

# The war in Ukraine, six months on (Serhiy Guz)

Friday 26 August 2022, by [GUZ Serhiy](#) (Date first published: 24 August 2022).

**When the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began six months ago, it seemed that this would be the most difficult test for us. But now it has become clear that the real test may not lie only in war. Will the people of Ukraine be able to maintain their commitment to democracy, human rights and what we call 'European values'?**

The question is by no means rhetorical. According to a [poll from the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology](#) last month, nearly 60% of Ukrainians believe a 'strong leader' is more important than a commitment to a democratic system. Only 14% of Ukrainians support the latter. Just a year ago, there were half as many supporters of a 'strong hand', and almost three times as many supporters of 'democracy'.

The first victims of the 'strong hand' of wartime were the opposition media and the voices of dissidents. They disappeared from the media landscape almost without a fight. The surviving TV channels of the disgraced oligarch and ex-president Petro Poroshenko don't count – they simply don't invite people to appear who hold different political views than those usually expressed on the channel.

All other influential TV channels were gathered by the authorities under the umbrella of the United Marathon, a joint round-the-clock telethon, establishing total control over the information broadcast in the country.

The 'watchdogs of democracy', as journalists used to be called in Ukraine, have gone silent, as have dissidents. Today, hiding behind the consequences of the war and the plight of millions of Ukrainians who are desperate for work, the authorities are passing laws that curtail the labour rights of these very citizens. But you will not hear any serious discussion or criticism of the adopted laws on TV.

It's also easy to silence trade unions. After all, strikes and protests are prohibited in wartime.

Meanwhile, Parliament is preparing even greater restrictions to media freedom. The above-mentioned opinion poll shows that 60% of Ukrainians questioned are ready to support the strengthening of state control over the Internet.

While winning victories and holding back the enemy on the 'military fronts', we are gradually surrendering our 'democratic front' – not forever, I hope.

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**P.S.**

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