

Speech of the Speaker of Parliament of Georgia H.E. Shalva Papuashvili at the General Debate

“[Foreign] aid industry and bureaucracy... serve to destabilize world peace by promoting ideas in foreign countries that are directly inverse to harmonious and stable relations internal to and among countries” – these are the words of the President of the United States Donald J. Trump from his Executive Order on ‘Reevaluating US Foreign Aid’, signed on the day of his inauguration.

The most relevant aspect of these words is that the leader of the free world revealed the malpractice of foreign aid, which is often used for interference for political purposes, but is presented as democratic assistance.

We have witnessed an extraordinary period in the development of international society, when foreign aid has negatively affected international cooperation. Undermining of the rule of law in various countries, in the name of democratization and with the use of so-called civil society organizations, has, in fact, disrupted both domestic democratic institutions as well as eroded the pillars of the rules-based international order.

More so, raising voice and doubting the morality and efficacy of foreign aid, especially delivered through non-governmental organizations, has become a taboo.

However, critical examination of these concepts, principles, and processes leads us to a very inconvenient conclusion: Through the manipulation of foreign aid and civil society, the very essence of democracy has been reversed from its original meaning – the rule by the people – towards the rule from abroad. Instead of democracy, we were offered *alienocracy*, a rule not by the people but by foreign-imposed dogmas, legitimized and perpetuated by the consensus from the foreign-funded NGOs.

While the strongest pillar of democracy is diversity of norms, opinions, and arguments, in contrast, *alienocracy* imposed an ideological straitjacket on this diversity, giving undue advantage to those groups in the society that share the foreign-imposed agenda. But we know very well that democracy is a way of life not an ideology. Imposing political influence under disguise of democratic aid contradicts the very essence of democracy. Instead of the rule of the people we get the rule of self-appointed foreign democratic mentors.

Among the nations whose democracy suffered from this imposed foreign political interference is Georgia. We saw the development of a strange foreign-fed narrative, when the foreign-funded NGOs were initially equated with the civil society, and then the civil society was equated with the people. Thus, effectively, foreign-funded NGOs became THE people. Thus, Georgia’s legitimately elected Parliament was juxtaposed with unelected NGOs, whose legitimacy was only measured by the volume of foreign funding that they received.

The fact that real civil society became replaced with sham NGOs is a direct hit at democracy.

The interests of democracy and the rule of law warrant that we should get back to the fundamental norms of the rules-based international order – sovereignty, democracy, and non-interference in domestic affairs.

Undue foreign interference should give way to respecting national sovereignty, and foreign-funded NGOs must give way to genuine civil society, and, thus, the real democracy.