

ТОДОРОВ ІГОР,

доктор історичних наук, професор Ужгородського національного університету

СУЧАСНА УКРАЇНО-РОСІЙСЬКА ВІЙНА: ВИТОКИ І ГЕОПОЛІТИЧНИЙ ВИМІР

У статті розглядаються витoki та початок україно-російського конфлікту на сході України у 2014 р. Визначені умови виникнення цього протистояння, доведено провідну роль Росії як організатора та основного виконавця війни проти України. Указано на недостатню роль Заходу в протистоянні російській агресії.

Ключові слова: *геополітичні основи; східна частина України; Донецька область; російська агресія; україно-російська війна; "Донецька Народна Республіка".*

Further escalation of the conflict, or in fact, the war, in the eastern Ukraine confronts researchers with the need to find out the origins of this situation, including its geopolitical background. It is the purpose that our scientific research serves to. Achieving this purpose involves implementation of such tasks as the definition of conditions for conflict resolution, proving the leading role of Russia as the organizer and key executor of the war against Ukraine. The implementation of these tasks relies on the documents issued by the central government and local authorities, the media information and the author's own observations.

In December 2013, it seemed that the idea of splitting Ukraine is not popular, unlike 2004. Dissatisfaction with the current government was very deep, though sufficiently hidden in the public discourse of Donbas [1]. In the towns of Donbas since late November 2013 there were held their own "euromaidans." In Donetsk, particularly every day in the evening 50-60 participants gathered, and on Sundays - up to 300. Meetings were entirely peaceful; the police treated their participants kindly, but in general, the residents of Donetsk shared a predominantly negative attitude to the Kiev 'maidan'.

In the Donbas there have always been pro-Russian sympathies, especially on an emotional level. Until recently, these sympathies have not moved into the sphere of political separatism. They were expressed mainly through the vote for the Party of Regions, which conventionally was considered a pro-Russian. Besides sympathy for the "northern neighbor" and the Soviet past was expressed in the Donetsk region in the form of a support to the openly pro-Russian Communist Party. But both political parties operated within in the Ukrainian legal domain and could not act against the territorial integrity of the state.

The events of early March 2014 when thousands of people who were in favor of the union with Russia started going out in the central streets of Donetsk seemed illogical and ungrounded. Earlier the Russian tricolor banner sometimes appeared in the streets of Donetsk, but it has never been a mass phenomenon. Suddenly everything changed: there appeared masses of people never seen before. There were grounds to say that in Ukraine there started a special operation carefully planned and prepared in advance, based on qualitative consideration of the local

realities. We now know that these scenarios were developed in last years, and perhaps it was planned to implement them after the presidential elections of 2015. However, the February events on Independence Square (Maidan) accelerated the beginning of the raid [2]. On the part of the local authorities and local governments, and especially - the law enforcement bodies, there were no clear, effective and thoughtful actions to oppose separatist forces. There were declared the calls for the unity of Ukraine, but no effective steps in this direction were made.

Subversive work, which was conducted among residents of the region, was clearly aimed at creating the mythology of both the Russian realities (high salaries and pensions) and of "fears" traditional for eastern Ukraine - Bandera, fascists ... In February, they were supplemented by the myths about the "Right Sector" which supposedly is going to Donbas to revenge on its residents for Yanukovich. Again there appeared the language issue, although most residents of Donetsk were aware that the Russian language has never been threatened there.

The NGO "Donetsk Institute of Social Research and Political Analysis" (director V.Kipen) in March 2014 conducted the opinion poll in Donetsk. Donetsk inhabitants then demonstrated the high level of interest in political events occurring in the country and the city. Three-quarters of respondents (77%) identified their interest in these events as stable and high. 34% of the citizens of Donetsk tended to trust the Ukrainian media in covering the events, 24% - to the Russian ones. Such a distribution of trust in the information sources fully reflects the fragility of the public opinion, which was formed in conditions of information warfare.

Half of Donetsk residents then spoke for preserving the unitary structure of Ukraine. Of them, 31% of the unitary government supporters believed that regions should be given broader economic and tax powers. There were 16% of those who saw the future of Donetsk region within Ukraine, but with the authority extended to the status of the federation subject. Totally there were 66% of those who supported the unity of Ukraine. There were 27% of those who supported entering the Russian Federation by the Donetsk region including those who spoke for the actual entry of Ukraine into the alliance, similar to the Soviet Union. And only 5% saw the region as a separate state formation.

Donetsk residents for the most part felt themselves unprotected. The events that unfolded in the city in March '14 left an obvious mark: 31% of respondents said that life in the city was "restless", 20% rated it as "dangerous", and 34% believed that life in general became more difficult and more depressing. In this situation, the Donetsk residents, in fact, had no one to rely on: the level of trust in the security forces was very low. Courts and prosecutors were the leaders of distrust among Donetsk residents: no more than 10% of Donetsk people trusted them. Locals had a little more confidence in the Security Service and the police. The army had the greatest confidence, but the share of those who did not trust it, in general, was as low as that of the SBU.

There was no unity in the perception of pro-Russian rallies and meetings in support of the unity of Ukraine. Although the overall distribution of responses shows a greater tendency of public opinion to support the rally participants for a unified Ukraine, however, it cannot be said that there was an unequivocal dominance of supporters of a particular point of view.

However, the thesis of the Donetsk residents' predominant orientation to Russia was not confirmed by the distribution of answers to the question of identity. Clear patriotic feelings, in general, were characteristic of more than a third of Donetsk residents. Close to them is a large group (21%) of Donetsk residents that identified themselves as "Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine." In total, this amounted to 58% of Donetsk population. A third of respondents cared for Russia [3].

It is worth mentioning that the pro-Russian movement began several years ago. In 2005 an unregistered organization "Donetsk Republic" began to operate. Its pro-Russian activists staged rallies, which were attended by a few dozen people. The situation has changed radically in early April 2014, when together with Russian tricolor banners there appeared in large numbers tricolor flags of "Donetsk Republic". On April 7, radical separatists acting according to the Moscow scenario and coordinated by the Russian secret services, declared a so-called "People's Council of Donbas" in a captured building of Donetsk Regional State Administration, held a fake "extraordinary session", which adopted the illegal and unconstitutional decision to establish a so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" and its accession to Russian Federation.

Donetsk Oblast Council requested Donetsk residents to remain prudent and not to succumb to provocations. It advocated a peaceful and legal settlement of the crisis in the Donbas [4]. Donetsk city council also made an official statement that it does not recognize the so-called "People's Council of Donbas", which announced the creation of "Donetsk People's Republic" [5].

However, there was the actual betrayal of law enforcement officers who did not oppose the seizure of administrative buildings, taunted the members of pro-Ukrainian rallies. Many of the senior officers of the SBU regional management were recruited by Russia. In fact, this structure is in the Donetsk region in fact worked for another state [6].

Since April 2014 towns of Donetsk and Lugansk regions were actually occupied. There were no state flags even over the administrative buildings that were not captured. All exits from the towns were controlled by the DPR's block posts.

Actions of the pro-separatist protesters were given a

formal assessment by the police: they were qualified as a crime against the national security of Ukraine (according to the prosecutor's office in Donetsk region). Radical actions of the pro-Russian extremists were also condemned by the scientific elite of Donbas. In the program "Questions of the authority" on the TV channel "Donbas", it was noted that the main purpose of Russia, which is pushing Donetsk separatists to radicalism, is to eliminate the Ukrainian statehood. All actions of local separatists on declaring an independent state "Donetsk Republic", holding a referendum and appeals to Russian Federation to bring its troops on the territory of Donetsk Oblast, are illegitimate and subject to the relevant articles of the Criminal Code of Ukraine [7].

In general, except tricolor flags and piles of garbage in the square in front of the Donetsk Regional State Administration, as well as hysterical cries of pro-Russian activists in social networks, in April 2014 Donetsk continued to live its normal life: people went to work and enjoyed the spring [8]. There were two parallel realities. However, in late April the situation changed radically. They began to cross. Much was made by the Russian propaganda. The trapped air of the regional TV and radio company broadcast the Russian channels. Even then it was clear that in the presidential election will not be held in the region. While the then chairman of RSA S. Taruta till the last moment said that everything is fine. The camouflaged men with weapons began to walk openly in the streets. And many Donetsk residents were willing to accept any lie by Putin. On May 11 the fake referendum on "independence" of the Donetsk People's Republic was held, which could not (or would not) be prevented by the constitutional state and local authorities. Some officials even secretly supported the separatists. Many people came to the polling stations (in estimates, about a third of voters). Some interest can be explained by a number of factors. These include nostalgia for the Soviet Union, following the social model that prevailed there. A generation of people was brought up on this. And such ideas were actively reproduced in Donetsk region. The "referendum" was attended not only by the elderly, although they constituted the basis for the DPR electorate.

It is likely that by the end of April, Putin (and it is him who takes decisions in the Russian Federation) did not have the final approach. In many ways, his decisions (based on the global political goals) were and are impulsive. There was wavering: either occupation and annexation on the model of the Crimea, or the self-proclaimed republic which is de facto under the control of Russia. Further developments showed that the second viewpoint won. There was realized the tactical purpose of keeping the stable instability in Ukraine [9].

It is impossible already to convince the majority of those who took the pro-Russian position. These people are in a state of altered reality and painful consciousness and aggressively defend their image of the world from any attempt of intervention. "Image" is established by the Russian channels, local press and the Party of Regions, which has long worked on rooting the stereotypes "we'll die without Russia", "decaying Europe", "Donbas feeds Ukraine" and the like. Most aggressive part of the population operates pseudo facts that cannot be challenged, as they are unprovable. Professional psychiatrists characterize such behavior as mass psychopathology.

From the beginning of the crisis in the east there started

the talks that Ukraine does not need the problematic Donbas. However, it is not just the fate of Donbas, but the statehood of Ukraine as such which is at stake. If Putin "swallows" Donbas, he will not stop. The myth of "Novorossia" was not randomly created.

Pro-Russian, or rather - pro-Soviet sentiments have always been present in different regions of Ukraine; in the Donbas however they were more common, although of hidden character. However, these positions could not take clear shape without outside interference. Separatist performances were carefully prepared.

In Russia, in our view, there are two main motives for aggression in Ukraine. They are supplemented by the personal complexes and offences of Putin. Global motive is the perception of himself as a kind of messiah, restoring the former empire, geographically as well.

Global understanding of his mission is also to show his enemy, the West, that Russia may ignore it. The purpose of Putin's third term is the empire's reintegration.

During the post-Soviet period Russia was trying to decide what it should be like: the imperialist power that everyone fears, or the country that primarily deals with social welfare. President Putin seems to have solved this problem in favor of an ambitious expansion policy. Prosperity is good, but for the time being, because it creates people who think independently and who can vote to overthrow their ruler. Large-scale plans on the international scene seemed safer, at least for the Russian authorities. But it is not possible to escape from the economic problems. Russian public was pleased by the propaganda about the Crimea as a free gift, but it is more like shopping in a store without price tags. Disappointment awaits at the checkout point, as stores that do not show the prices are usually very expensive. [10]

Such unhealthy fixation on the neighboring country indicates the depth of the post-imperial trauma. Ukrainians were too close, too similar for Russia to allow them to just go away. Throughout 23 years of independence Ukrainian statehood was perceived as a misunderstanding, a joke; this word in Russia is usually pronounced with ironic overtones.

In fact, in Russia century after century the various forms of social estate slavery were reproduced: from serfdom to the Soviet registration and current corporate state, and not only ordinary residents but also privileged classes are in the state slavery. Under these conditions, a society develops resentment, lack of demand, unrecognized talent. On the other hand, for about a century Russia has been copying the West, dissociating itself from this imitation. Russia either sees itself as Cinderella, unjustly forgotten by her stepmother and sisters, or it presents itself as a nation-victim, whose body saves the world from destruction: from the Mongol-Tatar yoke or "fascist hordes." One of the main propaganda myths of Putin's era was the "theory of Russia's defeat", starting with "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the XXth century", which was the collapse of the USSR.

The West tried to integrate Russia into their institutions, offering it the privileged partnership with both NATO and the EU. But Russia did not use an open window of opportunities, repeating the mantra of insult and humiliation.

Teenage complexes of the Russian authorities, elite's childish disappointment in the West and population's social infantilism gave birth to the myth of "Ukrainian

fascism". Ukraine was declared a traitor, and its betrayal seemed even more offensive, as the Ukrainians were considered those who belong to them, to the Slavic family by their blood. The image of fascism as a synonym for the absolute, final evil was typical of Russian propaganda. Russia's war in Ukraine is an example of anti-policy, pure negativity, based on self-inferiority, compensation of the elite's inferiority complex towards the West and the population concerning the circumstances of their lives. The government cannot change the role of Russia in the international arena through the "soft power", quality economic growth, cannot achieve respect and recognition of partners. The vast majority of the population, locked within Putin's restored estate system, cannot go beyond the state paternalism (essentially, caste slavery) and social parasitism, helplessness syndrome. Creating a fictional enemy in the person of Ukraine and imaginary victories - the annexation of the Crimea and the creation of Donetsk and Lugansk pirate republics served as a symbolic compensation [11].

Thus, the current behavior of President Putin is aimed at the destruction of international law, the "revival" of imperial Russia as a threat to the world. Consolidated West (the EU, NATO, the US, Japan, Australia, Brazil, South Korea and other countries of liberal democracy) must realize that Ukraine needs their real protection, for protecting Ukraine they protect themselves. In fact, Ukraine is an arena of the civilized world struggle with the modern Empire of Evil. Drastic and unexpected measures are required. Traditional sanctions fail. Russia in its imperial haze is ready to suffer economic costs for it understands only the language of force.

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Тодоров Игорь,

доктор исторических наук, профессор Ужгородского национального университета

СОВРЕМЕННАЯ УКРАИНО-РОССИЙСКАЯ ВОЙНА: ИСТОКИ И ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЕ

В статье рассмотрены истоки и начало украинно-российского конфликта на востоке Украины в 2014 г. Определены условия возникновения этого противостояния, доказано ведущую роль России как организатора и основного исполнителя войны против Украины. Указано на недостаточную роль Запада в противостоянии российской агрессии.

Ключевые слова: геополитические основы; восток Украины; Донецкая область; российская агрессия; украинно-российская война; "Донецкая Народная Республика".

Todorov Ihor,

Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of Uzhhorod National University

MODERN UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN WAR: BACKGROUND AND GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSION

The paper looks into the background and outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in the east of Ukraine in 2014. The conditions of the emergence of this confrontation are identified and the leading role of Russia as the organizer and main originator of the war against Ukraine is demonstrated. The inadequate role of the West in countering the Russian aggression is pointed out.

The paper presents the chronicle of the "Russian Spring" from the early March 2014 to the end of this year. The influence of local and Russian propaganda on changes in awareness of regional dwellers is shown. The motivation of the President of Russia in committing the aggression upon Ukraine is identified. It is pointed out that to stop the war, consolidated countries of the West should turn to more radical means rather than economic sanctions against Russia.

Key words: geopolitical background; East Ukraine; Donetsk region; Russian aggression; Ukraine-Russian war; "Donetsk People's Republic".

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