefanelli
and Izabela Skórzyńska

RESEARCH IN
POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

VOLUME 30

SCARS OF WAR

RESEARCH IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Series Editor: Barbara Wejnert

Recent Volumes:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Volumes 1–3: | Richard G. Braungart |
| Volume 4: | Richard G. Braungart and Margaret M. Braungart |
| Volumes 5–8: | Philo C. Wasburn |
| Volume 9: | Betty A. Dobratz, Lisa K. Waldner, and Timothy Buzzell |
| Volumes 10–11: | Betty A. Dobratz, Timothy Buzzell, and Lisa K. Waldner |
| Volume 12: | Betty A. Dobratz, Lisa K. Waldner, and Timothy Buzzell |
| Volume 13: | Lisa K. Waldner, Betty A. Dobratz, and Timothy Buzzell |
| Volumes 14–17: | Harland Prechel |
| Volumes 18–21: | Barbara Wejnert |
| Volume 22: | Dwayne Woods and Barbara Wejnert |
| Volume 23: | Eunice Rodriguez and Barbara Wejnert |
| Volume 24: | Barbara Wejnert and Paolo Parigi |
| Volume 25: | Ram Alagan and Seela Aladuwaka |
| Volume 26: | Tim Bartley |
| Volume 27: | Francesco Duina and Frédéric Merand |
| Volume 28: | David Pettinicchio |
| Volume 29: | Seela Aladuwaka, Barbara Wejnert, and Ram Alagan |

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Patrick Akard
Kansas State University, USA

Paul Almeida
University of California Merced, USA

Robert Antonio
University of Kansas, USA

Alessandro Bonanno
Sam Houston State University, USA

Barbara Brents
University of Nevada Las Vegas, USA

David Brown
Cornell University, USA

Kathleen Kost
University at Buffalo, USA

Rhonda Levine
Colgate University, USA

John Markoff
University of Pittsburgh, USA

Scott McNall
*California State University Chico,
USA*

Susan Olzak
Stanford University, USA

Harland Prechel
Texas A&M University, USA

Adam Przeworski
New York University, USA

William Roy
*University of California Los Angeles,
USA*

David A. Smith
University of California Irvine, USA

Henry Taylor
University at Buffalo, USA

This page intentionally left blank

RESEARCH IN POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY VOLUME 30

**SCARS OF WAR:
MIGRATION, SECURITY
AND SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE**

EDITED BY

MARIA ANITA STEFANELLI

Roma Tre University, Italy

AND

IZABELA SKÓRZYŃSKA

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2025

Editorial matter and selection © 2025 Maria Anita Stefanelli and Izabela Skórzyńska.
Individual chapters © 2025 The authors.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: www.copyright.com

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83608-509-6 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-508-9 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83608-510-2 (Epub)

ISSN: 0895-9935 (Series)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>About the Contributors</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xv</i>
Crisscrossing War and Peace, Democracy and Autocracy Viewed Through an Environmental Lens	1
<i>Barbara Wejnert</i>	
“Women Must Not Be Left Behind”: The UNESCO Path Towards Women’s Empowerment	21
<i>Raffaella Leproni and Liliosa Azara</i>	
Review on the International Legal Framework for the Protection of Women and Girl Children in Non-international Armed Conflicts	47
<i>Muthukuda Arachchige Dona Shiroma Jeeva Shirajanie Niriella</i>	
How Did Armed Conflicts Impact Women in Asia: A Study From 1950 to 2010	61
<i>Xingyu Chen</i>	
Gender and War: The Impact of Military Rule and War on Women’s Lives in Burma (Myanmar)	89
<i>Soe Win</i>	
Revisiting the Kashmir Conflict Through Rahul Pandita’s <i>Our Moon Has Blood Clots: Violence, Exodus and Loss</i>	109
<i>Anupama Vohra and Jasbir Singh</i>	
Women Refugees in Italy During the Russian–Ukrainian Conflict	121
<i>Maria Anita Stefanelli and Cecilia Cinti</i>	

- Women and War: Pedagogies of Care** 137
Agnieszka Chwieduk and Izabela Skórzyńska
- Things in Women's Hands: Reclaiming Domestic Space After the War** 151
Katarzyna Witek-Dryjańska
- Women and "Solidarity": A Sketch for the Union Biography of Ewa Zydorek** 171
Weronika Halaburda

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Maria Anita Stefanelli, a graduate of Ca' Foscari University (Venice, Italy), PhD, University of Edinburgh (UK), former Chair Professor of Anglo-American Literature at Roma Tre University (Italy), Visiting Fellow, Trinity College Dublin (Ireland). She is the Vice President, “World Center for Women’s Studies,” and served on the bi-national Fulbright Commission for Cultural Exchanges in Rome for nearly 10 years. She has published on twentieth-century modernist American poetry, American Drama, performance theory, cinema. She has authored, in Italy and abroad, essays on gender study: Emily Dickinson (*Women’s Studies*, 2002/2011), Anne Waldman (*Donne d’America*, Palermo-São Paolo, 2003), Margaret Fuller (Wisconsin, 2007), Erin Shields (Emerald, 2014), Sofia Coppola (*RSA Journal*, 26/2015), Judith Thompson-Julie Maroh (Mimesis International, Milan, 2017), Maria Edgeworth (Florence, 2019), Marisa Labozzetta (*Marriage and Family Review*, 2021), and Cheril Dunye (*Women on Women*, Milan, 2021). Her publications as a curator-author are *Performing Gender and Violence in Contemporary Transnational Context* (LED, Milan, 2016) and *Bob Dylan and the Arts* (ESL, Rome, 2020).

Izabela Skórzyńska, Associate Professor at the Faculty of History at Adam Mickiewicz University, postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Laval (Quebec, Canada), Vice-President of the World Center for Women’s Studies (2024–2025). Author and co-author with C-F. Dobre, A. Wachowiak, B. Jonda, I. Chmura-Rutkowska, E. Głowacka – Sobiech, A. Chwieduk of research projects on the performative memory and didactics of history and the history and memory of women during communism in the light of autobiographical narratives “(Re)gaining the future by (re)building the past: women’s narratives of life under communism in Poland, Romania and the former East Germany”; also the place and role of women in the school textbook narratives to history in Poland (women history/gender history).

This page intentionally left blank

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Liliosa Azara, PhD, teaches Contemporary History and Women's History at the Department of Education, Roma Tre University. Her scientific interests focus on the critical reconstruction of the history of the evolution of sexual habits and prostitution in XX century Italy; her research stands out for a political-institutional approach, as well as a specifically ideological and cultural orientation. On these themes, she has published extensively, including contributions in volumes and scientific journals. Among her latest works: *L'uso "politico" del corpo femminile. La legge Merlin tra nostalgia, moralismo ed emancipazione* (2017) and *I sensi e il pudore. L'Italia e la rivoluzione dei costumi (1958–1968)* (2018). She is now working on the institution of the female police in Italy.

Xingyu Chen, PhD Candidate in Global Gender Studies at the University at Buffalo. Her research focuses on women's health during wars and conflicts in Asia, examining the impacts of military conflicts on maternal health outcomes among Asian countries. She assesses the severity and duration of conflicts in Asia from 1950 to 2010 and analyzes their effects on maternal health indicators. In addition to her research, Xingyu teaches a course on the environmental impact of war, exploring the intersections of women's health, conflict, and environmental issues.

Agnieszka Chwieduk, Associate Professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University, PhD, Philologist (French and Romanian), and Social Anthropologist, works at the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. She develops her scientific and research interests in three areas: medical/psychiatric anthropology, migration studies, locality and processualism in didactics and qualitative research: performativity, participation, Emic Evaluation Approach, dialogue/negotiation in situations of difficult access to groups (totalizing spaces, small communities). The most recent exploratory experience concerns migration/detention in Guarded Centres for Foreigners in Poland (2018–2019), as part of the project "Spaces of detention: formal, organizational and socio-cultural aspects," while the previous ones were related to the issues of ethnicity, identity, and locality in a unifying Europe, including from the areas of Romania (Maramures), France (Alsace), and Poland. Author and co-author of monographs, numerous articles and review articles, and co-editor of the LUD journal, a leading Polish periodical in the field of ethnology and anthropology.

Cecilia Cinti, an independent scholar, is a graduate in Chinese Language at Oriental Languages and Literature Department, Ca' Foscari, University of Venice, Italy (1996). She holds a Teacher Training Diploma from the Capital

Normal University in Beijing, China (1997), and a certificate of linguistic-cultural mediator (2004). She has competence in language teaching, Italian as a second language, the use of new technologies in language learning, intercultural education, and cultural tourism. Since 2001, she teaches “English language” in a primary school (Comacchio Comprehensive School, Italian Department of Education) and writes periodically in the diocesan weekly “La Voce di Ferrara-Comacchio” on environmental issues, climate change, and the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Global Goals.

Weronika Halaburda, Master of Arts, graduate of the Humanities in School at the Faculty of History and Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, teacher of Polish and history at the Social Waldorf School and the Social High School in Wiry; her research interests are emancipatory context, the history of women of “Solidarity” as well as independent education in the broadest sense, including primarily Waldorf pedagogy.

Raffaella Lepрони, PhD, English Language and Translation Professor at Roma Tre University, Department of Education. Her didactic activity, held in different curricular and postgraduate courses, develops around storytelling and authentic materials in socio-pedagogic and educational areas dealt with in CLIL perspective. Her research activity focuses on English for Specific Purposes in HR and Social Sciences, teachers’ self-assessment and on the analysis of the role of language in the participated construction of intercultural social identity, with a particular attention to Special Education Needs, to stereotypes and bullying, and to the redefinition of gender perspectives in disciplinary studies. Among her latest publications, *Women on Women. De-gendering perspectives* (FrancoAngeli, 2021), followed by *Men on Women. A collection of thought-provoking perspectives* (FrancoAngeli, 2024), “Still Blundering into Sense.” *Maria Edgeworth, her context, her legacy* (R. Lepрони, F. Fantaccini eds., FUP 2019).

Muthukuda Arachchige Dona Shiroma Jeeva Shirajanie Niriella, Professor in the Department of Law, Faculty of Law University of Colombo; she serves as the Dean of the Faculty of Criminal Justice at General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) in Sri Lanka, holds an LLB with honors, and an MPhil in Law and Criminal Justice from Colombo University. She qualified as an attorney-at-law in 1997; she pioneered the introduction of Criminology and Criminal Justice courses at the postgraduate level in leading Sri Lankan universities, including the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, Open University, and General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) Sri Lanka. She established the first-ever Faculty of Criminal Justice at KDU; she published numerous publications with renowned publishers such as Springer and Routledge-Taylor & Francis, internationally, among other activities and honors; she is the Vice President of the Asian Criminological Society and World Center for Women’s Studies.

Jasbir Singh, Professor of Economics in the University of Jammu, Jammu, India. He is currently the Chairperson, Department of Philosophy, at the University of Jammu. He is the Vice President and an Executive Committee Member of the

World-CWS. He has completed eight national projects and has six books and 45 research papers published in national and international journals and edited volumes.

Anupama Vohra, Professor of English in the Directorate of Distance and Online Education, University of Jammu, Jammu, India, and, during 2012–2014, Fellow at Indian Institute of Advanced Study Rashtrapati Niwas Shimla where she worked on Kashmiri Testimonial Literature. Her research areas are Testimonios Literature, Indian Women's Writing in English, Gender Studies, Kashmir/Conflict Literature. She has participated and presented papers at national and international conferences and seminars. She has published three books and 40 papers in reputed journals.

Barbara Wejnert, Professor in the Department of Environment and Sustainability and also a faculty member at the Jaekel Center for Law, Democracy, and Governing at the University at Buffalo. She is the author or editor of several books, including a book published by Cambridge University Press on *Diffusion of Democracy* (2014). She is an award-winning author of research papers specializing in democracy, politics and energy security, political sociology, environmental sustainability, and gender. Her interdisciplinary, transnational research focuses on the worldwide diffusion of democracy, the rise of autocracy, and the effects of these changes on energy democracy, environmental sustainability, and gender equity.

Soe Win, PhD in Global Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York. This chapter is an expansion of her dissertation titled, "Women's Participation in the Spring Revolution: Resistance, Resilience, and Solidarity." She considers herself as both an academic scholar and an activist. Her research interests include gender-based violence, women's movement, and women's rights under authoritarian regimes in developing countries, especially in Burma (Myanmar).

Katarzyna Witek-Dryjańska, student at the Doctoral School of Humanities at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; her interests include history of education, intercultural cemeteries as places of memory, and the history of education as the crisis of materiality after World War II in Poland.

This page intentionally left blank

FOREWORD

Maria Anita Stefanelli and Izabela Skórzyńska

The history of wars, just like contemporary armed conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, Congo, Haiti, Palestine, and other places in the world (Comfort & Atwood, 2024), is arranged, in the post-Anthropocene era, in many different, sometimes contradictory or ambivalent but also full of hope, narratives (Szerszeń, 2024).

That is because they are characterized by a wealth of theoretical, ethical, and aesthetic approaches thanks to which ancient and contemporary wars are understood in terms of not only generalized politics, military violence, and diplomacy but also social and climatic injustices seen from the perspective of failed and/or unfinished great modernization projects, including decolonization and emancipation of women and children, migrants and refugees, inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe in relation to the former USSR, and the global South in relation to the global North.

The pressing problems of the present and expectations for the future, as perfectly expressed in the title of this volume *Scars of War: Migration, Security and Sustainable Future*, concern what people have actually been experiencing for decades that were affected by wars, rebellions, uprisings, and coups. And everything took place, I must add, under the increasingly scorching sun of an overheated planet impoverished by war and tormented by the excessive consumerism of some against the poverty of others.

In November 2022, a few months after the Russian attack on Ukraine, a report was prepared on the “Climate costs of the Russian invasion” (Lipiński, 2022) with an indication of CO₂ emissions related to the concentration, movement, and maintenance of Russian armed forces, as a result of the destruction of the Russian and Ukrainian heavy equipment; as a result of fires, including forest and farmland fires, oil and gas, and leakage of gas pipelines; and, finally, as a result of forced migrations in addition of the climate costs and benefits of rebuilding the Ukrainian economy using renewable energy sources (Lipiński, 2022). Someone will say that such a report is premature, that the war is still ongoing, but don’t we need such a diagnosis to formulate plans and recommendations for the future *now*?

Besides the above, social changes – the forced migrations of women and children, the costs of helping refugees and the social reality (still poorly recorded) of women’s and men’s everyday care for them in the face of the loss of their current positions and statuses in the face of an uncertain future – go along with the huge price of wars.

Those and other aspects of contemporary armed conflicts require, as highlighted in this volume, not only a reflection on the future but also a revision of our ideas about the past. Few people remember that during World War I and II, everyday life continued thanks to the involvement of women who developed priceless survival strategies that proved efficacious also in the war-ravaged areas of hunger, cold, homelessness, and disease. Until recently, little attention was paid in popular history to human efforts to restore ecosystems that might satisfy hunger in times of severe food shortages.

From the perspective of the present and the future, the issues identified above are invaluable indications not only of the destructive power of war, which affects, besides the environment, the people and their culture, but also the wish – despite the pain, the fear and the uncertainty – to imagine that the future would be different. There is a paradox in the fact that for centuries it was dictators and aggressors who shaped our human and nonhuman space of experience defined by wars and conflicts, while ordinary people and their efforts for harmony and peace were forgotten. And yet, thanks to these efforts, life after the war was possible to be rebuilt. This is a question of the tension between the space of experience and the horizon of expectations, and the burning question is who and what decides the nature of this tension? (Koselleck, 2001, pp. 359–388). Whether arising from the experience of war, fear, uncertainty, and helplessness in the face of the evil that contributed to this war, or the memory of the human capacity for sustainable development and peaceful coexistence. The last word should not belong to the aggressors, but to people of good will, truly concerned about the fate of the world for themselves and their successors. If this sounds like an utopia, let's at least avoid dystopia.

I.S.

As the North and South of the world have been – and are still being – invaded by weapons that brought death and devastation, in Rome – as I hear at this precise moment on TV (Benigni Roberto, 2024) – 70,000 children from all over the world are leaving the Olympic Stadium after their meeting with the Eminent old man who dresses in white, saying goodbye, and promising to come back in September for a renewed claim for peace. A guy (Oscar winning Roberto Benigni with his film “La vita è bella”), invited to syntonize the children with the Pope, told it right: “When children play ‘war’, as soon as one of them gets hurt, they stop. The game is over. So why, when adults wage war, don't they stop to help? Why? What cowardice is that? Wars must end.”

In spite of the promised efforts toward a cease-fire, with the Russian President's peace terms being subjected to the recognition of four southeastern regions (Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson) as a permanent part of Russia, peace does not appear to be imminent. As Barbara Wejnert points out in her central chapter, then, autocracy diffusion has produced “a destructive effect on global peace and environmental protection” as derived by “the impact of democracy erosion.” The consequences of such *diktat* are the downfall of temporary migrants', refugees', and asylum-seekers' hopes to return home. Compensations for that in terms of waiting patiently, socializing with the local community, practicing, or turning to, art and beauty – as I put it in my chapter

focusing on a mother and child as refugees in Italy – will be to almost no avail for yourself and, if you are a mother, your progeny, until indefinite time. On this last point, the “ethics of care and justice,” derived from an anthropological perspective, can come to rescue, but – as Skórzyńska and Chwieduk advise in their chapter – only as a disciplinary field to be reconsidered by students.

Education is an important sector for us to evaluate when we think of the need to realign the North and South of the world. Not surprisingly, it was Eleanor Roosevelt who, back in 1949, coined the slogan “Making human rights come alive” thus opening the UNESCO path toward the abolishment of gender discrimination and women’s empowerment. “Women must not be left behind,” she preached then; along the same lines today women must be granted access, as Leproni and Azara insist, to information technologies, a move vital in the efforts to prepare for the war and postwar diplomacy.

Memoirs and diaries are examined in four chapters dealing with different geographical areas. Witek-Dryjańska explores the work of women who, in the years between 1945 and 1956, organized the unfamiliar spaces of “Recovered territories” in Poland after the war. Halaburda, on another level, presents Ewa Zydorek’s important role in the “victory of democratic opposition and socio-political transformation in Poland after 1989” as results of the activism of the “Independent Self-Governing Trade Union ‘Solidarity’.”

Away from the European interest, a study from 1950 to 2010 concerning Asia was undertaken by Chen who authored “a comprehensive examination of the dynamics” of conflicts dating to that period and, by means of a statistical analysis, presents “essential information on the duration and intensity of conflicts” during the era under consideration. The war in Burma and its impact on women’s lives is the subject chosen by Win to focus her attention on the 2021 coup that “led to devastation and destruction in ethnic regions... gender-based violence and human trafficking.” The chapter highlights “the women’s involvement in political movement for peace, democracy, security, and sustainable development.” Focusing on India, Vohra and Singh explain that, founded by the British rulers on the ruins of the Sikh Empire following the first Anglo-Sikh war, Jammu and Kashmir came into existence in 1846. The dominions, who desired to be independent, tried to resist belonging to India or Pakistan, so they were offered to the British as replacement for taxes. Jammu and Kashmir kept the existing system of political control, economic, and social arrangements. Immediately after independence, however, the Kabaili (tribal) invasion in October 1947, instigated and supported by the newly created Pakistan, changed the scenario. Kashmiri Pandits initially resisted exodus; later, Maharaja Hari Singh agreed to join India to save the lives of the people from brutality. Kashmiri Pandits form a unique religious and cultural minority in Kashmir; they were the largest, non-Muslim, religious minority in Kashmir before 1990. Vohra and Singh also analyze Rahul Pandita’s childhood narrative, “Our Moon Has Blood Clots,” a poignant narrative of pain, loss and survival.

Last but certainly not least, Niriella’s investigation “of the effectiveness of existing legal instruments in safeguarding the rights and well-being of women and girl children” amidst noninternational armed conflicts is a judicial must. The

author asks if “the mechanisms to address the protection of women and girl children” in noninternational conflicts can be enforced, which “strategies and reforms can enhance the efficacy of the international legal framework” in dealing with the vulnerabilities of the subjects, and which are the challenges involved. After examining Geneva Conventions, Optional Protocol II, Rome Statute, Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), CEDAW, CRC, and the Beijing Platform, the author concludes that by implementing the proposed recommendations, the protection mechanisms for women and girls in noninternational armed conflicts can be strengthened, ensuring better adherence to international standards and improved outcomes for affected individuals – women and girl children.

M.A.S.

REFERENCES

- Benigni Roberto. (2024). World’s Children Day. RAI 1 Live, May 26, at about 6.30 p.m.
- Comfort, E., & Atwood, R. (2024). *10 conflicts to watch in 2024*. International Crisis Group. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/01/01/conflicts-2024-gaza-sudan-china-iran-myanmar-ukraine-ethiopia-sahel-haiti-armenia-azerbaijan-iran-hezbollah/>
- Koselleck, R. (2001). Przestrzeń doświadczenia i horyzont oczekiwań – dwie kategorie historyczne [The space of experience and the horizon of expectations – Two historical categories]. In H. Orłowski (Ed.), *Semantyka historyczna [Historical semantics]* (Trans. Kunicki, W., pp. 359–388). Poznań.
- Lipiński, K. (2022). *Koszty klimatyczne rosyjskiej inwazji [Climate costs of the Russian invasion]*. Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny.
- Szerszeń, T. (2024). Nie ma jednego obrazu wojny [There is no single image of war]. <https://dzieje.pl/wywiad/tomasz-szerszen-nie-ma-jednego-obrazu-wojny-w-ukrainie>

CRISSCROSSING WAR AND PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND AUTOCRACY VIEWED THROUGH AN ENVIRONMENTAL LENS

Barbara Wejnert

University at Buffalo, State University of New York, USA

ABSTRACT

The Ukrainian conflict, a real-world case study, vividly illustrates the threat autocratic regimes pose to democratic systems on a global scale, symbolizing a battle between freedom and authoritarianism. It is a stark reminder of the destabilizing effects of the spread of autocracy. This trend has replaced the previous wave of global democratic expansion and puts international peace and ecological sustainability at risk. Through a meticulous and comprehensive examination of contemporary autocratic rise, this study presents compelling evidence that clarifies the harmful outcomes of democratic erosion in emerging autocracies and their negative influence on global peacekeeping efforts and environmental preservation initiatives. In essence, this research study underscores the complex interplay between conflict and harmony and the dynamics of autocratic proliferation and democratic decline, all of which collectively shape the landscape of global security and environmental sustainability initiatives.

Keywords: Autocracy; democracy; war; peace; environmental sustainability; environmental politics; sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Commencing with the forceful Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a wave of alarming headlines flooded both American and global media platforms, including newspapers, news outlets, and magazines. These media outlets played a crucial role in unveiling the harsh realities of the invasion's brutality amidst a

Scars of War

Research in Political Sociology, Volume 30, 1–19

Copyright © 2025 Barbara Wejnert

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited

ISSN: 0895-9935/doi:[10.1108/S0895-993520250000030001](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0895-993520250000030001)

backdrop of Russian propaganda aimed at creating uncertainty about the state of hostilities. Despite claims from Russian sources of a halt in military actions, reputable journalistic entities like the BBC continued to report sustained bombardments on urban centers such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Chernihiv and rural communities. This narrative was further substantiated by firsthand accounts, including that of Chernihiv's mayor, who described the assault as "colossal" in its intensity.

Additionally, as the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus underscored in his interview with the BBC international media on March 30, 2022, the indiscriminate nature of the violence and war's impact includes vital healthcare infrastructure, hospitals, and maternity wards. Notably, the timing of these attacks contradicted official Russian claims of de-escalation. The resumption of bombings shortly followed Russian assurances of military restraint.

Regardless of the massive force of 180,000 troops, convoys of tanks and artillery, surrounding and attacking Ukraine on three sides, Russia's plan to speedily roll over Ukraine did not materialize. Ukraine withstood, and two years later, it is withstanding Russian attacks. Ukrainians responded with courage and firm conviction that victory would prevail, defending their land and pushing back Russian troops toward the Ukrainian–Russian border. As the war continues, the Russian limitless bombing of schools, places of worship, hospitals, daycares, theaters, and residential buildings leaves remnants of homes, pain, and Ukrainian and global rage on its path of destruction. The broad use of landmines, attacks on nuclear power stations, and the use of cluster ammunition banned by the international community are striking reminders of the ruins of agricultural fields, forests, and clean water and air. The scares of this war are human casualties monumental for Ukraine and sobering reality manifested in the ongoing destruction endured by the country and its people.

Psychological warfare, through the spread of misleading claims of bombing reduction and propaganda about Ukraine's military and government corruption, aimed at weakening the Ukrainian determination, and Western allies military support augmented the velocity of civilian infrastructure destruction. Regardless of these efforts, brave Ukrainian civilians sign up for military duties, and women, from young girls to grandmothers, assist the men in combat. Millions of women and children initially immigrated to avoid bombing. However, after the first year of war, many returned and mobilized beyond the battlefield, providing logistics and noncombat support to defend their country. The civilians keep the economy growing despite the relentless Russian bombing; they rebuild services, including the energy sector and civilian infrastructure. In 2022, an article published in *Politico* journal specifies that residential buildings are uninhabitable because of Russia's military bombing (Banco et al., 2023). It attests that Putin's war is a war against the people, a war aimed at annihilation of Ukraine as it did not surrender to the Mighty Russia. This war is waged against civilians, with women and children paying a massive price for it. Already, it has destroyed nearly 70% of Ukrainian civil infrastructure. The invasion cost is global hunger, with food prices jumping to a six-year high (increasing by 92 points to 108 pts on the FAD

Food price index), as reported by the World Bank in 2022 ([World Bank, 2022](#)). Especially African countries, where 30% of wheat comes from Ukraine and Russia, suffer dire consequences.

For Ukrainians, it is a war for survival as a nation, a sovereign state, and a democracy against autocratic occupation. As the US National Public Radio reported on March 15, 2022, it is a clash of freedom vs tyranny ([Gross, 2022](#)). The attack on Ukraine galvanized countries in the defense of democracy worldwide. In the epic vote at the United Nations General Assembly on March 2nd, 2022, as many as 141 out of 193 assembly members denounced Russia for the attack on Ukraine. Only four countries, namely Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, and Syria, voted against Russian condemnation. Authoritarian China was one of the 35 UN assembly members that abstained from voting on the resolution of Russian condemnation. The four UN members who voted against the resolution were countries with autocratic regimes, ruling with an iron fist against their people, aiding each other in aggressive tactics. All these autocracies suffer economic stagnation, high unemployment, and limited development and use the war as a job opportunity for their young men. Enlisted to fight in Ukraine received circa \$7,000 for deployment, about the same as ISIS paid its soldiers ([International Crisis Group, 2017](#)). Among the enlisted are also Indian, Nepalese, and Sri Lankan nationals who are forced to serve in the Russian military invasion, being caught as illegal labor migrants ([International Crisis Group, 2017](#)).

The unleashed Russian military aggression represents not merely a brutal invasion but also a political struggle for democratic principles, national sovereignty, and independence. It serves as a sad reminder of the inherent peril autocratic regimes pose to democratic nations and the threat posed by autocracies to democratic states. The invasion of Ukraine is a symbolic reminder of the danger that autocrats pose to democracies worldwide. It is also a juxtaposition of democracy vs autocracy. The passed UN resolution attests to global solidarity in standing for peace, further verifying the conflict between democratic and autocratic values.

Eighty years of peace, cooperation, and prosperity in Europe have been ruined because of Russian aggression. In the past two years, Europe has focused its development on militarization, changing peace production to armaments, technological advancement, and innovation aimed at prosperity to countries' arms manufacture. It took only one autocrat's selfish desires to inflict intractable pain, destruction, and fear and to destabilize the world order. Since the end of Second World War, the European continent has symbolized a continent of unity, peace, cooperation, and thriving democracies. However, the pause on militarization is over, and the arms race between democratic and autocratic worlds restarted after prolonged demilitarization.

Autocratic Russia destroyed the peace. However, the Russian government falsely claims that its aggressive invasion is a war of Ukrainian liberation from the influence of Western tyranny, and the Russian government is supposedly a liberator of occupied Ukraine, its ethnic "brother" facilitating Ukrainian eagerness to join Mother Russia. Misleading propaganda failed. Russia is unable to be victorious as the West provides help. It is plausible that Russia, with the help of

Iran, attempted to divert global and Western ally attention from the war in Ukraine and helped to provoke a new war in Gaza. Inevitably, Russia would like to sidetrack global attention and reduce Western help in Ukraine.

Despite various attempts, Ukrainians' fight for national identity and the heroic defense of Ukrainian land continues; Western countries continue to provide military and humanitarian aid to prevent Russia from further escalation of the war. The prior Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 was met with a lack of Western support for Ukraine, leading to the annexation of Crimea and persistent war conflict in the Donbas and Luhansk regions, and is a reminder of the costs of Western democracies' inaction.

Prior events signaled a Russian attempt to incorporate Ukrainian land into Russia. It has been demonstrated since the start of the independent Ukrainian state in 1991 when 90% of Ukrainians from across the country voted for independence and a democratic political system. The call was repeated in 2014 (the year of the Euromaidan Revolution) and during the Orange Revolution of 2004 in response to Russian meddling in Ukrainian elections and spreading anti-Ukrainian propaganda (Wejnert, 2020, pp. 185–198). These events signaled Ukraine's upcoming defense of its national identity, sovereignty, and democracy, reminding the Western world that helping a fledgling democracy leads to autocracy inhibition and establishes peace.

This paper underscores the crisscross of war and peace, the diffusion of democracy countering autocracy diffusion, which shapes the world's security and environmental sustainability. It is a striking reminder of the danger diffusing autocracy poses to global peace and cooperation when replacing the prior trend of global democracy diffusion (Wejnert, 2014).

GLOBAL DEMOCRACY EROSION AND AUTOCRACY DIFFUSION

In contrast to the rapid increase of worldwide democratization at the end of the 20th century, where the number of democracies reached 79% of the existing 167 sovereign countries, in the 21st century, democracies are in steep decline. In the first 15 years of the new Millennium, democracies significantly decreased from 79 to 67% of all sovereign states (Wejnert, 2021). The strength of democracies also decreased, which is most commonly assessed on a scale of 0–10, with 0 meaning nondemocracy and 10 fully developed democratic systems (V-dem, 2021; Wejnert, 2014). Simultaneously, the number of autocratic regimes has surged, marking a striking reduction in the opportunities for global societies to live in a democratic system. Between 2010 and 2020, as V-dem Institute reports, within the first two decades of the 21st century, the number of people living in autocracies increased from 48% to 68% of the global population (V-dem, 2021), while the portion of the global population living in democracies declined from 52% to 32% within the same period. Freedom House Institute confirms these findings (Freedom House, 2020). The author's research on a global democratic regression, demonstrated in Fig. 1.1a and b, which extend prior discussions (Wejnert, 2020,

2021), also confirms the reduction of the number and strength of worldwide democracy.

Subsequently, as [Fig. 1.1a and b](#) reveal, democracy has a lengthy history. Nonetheless, the average level of worldwide democratization has weakened since 2008. In weakening democracies, elected leaders often embraced authoritarianism, the process called autocratization ([Geddes et al., 2018](#)), passing reforms, laws and policies limiting civil rights and civil society to control political power ([Economy, 2022](#); [Xia, 2021](#)). With democratic regimes, autocratization, democratic norms, and political behaviors erode. Other changes include constrained individual freedoms, political appointment of judgeships that facilitated a decline in the impartiality of the judiciary system, limiting public trust in the rule of law, limiting freedom of the press, and constraints of the education system ([Economy, 2022](#); [Xia, 2021](#)). In waning democracies, elected political leaders engage in sidelining, bribing, and silencing their political opposition from the mature US democracy to the relatively young postcommunist and postcolonial democracies ([Applebaum, 2020](#); [Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018](#)).

Several analyses devoted to the regression of democracy attempt to examine the causes of these changes, pointing to growing politics of supportive conditions for the global autocratic surge. Among the more crucial are the internal, domestic conditions within individual countries in the aftermath of democratic elections, when election losers refuse to concede power to incoming elected leaders and coordinate and lead democracies to fall ([Huggard & Kaufman, 2021](#); [Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018](#); [Przeworski, 2019](#)). This process starts with growing intolerance, societal divisiveness, and disrespect for democratic values. It often stems from preexisting socioeconomic conditions, intense economic difficulties, and unmet needs of large portions of societies. Political instability and populism, at times verging on authoritarianism, become a more likely outcome ([Huggard & Kaufman, 2021](#); [Wejnert, 2020](#)), and democratically elected government members use populist rhetoric to introduce antidemocratic behaviors and principles, initiating democratic decline and autocracy rise ([Bauer & Becker, 2020](#); [Markoff, 2013](#); [Przeworski, 2019](#)).

The world's population was exposed to such conditions at the start of the new millennium in the early 2000s, especially since the 2008 global economic crisis. The globalization of the market economy and related loss of industrial jobs due to automatization and industry relocation to less developed regions of an inexpensive labor force produced massively disfranchised populations in well-developed economies. For example, with the outsourced industrial jobs, the US industrial workers lost not only their jobs but also the dignity and pride associated with them, explained [Williams \(2016\)](#). Disfranchised populations succumb to extremism, conspiracy theories, and, most importantly, rapidly spreading anti-democratic populism, marked by global societal division and mistrust of governing regimes. These changes prepared a foundation for the rise of antidemocratic forces and led to the global erosion of support for democratic tolerance and collaboration. The profound decline of support for democratic values was associated with the progressive attrition of key democratic institutions

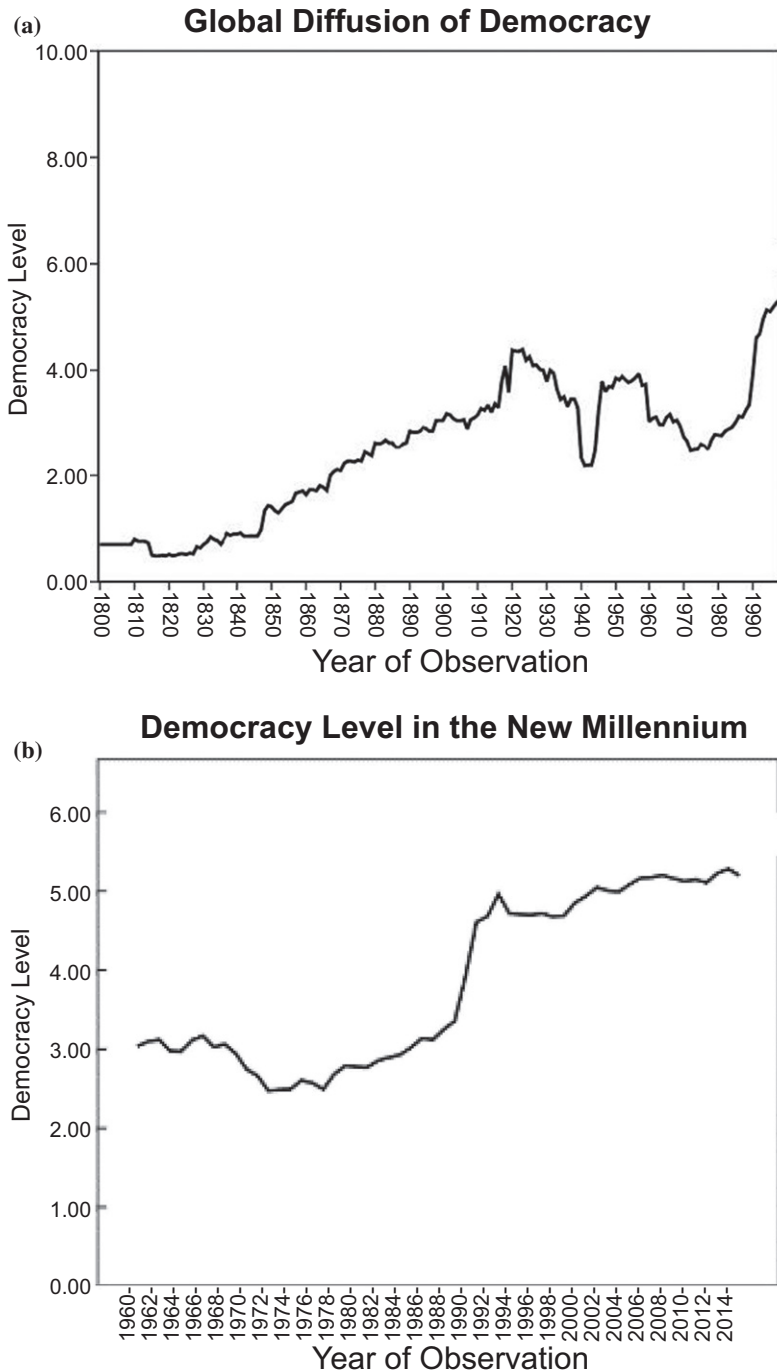


Fig. 1.1. Crisscrossing Diffusion of Democracy and Autocracy. (a) Democracy diffusion (1800–1998). (b) Democracy regression in the new millennium (1960–2015). *Source:* Modified figures from the author’s prior work: (a) [Wejnert \(2014\)](#) and (b) [Wejnert \(2021\)](#). *Note:* The estimated democracy values on a scale of 0–10 were obtained using the database *Nations, Democracy and Development: 1800–2005* ([Wejnert, 2007](#)). [Fig. 1.1b](#) depicts the current work on extending this database to 2021 for use in the proposed project on democracy retrenchment and the rise of autocracy.

Table 1.1. Autocratic Behaviors Manifested by Democratically Elected Leaders in Eroding Democracies.

1	Losers Refuse to Accept Legitimate Elections (Pemstein et al. (2021) Pack courts with loyalists to the ruling regime – the practice of court-packing (Huggard & Kaufman, 2021)
2	Following populist’s rhetoric, portray partisan rivals as criminals to disqualify them from political participation (Mollan & Geesin, 2020; Johnson, 2019)
3	Endorse or fail to condemn the violent behaviors of their supporters (Mollan & Geesin, 2020)
4	Support laws and policies that restrict civil liberties (Karolewski, 2020)
5	Appeal to violence to secure own power (Moffitt, 2016)
6	Restrict criticism of the ruling government (Cianetti et al., 2019).
7	Restrict freedom of independent press (Przeworski, 2019)
8	Undermine legitimate election if they lose the election (Przeworski, 2019)
9	Take legal or other punitive action against criticism of the government by media, civil society, or rival parties (Cianetti et al., 2019; Karolewski, 2020; Przeworski, 2019)
10	Praise repressions used by other authoritarian governments (Mollan & Geesin, 2020)

Note: Table constructed by the author based on literature review.

and a steady weakening of norms of democratic governing, facilitating an autocracy surge.

Elective leaders engage in autocratic behaviors to hold onto power after lost elections, as shown in [Table 1.1](#).

Reduce justice, abstraction of law, and difficulty punishing regime members’ corruption assisted the progressive autocratization of democratically elected leaders ([Table 1.1](#)). Elected state leaders slowly embraced more forms of autocratic governing. Illiberalism started to undermine democratic values, including support for human rights, tolerance, and diversity, preventing support for justice, checks and balances on the executive branches of government, and presidents. Although illiberalism and democracy erosion occur nationally, the “autocratization” of democratically elected leaders ([Geddes et al., 2018](#)) spills over to other countries in a process resembling autocracy’s global diffusion. The diffusion process augments democratic weakening due to leaders’ autocratization and adds another pathway of democratic regression.

The diffusion process encompasses adopting practices or behaviors by social institutions or other social or political entities (like individuals, social groups, or countries), where the adopters follow models and behavioral patterns of other social actors, organizations, national parties, or political regimes ([Wejnert, 2005](#), pp. 55–56). Even though the diffusion studies began with a classic Book on *The Laws of Imitation* ([Tarde, 1903](#)), the development of this approach did not occur until [Ryan and Gross \(1943\)](#) published results on the spread of hybrid corn use among Iowa farmers 40 years later. Only recently, however, published important work on diffusion by [Rogers \(2003\)](#) initiated a surge of research focusing on the diffusion of social movements and political changes ([Givan et al., 2010](#); [Kneuer & Harnisch, 2016](#), pp. 548–556; [Lee et al., 2011](#), pp. 444–544; [Wejnert, 2014](#)), farming and agribusiness ([Mardiana & Kembauw, 2021](#), online), new

technologies and market strategies (Wejnert, 2018), and political reforms and policies (Darian-Smith, 2022).

In the diffusion process, communication factors alter the plausibility of adopting a behavior or action by a political or social entity undertaking a similar action or practice following established patterns (Rogers, 2003; Starr, 1991; Wejnert, 2023). Amidst varied applications, a broad concept of diffusion evolved from the original diffusion views that required direct contact between prior and potential adopters to subsequent perspectives invoking additional diffusion modes. For instance, Rogers, in his classic definition, proposed a more general approach by defining diffusion as “[...] a process by which an innovation is *communicated through certain channels* over time among members of a social system” (Rogers, 2003, p. 5) or “. . . process by which institutions, practices, behaviors, or norms are transmitted between individuals and between social systems” (Starr, 1991, p. 359). Rogers himself clarified the process of diffusion by (a) distinguishing transmitters from adopters, (b) identifying classes of adopters based on the temporal rate of adoption (i.e., innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards), and (c) analyzing communication channels and specified conditions under which diffusion occurs. Consecutive studies have questioned the classic distinction between innovators and adopters and the roles of innovation and imitation in the diffusion process, arguing that adopters become innovators and vice versa.

This chapter, devoted to the worldwide rise of autocracy, approaches diffusion as a contributing factor to the erosion and weakening of democracy. It attempts to uncover possible examples of diffusion processes enhancing democracy backsliding and shows how and when democratic leaders imitate or adopt anti-democratic practices. To simplify the analysis of the diffusion of antidemocratic behaviors, this paper analyzes democratically elected leaders mimicking other leaders in backsliding democracies. Country leaders who imitate others are considered the followers being subjected to antidemocratic behaviors or rhetoric. The role modelers initiating antidemocratic practices are considered the initiators in the process of diffusion of autocracy. Both innovators and adopters constitute vital components of the rise of autocracy.

THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE DIFFUSION OF AUTOCRACY AND EROSION OF DEMOCRACY

According to Carter (2012), autocracies model each other and form alliances and networks of Like-Minded Groups and do not act alone. Formed networks provide legitimacy and justification for anti-democratic practices and endorsed values (Cianetti et al., 2019). For example, the initially democratically elected but autocratizing regime of Hungary and its Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, was followed by Donald Trump, the prior president of the US Just like Orbán, Donald Trump accepted the far-right ideology endorsing the far-right groups and pushing the US into the proautocratic direction (Mollan & Geesin, 2020; New York Times, 2022). The prior US president also emulated Viktor Orbán’s