THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF HOLDING ELECTIONS IN UKRAINE DURING WAR: MANIPULATION BY TRUMP AND PUTIN AND A DANGEROUS TRAP FOR UKRAINE

Viktor BED
Head of the All-Ukrainian Society of Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine
People's Deputy of Ukraine of the First Convocation

Uzhhorod
10 December 2025

Annotation

The article analyzes the dangers of holding presidential elections in Ukraine during the ongoing Russian–Ukrainian war. The author reveals the manipulative nature of calls for early elections coming from U.S. President Donald Trump and Russia's President Vladimir Putin, emphasizing their potential impact on Ukraine's political stability and national security. The study outlines key risks: societal fragmentation, erosion of public trust in state institutions, threats to the military front, the possibility of direct interference by the Russian Federation, and dangerous geopolitical scenarios involving the United States, Russia, and China. It is argued that elections during wartime could become a tool of external pressure and an "instrument of chaos" that may lead to the loss of statehood. The conclusion stresses that elections should not be held until the war is over and highlights the importance of preserving national unity and defending Ukraine's strategic interests.

Keywords: Russian–Ukrainian war; presidential elections; national security; foreign interference; geopolitical risks; Donald Trump; Vladimir Putin; Volodymyr Zelenskyi; China; political stability; Ukrainian statehood.

Manipulative pressure from Putin and Trump: a shared narrative that threatens Ukraine

Recent statements made by Donald Trump (President of the United States) [1] and Vladimir Putin (President of the Russian Federation) [2] demonstrate the formation of a dangerous joint political narrative: instead of seeking ways to end the Russian–Ukrainian war (2014–2025), they are attempting to impose on Ukraine the topic of urgent, early presidential elections.

This is no coincidence but rather an element of external pressure, aimed at destabilizing the Ukrainian state from within at a moment of its greatest military vulnerability.

Yielding to this manipulation, President Volodymyr Zelenskyi [3] announced his readiness to hold elections within 60–90 days and appealed to the Parliament to amend legislation in order to enable presidential elections during wartime.

This is a misguided, dangerous and strategically losing course of action that could come at a high cost to Ukraine.

The situation on the front: not a time for political frenzy

While discussions about early elections continue, the Russian–Ukrainian front is under severe strain. Ukrainian soldiers are exerting extraordinary effort, and the state suffers daily losses — human, material, and territorial.

Under such conditions, launching an election campaign will:

- divide society, which must now be maximally united;
- demoralize the Ukrainian Army, which will become an object of political manipulation and information attacks;
- weaken the Russian–Ukrainian front, diverting the country's resources and attention from the main task — repelling the aggression;
- strengthen Russian agent networks, which will receive ideal conditions to generate chaos inside Ukraine;
- open the way to internal political destabilization, which serves only the aggressor state — the Russian Federation led by war criminal Vladimir Putin.

Why elections during war are a trap and a source of societal division

In peacetime, elections are a natural instrument of democracy, ensuring the renewal of power, healthy political competition, and open public dialogue.

In wartime, elections turn into a mechanism of disintegration, because a nation fighting for survival requires maximum internal unity, coordination, and concentration of strength.

During the active phase of the Russian–Ukrainian war:

- society becomes objectively divided along emotional, traumatic, and political lines;
- any political competition between candidates turns into a struggle of “brother against brother,” weakening the moral and psychological resilience of the nation and the state;
- an election campaign transfers political conflicts into the Armed Forces, where people with different political views serve side by side but share a single mission — to defend the state from the aggressor;
- internal polarization becomes a gift to the enemy, who systematically and purposefully works to destroy Ukrainian unity and statehood.

As a result, pre-election struggle during war undermines national resilience because it:

- shifts state priorities — instead of focusing on victory, the country becomes immersed in political contestation;
- opens vast opportunities for hostile Russian informational and sabotage activities;
- demoralizes society, which already lives under constant loss, anxiety, and exhaustion.

A nation at war must remain united — this is its only chance for victory.

Elections at such a moment are an attempt to divide what must remain unbreakable, united, and whole.

The destruction of internal trust within the state

Election campaigns launched in conditions of mortal danger and the ongoing Russian–Ukrainian war inevitably trigger processes of internal decay that undermine the foundation of state resilience.

Under such conditions, the electoral process:

- generates a wave of mutual accusations, scandals, and kompromat, which divides society and replaces the shared goal of national resistance with political hostility;
- undermines trust in key state institutions — the Army, the President, Parliament, and the Government — because every action is perceived through the prism of political struggle rather than national security;
- weakens the legitimacy of the authorities at a critical moment, when the state requires a clear chain of command and the unconditional support of society;
- creates an impression of chaos and orchestrated crisis, which the enemy actively exploits to shake the morale of both civilians and military personnel;
- erodes the line between state interest and political expediency, which is extremely dangerous under wartime conditions.

As a result, the trust of citizens and military personnel — the foundation of any state during wartime — is destroyed, giving way to suspicion, internal hostility, and distrust toward the decisions of the authorities.

The military threat

Holding elections during the ongoing Russian aggression creates unprecedented risks for Ukraine's national security.

Any electoral process under such conditions becomes a vulnerable target and an instrument of pressure in the hands of the enemy.

First, elections open up significant opportunities for direct interference by the Russian Federation:

- missile and drone strikes on polling stations, administrative buildings, servers, and electronic data systems;
- cyberattacks on the Central Election Commission and state registries, capable of paralysing the system or falsifying results;
- sabotage and provocations aimed at disrupting voting or creating chaotic situations on election day;
- information and psychological operations designed to discredit the electoral process and its legitimacy.

Second, elections held in wartime may turn into a large-scale security catastrophe that the Kremlin would exploit:

- to blackmail the Ukrainian authorities and society;
- to fuel panic and mistrust toward state institutions;
- to demonstrate Ukraine's alleged "incapacity" to international partners;

- to force Ukraine to accept a political agenda dictated by Moscow, including ending the war on terms disadvantageous to Ukraine.

In essence, the enemy gains a unique opportunity to paralyse the state at a critical moment of the ongoing Russian–Ukrainian war, when any political chaos or disruption may affect defence operations, military command, and strategic decision-making.

Wartime conditions make elections not only impractical but dangerous — they create an additional internal front to which Ukraine cannot afford to divert resources or attention.

International risks and geopolitical context: the USA, Russia, China

The promotion of early presidential elections in Ukraine by Donald Trump (USA) and Vladimir Putin (Russia) does not occur in a vacuum. It is part of a broader geopolitical game — effectively a creeping Third World hybrid war — in which Ukraine may become an instrument in the hands of foreign political forces rather than an independent actor, unless it fully recognises the scope of external threats and the intentions of key global players.

1. The Russian Federation: a strategic aim to weaken Ukraine from within

For the Kremlin, the demand for elections during wartime is part of its hybrid military and geopolitical aggression strategy:

- to divide Ukrainian society, which would undermine mobilisation and sustained resistance to Russian aggression;
- to weaken the legitimacy of Ukrainian authorities, thereby promoting the false international narrative of Ukraine as an “unstable and incapable state”;
- to create internal chaos, facilitating further military escalation or political pressure;
- to activate pro-Russian and agent networks, which would receive ideal conditions during an election period to exert influence, infiltrate, and preserve their presence within Ukraine’s state institutions.

For Putin, “elections during war” in Ukraine represent a way to obtain what he could not achieve on the battlefield.

2. The United States under President Donald Trump: geopolitical pressure and a desire for control

Donald Trump, unlike the bipartisan majority of the American political establishment, views Ukraine not primarily as an ally but as a “factor” that must be rapidly incorporated into a deal advantageous to the United States.

His interests may include:

- shifting responsibility for the war onto Ukraine, thereby reducing American costs and obligations;
- promoting a “peace plan” that freezes the conflict on terms favourable to the Russian Federation (the aggressor state) and limits Ukraine’s sovereignty;
- resetting relations with Moscow, in which Ukraine becomes a “bargaining chip”;

- establishing direct influence over Ukrainian domestic politics, including through the demand for elections and the formation of a political landscape favourable to the current U.S. administration.

Trump openly adheres to a transactional approach to international relations — and this constitutes a direct threat to Ukraine's independence if Kyiv becomes internally weakened.

Holding presidential elections in Ukraine during wartime creates a critical vulnerability that the sitting U.S. President, Donald Trump, can already exploit in line with his own political logic and geopolitical aims.

Under current conditions, elections in Ukraine open the possibility for Trump to:

- shape a politically controlled or favourable environment in Ukraine by exploiting the weakening of state institutions during a change of power and an unstable transitional period;
- put forward continuous demands and conditions to Kyiv, which Ukraine cannot ignore because of its critical dependence on U.S. military, technological, and financial assistance;
- impose a vision of "conflict resolution" aligned with his own political interests and strategic dealings with global powers — a vision that may disregard Ukrainian values, security, or territorial integrity;
- exert pressure on Ukraine using his transactional logic, in which international relations are not partnerships but exchanges of benefits;
- demand rapid and dangerous compromises, potentially including de facto legitimisation of Russian territorial seizures or enforced territorial–political concessions;
- act unpredictably and impulsively, as demonstrated repeatedly in his foreign policy behaviour, creating direct security risks for the Ukrainian state.

In such a configuration:

- Ukraine is no longer in the position of a partner but becomes a dependent party, forced to react under pressure at its weakest moment — during externally imposed internal political turbulence;
- elections during wartime effectively become an instrument of external influence, not a democratic mechanism of national will;
- Donald Trump gains the ability to maximally strengthen his control over Ukraine's political field, determining which forces are "acceptable" and which are "undesirable" to the current U.S. administration.

This creates a strategic vulnerability that may lead to decisions contradicting Ukraine's national interests and generate significant internal and external risks.

3. China: a pragmatic player benefiting from the weakening of the USA and Europe

Communist China publicly declares "neutrality," but is strategically interested in:

- weakening the USA and NATO through prolonged conflicts, including military ones;
- discrediting democratic systems, which struggle to manage crises effectively;

- strengthening its own role as a global “peacemaker,” expanding Beijing’s influence worldwide;
- creating a precedent in which major powers may forcibly change borders (with an eye toward Taiwan).

If Ukraine becomes divided and weakened due to election-induced chaos:

- China gains additional arguments against democratic governance models;
- Beijing may propose an “alternative peace plan” that effectively legitimises Ukrainian territorial losses;
- a divided West strengthens China’s position in its strategic confrontation with the United States.

Thus, an unstable Ukraine is a geopolitical victory for the communist–totalitarian regime in Beijing, which seeks to reshape the global balance of power.

Why elections during war are mortally dangerous for Ukraine

The synchronisation of interests among the revived communist–totalitarian regime of the Russian Federation, elements of the American political spectrum (the “Trumpist” faction), and communist China means:

- pressure comes from different directions but with a single objective — to weaken Ukraine;
- internal destabilisation through elections becomes a universal instrument for external actors hostile to Ukraine;
- the division of Ukrainian society becomes the fastest route to the loss of Ukrainian statehood and subjectivity;
- internal chaos can become the precondition for imposed “peace solutions” beneficial not to Ukraine, but to global centres of power — especially totalitarian ones.

Ukraine must understand that elections during wartime are not an internal political matter but a geopolitical risk actively exploited by global actors who are far from always democratic, conscientious, or respectful of international law, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and human rights.

Therefore, Ukraine’s foremost priorities must be:

- national unity, resilience, and the unwavering preservation of state independence.

Elections must take place — but only after the war ends

Ukraine needs fair and legitimate elections —

- presidential;
- parliamentary;
- and local self-government elections.

However, they must take place only after the cessation of the Russian–Ukrainian war and the end of its active phase, when:

- the security of voters and candidates is guaranteed;
- full state control over the territories where elections can be held has been restored;

real participation of military personnel and internally displaced persons can be ensured;

international security guarantees are obtained to prevent a renewed Russian attack.

Any other model is a path toward political chaos and even the loss of Ukrainian statehood.

Corruption and war: priorities must not be distorted

Ukraine must fight corruption regardless of circumstances.

However, during war, the primary priority is the preservation of the state.

Anti-corruption and law-enforcement bodies must continue their work, but they must not become instruments of:

- political propaganda;
- political persecution;
- political destabilisation;
- external political manipulation;
- serving foreign interests.

In wartime, the main heroes are Ukrainian soldiers and defenders.

Today, Ukraine's chief objective is:

- to end the Russian–Ukrainian war, preserve state independence, and ensure Ukraine's accession to the European Union.

Strategic conclusion: immediate elections = a threat of political catastrophe

Holding presidential elections at the most dangerous moment of the Russian–Ukrainian war:

- contradicts the Constitution of Ukraine, as well as the spirit and goals of a state at war;
- creates risks of internal political chaos and societal division;
- weakens Ukraine's defence;
- gives advantages to Russian agent networks and propaganda;
- may become a fatal blow to Ukrainian statehood.

This is a trap set by Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, one into which Ukraine must not allow itself to be dragged.

The responsibility for preventing this lies with Ukrainian society, political elites, and civic institutions.

Conclusion

Today, the Ukrainian people stand at the threshold of a historic choice: to preserve national independence or to allow internal political quarrels to destroy what is most precious — freedom, dignity, and the God-given Ukrainian State, all won through the blood of our soldiers and many generations of fighters for Ukraine's liberty.

We have no right to repeat the tragic mistakes of nations that lost their freedom due to internal intrigue and political shortsightedness during wartime. A particularly bitter lesson is offered by the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1921), where internal discord and the absence of unified political will became key factors in the loss of statehood.

Therefore, our duty is to act responsibly and remember:

- Elections — after the war.
- Victory — before elections.
- The Ukrainian State — above political ambitions.

List of References

1. Trump said it was time to hold elections in Ukraine.
   NV (Novoye Vremya), December 9, 2025.
   URL: https://nv.ua/ukr/world/geopolitics/tramp-zayaviv-shcho-nastav-chas-provesti-vibori-v-ukrajini-50567062.html (Accessed: December 10, 2025).
2. Kremlin says Putin has 'for a long time' spoken about the need for elections in Ukraine.
   Anadolu Agency (AA), December 10, 2025.
   URL: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/russia-ukraine-war/kremlin-says-putin-has-for-a-long-time-spoken-about-need-for-elections-in-ukraine/3767254
   (Accessed: December 10, 2025).
3. Zelenskyy 'ready for elections' after Trump questions Ukrainian democracy.
   The Guardian, December 9–10, 2025.
   URL: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/dec/09/zelenskyy-ready-for-elections-after-trump-questions-ukrainian-democracy (Accessed: December 10, 2025).