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UKRAINE–RUSSIA: FORMAT OF GEOECONOMIC AND GEOPOLITICAL CONFRONTATION

УКРАЇНА–РОСІЯ: ФОРМАТ ГЕОЕКОНОМІЧНОЇ ТА ГЕОПОЛІТИЧНОЇ КОНФРОНТАЦІЇ

УКРАИНА–РОССИЯ: ФОРМАТ ГЕОЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ И ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ КОНФРОНТАЦИИ

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Abstract. *The article reveals challenges and prospects of Ukraine in the conditions of transitive world order crisis in Eastern European context. The issue of strengthening national security and protection of the territorial sovereignty of the post-Soviet countries and Eastern European countries in connection with the aggression of Russia and the occupation of part of the Ukrainian territories has been mainstreamed. The confrontation between Russia and the post-Soviet countries is a conflict of two civilizational systems, the struggle of two opposing worldviews and paradigms of a new world order. It has been proved that Russia's Eurasian integration projects were aimed at attracting Ukraine and maintaining it in the sphere of Russia's geo-economic and geopolitical influence. The creation of integration associations in the post-Soviet space is intended to become one of the instruments of revival of the Eurasian empire, in particular at the expense of the destruction of the national economy and the sovereignty of Ukraine.*

A key result of the Revolution of Dignity was the signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU which destroyed Russia's strategy to engage Ukraine in the Eurasian integration area. It is confirmed that after the Russian Federation's unsuccessful actions to involve Ukraine in Eurasian integration structures through the use of managed pro-Kremlin power, Moscow abandoned this option and switched to a scenario under which the strategy of fomenting and supporting separatism in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine was implemented. The strategy to create a pseudostates on the territory of Ukraine in one way or another involves the issues of infrastructure and transit of Russian energy resources to the European Union. The formation of Novorossiia at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty also included support from individual EU Member States to accelerate the construction of energy infrastructure bypassing Ukraine as a failed state. The annexation of Crimea became a non-standard geostrategic step in Russia, which led to the violation of the border of the sovereign state for the first time since the end of World War II. In general, the Crimea is an important sacred phenomenon and a geostrategic asset for the Russian Federation. Given the opening of new military bases in Belarus, the preservation of the Russian military contingent in Transnistria and the Donbas, as well as the creeping geopolitical

displacement of Ukraine from the Black and Azov Sea, the latter automatically finds itself in a kind of geopolitical "garrotte" while losing access to the sea.

In the end, Russian aggression aimed at destabilizing Ukraine also had internal political significance for Russia, since Europeanization of Ukraine and its political and economic success would become a new geopolitical trend and would call into question the effectiveness of the authoritarian regime of Russia and other post-Soviet countries. All this would become a clear example for the Russian society of the positive consequences of the democratic transformations of the great Orthodox state. However, while the Russian Federation has achieved some tactical advantages in Ukraine, thereby slowing its rapprochement with the EU and NATO, designing instability strategically prevents any involvement of Kyiv in Eurasian integration projects, further alienating it from Russia, making Ukraine more pro-Western and anti-Russian.

Keywords: *Ukraine, foreign policy, national security, Russian Federation, Eastern Europe, ODED-GUAM, Baltic-Black Sea Commonwealth*

Анотація. *Розкрито виклики та перспективи України в умовах кризи транзитивного світопорядку в східноєвропейському контексті. Актуалізовано питання зміцнення національної безпеки та захисту територіального суверенітету пострадянських країн та країн Східної Європи у зв'язку з агресією Росії та окупацією частини українських територій. Протистояння між Росією та пострадянськими країнами є конфліктом двох цивілізаційних систем, боротьбою двох протилежних світоглядів і парадигм нового світового порядку. Доведено, що євразійські інтеграційні проекти Росії були спрямовані на залучення України та утримання її у сфері російського гео економічного та геополітичного впливу. Створення інтеграційних об'єднань на пострадянському просторі покликано стати одним із інструментів відродження євразійської імперії, зокрема й за рахунок руйнування національної економіки та суверенітету України.*

*Ключовим результатом Революції Гідності стало підписання Угоди про асоціацію між Україною та ЄС, що зруйнувало російську стратегію щодо втягнення України в площину євразійської інтеграції. Підтверджено, що після невдалих дій Російської Федерації із залучення України до євразійських інтеграційних структур через використання керованої прокремлівської влади, Москва відмовилася від цього варіанту та перейшла до сценарію, відповідно до якого було реалізовано стратегію розпалювання та підтримки сепаратизму в південно-східних областях України. Стратегія щодо створення на теренах України псевдодержав так чи інакше включає питання інфраструктури та транзиту російських енергоресурсів до Євросоюзу. Формування Новоросії за рахунок українського суверенітету передбачало також підтримку з боку окремих країн ЄС прискорення побудови енергетичної інфраструктури в обхід України як *failed state*. Анексія Криму стала нестандартним геостратегічним кроком Росії, що призвів до порушення кодону суверенної держави вперше з часів завершення Другої світової війни. Загалом Крим для РФ є важливим сакральним явищем та геостратегічним активом. За умов відкриття нових військових баз у Білорусі, збереження російського військового контингенту у Придністров'ї та на Донбасі, а також повзучого геополітичного витіснення України з Чорного т Азовського моря остання автоматично опиняється у своєрідному геополітичному «заиморгу», позбавляючись при цьому виходу до моря.*

Зрештою, російська агресія, спрямована на дестабілізацію України мала для РФ також і внутрішньополітичне значення, адже європеїзація України та її політико-економічний успіх став би новим геополітичним трендом та поставив би під сумнів ефективність авторитарного режиму Росії та решти пострадянських країн. Все б це стало для російського суспільства наочним прикладом позитивних наслідків демократичних трансформацій великої православної держави. Однак, хоча РФ і досягла певних тактичних переваг в Україні, уповільнивши тим самим її зближення з ЄС та НАТО, все ж проектування нестабільності стратегічно унеможлиблює будь-яку участь Києва у євразійських

інтеграційних проектах, дедалі віддаляє його від Росії, робить Україну більш прозахідною та антиросійською.

Ключові слова: Україна, зовнішня політика, національна безпека, Російська Федерація, Східна Європа, ОДЕР-ГУАМ, Балто-Чорноморська співдружність

Анотація. Раскрыто вызовы и перспективы Украины в условиях кризиса транзитивного миропорядка в восточноевропейском контексте. Актуализирован вопрос укрепления национальной безопасности и защиты территориального суверенитета постсоветских стран и стран Восточной Европы в связи с агрессией России и оккупацией части украинских территорий. Противостояние между Россией и постсоветскими странами является конфликтом двух цивилизационных систем, борьбой двух противоположных мировоззрений и парадигм нового мирового порядка. Доказано, что евразийские интеграционные проекты России были направлены на привлечение Украины и удержание ее в сфере российского геоэкономического и геополитического влияния. Создание интеграционных объединений на постсоветском пространстве призвано стать одним из инструментов возрождения евразийской империи, в том числе и за счет разрушения национальной экономики и суверенитета Украины.

Ключевым результатом Революции Достоинства стало подписание Соглашения об ассоциации между Украиной и ЕС, что разрушило русскую стратегию втягивания Украины в плоскость евразийской интеграции. Подтверждено, что после неудачных действий Российской Федерации по привлечению Украины в евразийские интеграционные структуры из-за использования управляемой прокремлевской власти, Москва отказалась от этого варианта и перешла к сценарию, согласно которому было реализовано стратегию разжигания и поддержки сепаратизма в юго-восточных областях Украины. Стратегия по созданию на территории Украины псевдогосударств так или иначе включает вопросы инфраструктуры и транзита российских энергоресурсов в Евросоюз. Формирование Новороссии за счет украинского суверенитета предусматривало также поддержку со стороны отдельных стран ЕС ускорения построения энергетической инфраструктуры в обход Украины как failed state. Аннексия Крыма стала нестандартным геостратегическим шагом России, который привел к нарушению границ суверенного государства впервые после окончания Второй мировой войны. В общем Крым для РФ является важным сакральным явлением и геостратегическим активом. В условиях открытия новых военных баз в Беларуси, сохранение российского военного контингента в Приднестровье и на Донбассе, а также ползучего геополитического вытеснения Украины с Черного и Азовского моря последняя автоматически оказывается в своеобразном геополитическом «петли», избавляясь при этом выхода к морю.

В конце концов, российская агрессия, направленная на дестабилизацию Украины имела для РФ также и внутривнутриполитическое значение, ведь европеизация Украины и ее политико-экономический успех стал бы новым геополитическим трендом и поставил бы под сомнение эффективность авторитарного режима России и остальных постсоветских стран. Все это бы стало для российского общества наглядным примером положительных результатов демократических трансформаций великого православного государства. Однако, хотя РФ и достигла определенных тактических преимуществ в Украине, замедлив тем самым ее сближение с ЕС и НАТО, все же проектирования нестабильности стратегически исключает любое участие Киева в евразийских интеграционных проектах, все больше отдаляет его от России, делает Украину более прозападной и антиросийской.

Ключевые слова: Украина, внешняя политика, национальная безопасность, Россия, Восточная Европа, ОДЕР-ГУАМ, Балто-Черноморская содружество

Formulation of the problem. For Russia Ukraine, like the whole post-Soviet area in general, is the most important object of neo-imperial policy aimed at the revival of its great power. This is ultimately explained by the de facto rejection of the Russian Federation of Ukrainian sovereignty, as well as the inadmissibility for Ukraine to determine of its own domestic and foreign policy. In

this context, any rapprochement of Ukraine with the Euro-Atlantic structures is completely unacceptable for Russia.

An additional geopolitical aggravation for Moscow is that the Ukrainian state, which embarked on the path of building liberal democracy and market economy, may cause similar transformations in other post-Soviet countries, especially in Russia itself. Therefore, Russia's main geostrategic task with regard to Ukraine is to preserve it in the "gray", buffer (limitrophy) zone of security and economic area between the Russian Federation and the EU and NATO. One of the main Russian scenarios is the transformation of Ukraine into a "failed state" by using a variety of political, economic and cultural instruments of influence.

Leading global experts argue that without Ukraine, all Russia's great-power projects lose their geopolitical and geo-economic significance. Actually, the strengthening of the expansionist potential of the Russian Federation due to the economic, demographic and territorial resources of Ukraine is intended to satisfy the ambitions for expanding steric influence in post-Soviet and other regional areas. In this context, the Russian Federation is testing on Ukraine the whole set of pressure levers: starting from the economic impact of force pulling it into Eurasian integration structures, trade wars, ending with unconventional methods that include geocultural expansion in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine, where ethnic Russians and the so-called "Russian-speaking citizens" make up a significant percentage of the population, or an absolute majority, as was the case with the now-annexed Crimea.

A comparatively new type of Russian imperial expansion on the territory of Ukraine is the hybrid war where the configuration of the application of military and non-military methods is adjusted depending on the situation in the particular spatial and temporal segment. One of the tools for ensuring Russian politics in the Ukrainian direction is the exploitation of stereotypical Soviet myths about the historical exclusiveness of Russia, as well as the delineation of a special geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural area, no less known as the "Russian world", represented by the Russian diaspora and foreigners on different continents loyal to Moscow. Faced with such challenges, Ukraine needs scenario competence to develop a strategy in order to confront the challenges that Russia faces during the rebirth of the empire through total subordination of the post-Soviet area.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the Russian-Ukrainian geoeconomic and geopolitical confrontation in the conditions of Russia's hybrid aggression against Ukraine and the formation of a new world order.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The question of Russian-Ukrainian confrontation remains in the focus of attention of scientists and analysts. In particular, among the domestic experts, we can mention the works and analytical investigations of O. Karpiak [*Karpiak*, 2013], A. Kramar [*Kramar*, 2019], B. Levik [*Levy`k*, 2016], A. Oksityuk [*Oksy`tyuk*, 2014], S. Solodkii [*Solodky`j*, 2013], K. Vitman [*Vitman*, 2010], A. Umland [*Umland*, 2015] and other. Among n scholars dealing with Ukrainian-n relations should be mentioned: S. Glazyev [*Glaz`ev*, 2006], N. Narochnitskaya [*Narochnickaja*, 1992], G. Nuryshev [*Nuryshev*, 2012], S. Tsygankov [*Cygankov*, 2009]. This issue has also become the object of attention of foreign scholars. Among them are: R. Allison [*Allison*, 2014], Z. Brzezinski [Bzhezins'kij, 1998], Z. Dan [*Dan*, 2015], J. Mankoff [*Mankoff*, 2015], J. Mearsheimer [*Mearsheimer*, 2015], A. Moshes [*Moshes*, 2010], A. Motyl [*Motyl*, 2013], A. Racz [*Racz*, 2014], L. Shevtsova [*Shevcova*, 2016], T. Snyder [*Snyder*, 2014], A. Stent [*Stent*, 2015], D. Treisman [*Treisman*, 2016], J. Friedman [*Fridman*, 2016] and many other. The vast majority of these scholars pay attention to the geopolitical aspect of the confrontation between Ukraine and Russia, while the issue of geoeconomic aspect remains unrepresented in most works.

The important research results. Russia used to consider the EU-initiated European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) project as dangerous, mainly because it could potentially bring Ukraine closer to EU integration, since the ENP actually laid down the sectoral integration approach. That is why the Russian Federation proposed a kind of twin-project on the ENP (in the form of the Single Economic Space (SES)) in order not to let Ukraine get out of its geopolitical fairway. Finally, in September 2003, in Astana, the leaders of the Russian Federation, Belarus,

Kazakhstan, and Ukraine signed an agreement on a project to create SES, which was ratified by the parliaments of these countries in April 2004. However, for Ukraine only the maximum permitted level of participation was acceptable that did not contradict its course to European and / or Euro-Atlantic structures.

Therefore, Ukraine’s participation in the SES should be limited to the free trade area within four Member States, which was not denied by the EU at the time, emphasizing that such participation would not prevent Ukraine’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). That is, the free trade regime with Ukraine was not intended to envisage foreign trade and customs policy towards third countries, as well as the functioning of various supranational bodies. Finally, in 2006, the Russian Federation, Belarus, and Kazakhstan decided to start designing the SES without Ukraine’s participation. Thus, the latter refused to participate in this project, taking into account its European integration aspirations.

It should be noted that the SES project was one of the many instruments of revival of the Eurasian empire, primarily due to the subordination of the economy, and later the sovereignty of Ukraine. It is well known that for most of the Russian leaders, as already mentioned, Ukraine acts as part of the Russian nation – as “one nation”, and its independence is the geopolitical misunderstanding. The scientific position of the Ukrainian researcher K. Wittman also confirms our opinion, who stressed that the SES was another integration institution, designed primarily for Ukraine’s involvement in the Eurasian integration process, since the three named neighbouring states were already integrated into the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and the Customs Union (CU) [Vitman, 2010]. Notable was the curtailment of Ukraine’s participation in the CIS in 2018 due to the suspension of the relevant treaties which ensured its membership in the statutory bodies of this organization.

A great while the Russian leadership had a strategy for Ukraine’s participation in the EAEU. At the same time, in 2013 Ukraine was even offered a \$ 15 billion loan on favourable terms and the reduction in gas prices. According to most experts, the EAEU without Ukraine, as the most important post-Soviet state for Moscow, is losing its trans-regional nature and undermining its economic weight altogether.

The 2014 revolutionary events in Ukraine (better known as the “Revolution of Dignity”) changed the power and vector of the country’s foreign policy orientation, preventing Russia’s plans to integrate Ukraine into the EAEU. We argue that after the Russian Federation’s unsuccessful actions to involve Ukraine in the Eurasian integration structures through the use of managed pro-Kremlin power, Moscow abandoned this option, which we designated as scenario “A” and switched to scenario “B”. According to scenario “B” strategy of the ignition and support for separatism in the southeastern regions of Ukraine with a view to their further separation and entry into the Eurasian Union as a newly created pseudo-state “Novorossiya” was implemented. However, realizing that it would not be possible to officially involve Ukraine in its Eurasian brainchild of Russia, it eventually switched to the forceful entanglement of industrially developed south-eastern regions of Ukraine. However, Russia’s expectations of total support from the side of the so-called Russian-speaking population of the idea of separation from pro-Western Kyiv were far too high, which meant the collapse of scenario “B” (Table 1).

Table 1.

Russian Federation’s Scenarios for fixing Ukraine in its geopolitical orbit

Scenario A: “INCLUSION OF UKRAINE TO EAEU”		Scenario B: “CREATION OF NOVOROSSIYA”	
Implementation strategy	Consequences	Implementation strategy	Consequences
Changing political leadership in Ukraine through a large-scale support deployment for pro-Russian political forces that would reorient	Ensuring that President Viktor Yanukovich came to power in 2010, however, the Revolution of Dignity removed Russia’s protegee in 2014	Firing up and supporting separatism in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine with a view to their further separation and entry	Creation of puppet regimes in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions – Lugansk and Donetsk People’s Republics (L/DPR),

its foreign policy vector toward the Russian Federation for further integration into the EAEU.	from power and finally cemented Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic foreign policy vector.	into the Eurasian Union under the rights of the newly created pseudo-state "Novorossiya".	which are considered to be temporary occupied territories of Ukraine.
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Source: own research created by the author

The strategy of creating a pseudo-state "Novorossiya" in Ukraine in one way or another involves the issues of infrastructure and transit of Russian energy resources to the European Union. The formation of Novorossiya at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty implied support from individual EU countries to accelerate the construction of energy infrastructure bypassing Ukraine as a failed state. Moreover, according to J. Mankoff, Russia implements the energy projects of the TurkStream and North Stream-2 gas pipelines, as well as the railway bypassing Ukraine. This exempts the need for Russian cargoes going to Belarus and the Baltic countries to transit Ukrainian territory and this way Russia is trying to deprive Ukraine permanently of the status of an important transit country for energy and goods to the EU. Indeed, the launch of the TurkStream and Nord Stream-2 gas pipelines will completely deprive Ukrainian gas transportation system of its profitability due to the termination of its gas transit to Europe [Mankoff, 2015].

Currently, the commercial and business interests of the leading EU countries (notably Germany) regarding the procurement of relatively cheap energy resources have so far dominated the energy security of collective Europe. Therefore, the preservation of Russian gas transit through the territory of Ukraine after the implementation of two of these projects seems unlikely, and even more so after the change of leadership in Germany.

In such a scenario, Ukraine will lose its status of the main transit country for Russian blue fuel, and losses resulting from the suspension of its transportation could reach more than \$ 4 billion per year, which will significantly affect the structure of the Ukrainian budget. All this can ultimately weaken both Ukraine's internal political and economic stability and security and its position on the international stage. The most optimal mechanism for minimizing such energy risks for Ukraine remains the creation of the European gas transport consortium for joint management of the Ukrainian gas transportation system (with the participation of the Ukraine, EU and the Russian Federation), which is to be maximally sought by Kyiv before the completion of the Nord Stream-2 and TurkStream construction. In fact, only the collective approach of the EU to the problems of Russian gas transit will strengthen the energy security of both the Ukraine and European Union primarily by ensuring its diversification.

However, due to the introduction of US sanctions against companies involved in the implementation of the project "Nord Stream Stream-2", it was possible to suspend the construction of this pipeline which is aimed primarily at undermining Russia's transit status of Ukraine.

The Russian Federation understands that Ukraine could well balance the EAEU against the backdrop of the energy-rich Russia and Kazakhstan, while playing the role of an economic asset due to its advanced communications infrastructure, industry and agriculture. However, the signing of the Association Agreement of the EU (AA) with Georgia and Moldova on June 27, 2014 de-facto put an end to Russia's institutional involvement of its neighbors in its geopolitical orbit.

The signing of the AA was, without exaggeration, an unprecedented event not only for the current history of Ukraine, but for the whole development of modern international relations. The establishment of the Association of Ukraine with the European Union, including the introduction of a deep and comprehensive free trade area, initiated the new format for relations with the European Union, which can become the basis for full European integration of Ukraine. The agreement contains a wide range of instruments enabling the country to integrate into the EU internal market, provided that its legislation is approximated with that of the EU. At the same time, it is obvious that the influence of European legislation, due to the liberalization of access to the EU market, will have global consequences not only for trade relations with the EU, but also will lead to the modernization of a large number of public relations spheres within Ukraine. On the other hand, the political association with the EU envisages the extension of EU values, principles and legal provisions for

Ukraine. Due to this, such a systemic phenomenon as Europeanization of Ukrainian legislation arises. All this contributes to the radical reorientation of the country.

In the end, it was due to the apparent change in Ukraine's geopolitical vector and the collapse of the Novorossiia project that Russia switched to scenario B, launching a hybrid war to fragment Ukraine by supporting separatist self-proclaimed and unrecognized pro-Russian enclaves – the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics (L/DPR) in order to finally close Kyiv's path to European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

We believe that amid attempts by Russia to implement Eurasian integration projects aimed at restoring the new empire, Ukraine has actually become a key initiator and one of the participants in the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan Republic and Republic of Moldova (ODED-GUAM) alternative to Eurasian integration projects. It is known that ODED-GUAM is intended to help establishing the transport corridor between Europe and Asia and the settlement of conflicts provoked by Russia.

However, for its part, Russia considered ODED-GUAM to be typical US project and an organization that focused exclusively against Russian security, the integration policy of the Russian Federation, and the disintegration of the post-Soviet states. However, the imperial policy of the Russian Federation only contributed to the fact that the post-Soviet countries, which saw a geopolitical and geo-economic threat from Eurasian integration, were forced to implement their own projects without the participation of the Russian Federation. This view is finally confirmed by the Finnish political scientist A. Moshes, who in 2010 predicted that "... the decentralization and acceleration of centrifugal tendencies in relations between Russia and Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova will only increase" [*Moshes*, 2010: 136-137].

The geostrategist Z. Brzezinski spoke regarding the importance of Ukraine to the Russian Federation already in the 1990s, defining it as a new important space on the Eurasian chessboard and geopolitical centre. In particular, he stressed that without Ukraine and the control over the Black Sea, Russia would lose the status of a powerful Eurasian imperial state [*Bzhezins'kij*, 1998: 126-127]. This opinion is shared by scientist L. Shevtsova who stresses the importance of Ukraine for the Russian Federation not only in the sense of satisfying its imperial ambitions, but also in the context of the state-making process: "Ukraine in the Kremlin's understanding is a core factor for Russian statehood. This means that without Ukraine, Russia cannot be a superpower. The loss of Ukraine could provoke the further geopolitical disintegration of Russia's "galaxy", which is the pillar of the current system" [*Shevcova*, 2016].

In the end, this is another direct testament to the exceptional importance of maintaining Russia's geopolitical influence over Ukraine, which, in essence, is for Moscow the key to securing domination both in the post-Soviet area and in attempting to return to its geopolitical field of Central and Eastern Europe. After all, Ukraine is the bridge that can provide access to the territory of the former Warsaw Pact countries.

For a long time, energy resources were the significant instrument of Russian influence over Ukraine, which in fact determined the state of Ukrainian energy security. In 2004, according to the Ukrainian expert S. Solodkii, raising the gas prices for Kyiv to the market level or four times (from \$ 50 to \$ 200 per 1,000 m³), was justified by denial to subsidize Ukrainian economy. Nevertheless the main reason for such a step was the declaration of the Western foreign policy vector by Ukraine as a priority [*Solodky`j*, 2013].

In 2009, for the second time Gazprom completely shut off gas supplies to Ukraine and its transit to Europe, mainly due to the misalignment of the natural gas price for Kyiv. We agree with the statement of J. Mankoff, the researcher of the Russia and Eurasia Programme in the USA, that the energy crisis provoked by the Russian Federation was, first of all, necessary to blackmail Europe and demonstrate the unreliability of Ukraine as a transit country, which was intended to support the implementation of alternative projects of energy supplies to the EU [*Mankoff*, 2009: 3-4]. At the same time, the Russian Federation is attempting to prevent an increase in reverse gas flow supplies to Ukraine from Europe, as evidenced by constant attempts to reduce gas supplies to a number of European countries [*Cygankov*, 2009: 88].

Russia is actively using Ukraine’s trade and economic dependence as a lever of geopolitical pressure. It should be noted that during 2013–2018, according to the National Bank, Russia lost the role of its main trading partner to Ukraine, since its share in the foreign trade of Ukraine is currently about 10% of the total volume of trade with \$ 9 billion, while by 2013, trade between Ukraine and the Russian Federation was over \$ 40 billion (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Trade turnover between Ukraine and Russia in 2010–2018.

Source: Democracy House <http://www.democracyhouse.com.ua/en/2018/ukraine-russia-trade-ties-trends-and-forecasts/>

However, despite a certain decrease in energy dependence on Russia, as well as a general decrease in Russia’s share in the Ukrainian trade, Ukraine still feels dependent on the products of machine building, chemical industry (above all, the share of imports of nitrogen and potassium fertilizers from Russia averages over 30%), coal supply (about 60% of coal production in Ukraine comes from the Russian Federation), components and equipment in the military, aviation and space industries, as well as various types of equipment in the civilian sphere. However, according to the analysis, Ukraine still imports about 40% of Russian gas from Russia, and its volume of purchases for 2017, according to a number of sources, even increased by 27% compared to the previous year – or from 11 billion m³ to 14 billion m³ [Kramar, 2019].

Although the share of Russian crude oil in energy imports by Ukraine is currently no more than 2.6%, the share of Russian oil imported by it is still more than 35%, which determines the preservation of Ukraine’s considerable energy dependence on the Russian Federation. It was also found that the US-Japanese company “Westinghouse” supplies nuclear fuel to about half of the needs of Ukrainian Nuclear Power Plant (6 out of 15 reactors), while the rest comes from Russian “TVEL” (still controls 55% of the Ukrainian nuclear fuel market; “Rosatom” [controls](#) 17.7% of the global nuclear-fuel market) for inflated prices as US nuclear fuel is 60% cheaper than Russian fuel. Moreover, according to a number of articles, the volume of trade between Ukraine and Russia increased by 25% during 2017–2018, as well as the size of Russian investments in a number of sectors of the Ukrainian economy, which should serve to make Ukraine’s strategic decisions in order to further diversify trade and economic relations and reduction of geopolitical dependence on Russia. In 2018, Russia imported \$ 3.65 billion worth of goods from Ukraine (\$ 3.94 in 2017) and imported \$ 8.09 billion from Russia (2017: \$ 7.22). Russia reports that trade between Ukraine and Russia in 2018 decreased by 30 percent [Fisher, 2014]. (Figure 2).

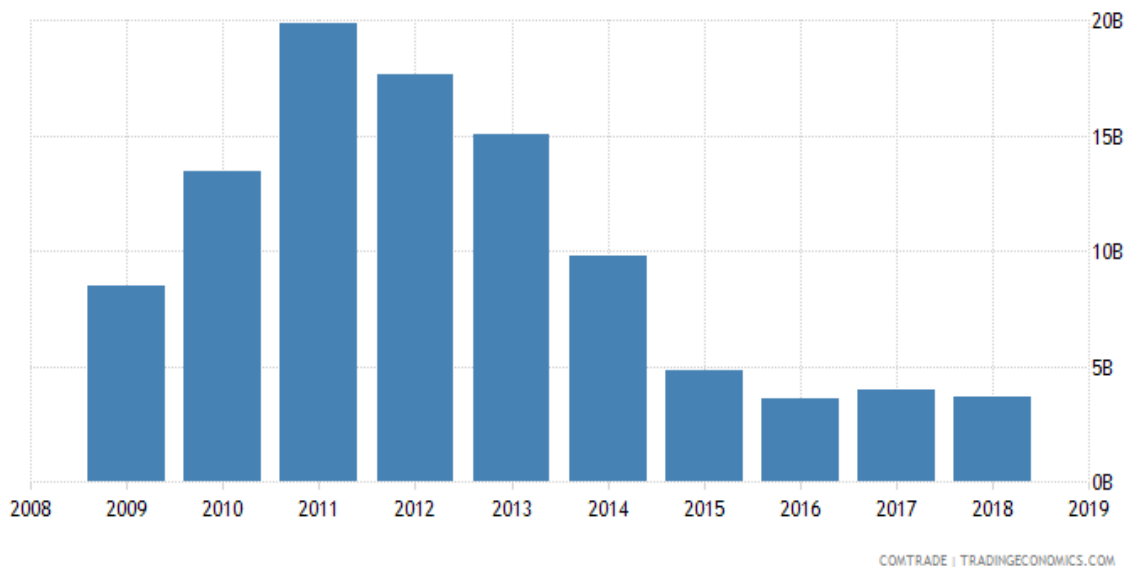


Figure 2. Ukraine Exports to Russia 2009–2018.

Source: Trading Economics <https://tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/exports/russia>

This state of affairs is caused in particular by the consequences of the existence of the once unified national economic complex of the USSR, which is still evident and complicates the rupture of Ukraine's economic ties with the aggressor state.

An urgent and paramount task is to launch a strategy to form and develop a network of Western LNG terminals for the supply of liquefied gas from the US and other third countries, which will further reduce the share of Russian gas in total energy imports and completely deprive Russia of using the latter as a lever of geopolitical pressure on Ukraine. Equally important is the development of a program of import substitution for Russian components in the defense, aviation and space industries with the prospect of creating technologically closed production cycles in these industries.

Powerful tools for securing Russia's influence on Ukraine and its political and economic depletion are known to be terror, sabotage, cyberattacks and total anti-Ukrainian propaganda at the regional and global levels. Back in 1992, Russian political analysts predicted the inevitability of large-scale conflicts between Ukraine and the Russian Federation over the status of the Crimea, which gained autonomy on February 12, 1991. Even then, a well-known Russian historian and public figure N. Narochnitskaya argued that Russia could not overcome historically the loss of the Crimea and would return it by all available means [Narochnickaja, 1992: 120].

According to the Ukrainian historian B. Levik, immediately after the collapse of the USSR, the Crimea, which Russia from the dawn of time considers to be its own, became, in fact, the symbol of its territorial claims on Ukraine. Also with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dilemma of further deployment of the Black Sea Fleet (BSF) in the Crimea emerged amid Ukraine's progressive rapprochement with the West [Levyk, 2016: 51]. The contractual package between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the BSF division essentially consolidated the agreement on the Russian naval base abroad, the withdrawal of the BSF from the CIS armed forces and 87% of the Black Sea Fleet's ownership of the Russian Federation. In 2010, the BSF lease was extended until 2042 in exchange for the reduction in the price of Russian gas [Stent, 2015: 342]. Therefore, from the very beginning of its deployment in the Crimea, the Russian BSF became an instrument of pressure on Ukraine. Another important geopolitical achievement for Moscow, as noted by O. Karpiak, was the actual curtailment of deepened cooperation between Ukraine and NATO under the presidency of V. Yanukovich [Karpiak, 2013].

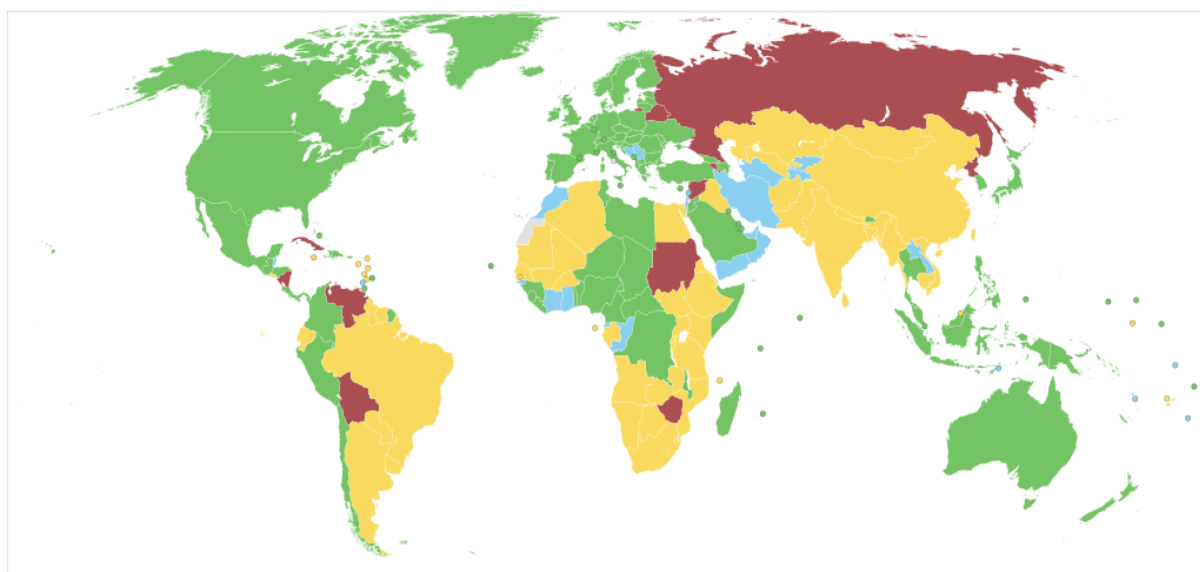
In part, under the influence of Russia's policy of shaping Ukraine as a failed state, it put the agenda on the discourse of Western experts, who quite often agree on maintaining Ukraine's neutrality, or the so-called "Finnishization" as the best option for resolving the Donbas conflict. At

the same time, it is also proposed to extend Russia's economic cooperation with the EU up to the signing of an association agreement similar to the one concluded with Ukraine.

This option, in particular, is actively offered by the supporter of realism H. Kissinger, who is known for his theory of "balancing strategy" [Kissindzher, 1997: 16-17]. The latter is to support US cooperation with Moscow in areas where their common interests intersect while maintaining Washington's rigid position, where Russian-American interests conflict. Z. Brzezinski is of the same opinion, stressing the importance of maintaining and developing Ukraine's economic ties with both Russia and the EU. In general, according to supporters of the idea of "Finnishization", it is the observance of neutrality that will allow Ukraine to "move" slowly to the West through the implementation of internal transformations, subject to the imperative of pragmatism in relations with the Russian Federation [Save Ukraine, 2015].

It follows that Ukraine has to rely primarily on its own strength. Kyiv must ensure the creation of strong democratic institutions, the necessary reforms, and the intensification of the fight against corruption, which will ultimately help to build an efficient economy.

In the end, Russia's annexation of the Crimea in March 2014 led to a peculiar fracture of the emerging world order [Try` opciyi dij Putina, 2014; Vystuplenie Vladimira Putina, 2014]. Capture of the Crimean peninsula by Russia in 2014 after a bogus referendum, according to Z. Dan, became an unprecedented phenomenon of forceful border review in the European region since the Second World War, as well as the watershed that will determine relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation in the future [Dan, 2015]. (Figure 3).



- In favour of considering the referendum illegal
- Against adopting the resolution
- Abstained
- Absent when the vote took place

Figure 3. UN General Assembly vote on the resolution condemning the 2014 Crimean referendum.

Source: United Nations <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm>

Some Russian and even Western experts, such as Professor J. Mearsheimer from the University of Chicago, associate Putin's actions in Ukraine with his geopolitical fears of Ukraine's likelihood of joining NATO, deploying an Alliance naval base in the Crimea, and squeezing out Russia from the Black Sea, which was regarded by the Russian Federation as nothing more than the loss of its geopolitical positions in the so-called historical region [Mearsheimer, 2014: 78-79].

According to another American expert D. Treisman, the main strategic motive for the annexation of the Crimea was the geopolitical phobia of Moscow over the future of its naval base in the Crimea. The issue of further stay of this naval base in any way should be put on the agenda in case of Ukraine's acquisition of the candidate country status for NATO membership [Treisman, 2016: 50-51].

However, we can disagree with the above-mentioned scientist, since Ukraine's accession to NATO was not on the agenda that is why it cannot serve as an argument for Russian aggressive intervention. Therefore, Russian actions against Ukraine are primarily tactical in the context of its post-Soviet geostrategic permanence. At the same time, one of the reasons for the occupation of the Crimea is Russia's reaction to the alleged actions of the US and pro-American forces in Ukraine aimed at overthrowing the pro-Russian President V. Yanukovich, which in fact meant an attack on Russia itself.

We also disagree with Friedman's assertion that the establishment of Russian control over Ukraine, along with its non-admission to NATO, was necessary to strengthen Russian security by moving west and thereby enhancing strategic defence depth [Fridman, 2016: 2018]. Firstly, as already mentioned, there are no clear signs of Ukraine's accession to NATO even against the background of the increase of Russian aggression, secondly, European member states of the Alliance have in recent years minimized their military capabilities too much to have any theoretical intent to commit aggression against Russia as nuclear power and the main donor of energy in European markets.

Based on the views of these experts, we believe that the key reason for the expansion towards Ukraine was the realization of Russia's restoration of the status of a superpower (the Eurasian empire), which was made possible by Ukraine's overt geopolitical weakness after the revolutionary events of 2014, as well as after all chances to attract Ukraine. The new Russian Empire was economically exhausted, primarily due to its inclusion in the EAEU.

Another geopolitical motive for the annexation of the Crimea was the classic imperative of Moscow to protect ethnic Russians and the Russian-speaking population in the territory of other countries within the concept of "Russian world". In the case of the Crimea, in order to justify its actions, the Russian Federation reproduced the thesis about the growing danger to the Russians (who make up about 60% of the population in the Crimea) due to the radical nationalist forces coming to power as a result of a "coup" in Ukraine. In this case, the Russian Federation has positioned itself as a guarantor of Russians residing on the peninsula (Figure 4).

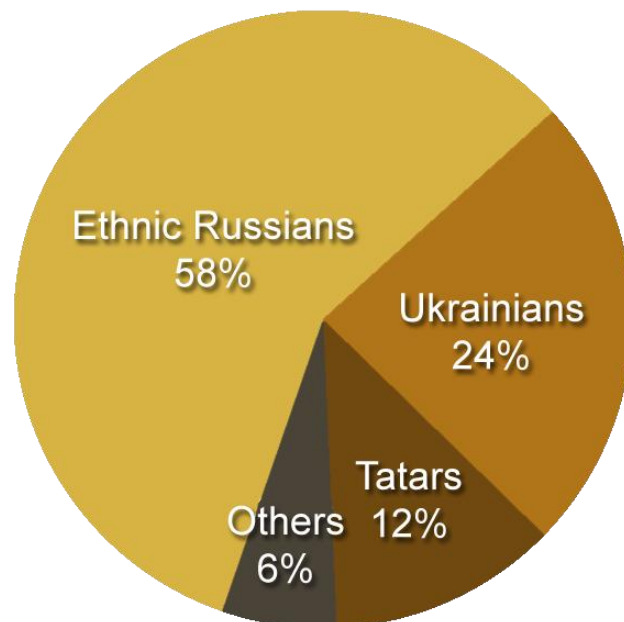


Figure 4. Distribution of ethnic groups in Crimea.

Source: Distribution of ethnic groups in Crimea 2001. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Distribution_of_ethnic_groups_in_Crimea_2001.png

Also, we believe that, from the tactical point of view, Russian aggression against Ukraine focuses primarily in particular on Russia's internal policy, as its ruling circles seek to demonstrate to the population the return of the geopolitical grandeur of their country through the gathering of the former USSR territories and to prevent the liberal democratic ideas from spreading among Russian population. Moreover, as was already mentioned, the support for instability in Ukraine should serve as a clear example of the consequences of "colored" revolutions for Russian society. Secondly, from a geostrategic point of view, the seizure of the Crimea was a logical continuation of the strengthening of Russia's geopolitical presence in the Black Sea region: it was after it gained control over Abkhazia and the Crimea that its influence on the Black Sea region increased dramatically. Thus, the issue of renting the military base in Ukraine was removed for Russia, and all bilateral agreements on the Russian Black Sea Fleet's deployment in the Crimea were denounced by Moscow unilaterally. Also, with the occupation of the Crimea, the Ukrainian BSF was supplanted. At the same time, the annexation of the Crimea is, primarily, necessary for the Russian Federation to fully restore the status of the naval base of the USSR, given that Moscow plans to create a military grouping of 100–120 thousand people there.

Thus, the Crimea for Russia is also an important sacred phenomenon and a geostrategic asset in the sense that, given the increase of its military presence on the peninsula, the opening of new military bases in Belarus, the preservation of the Russian military contingent in Transnistria and L/DPR, as well as the insidious geopolitical "squeezing out" of Ukraine from the Sea of Azov by permanent blocking of ships going to the Ukrainian ports through the Kerch Strait, Ukraine automatically finds itself in a kind of geopolitical "stranglehold", being landlocked. That is why Russia is trying to transform the Crimea into a "non-submersible aircraft carrier" through the modernization and development of military infrastructure on the peninsula, in particular air defence systems, radar, navy and air force [Okseytyuk, 2014].

In case of further expansion of Russia's presence in the Sea of Azov and military and economic control of navigation, Ukraine faces a real threat of its territorial waters loss and the actual transformation of the Sea of Azov into an inland Russian lake that will inevitably lead to the decline of the Ukrainian port cities – Mariupol and Berdyansk. The trade for these cities is already limited by the construction of the Kerch bridge crossing, which in addition to connecting the Crimea with Russia also performs the function of blocking the indicated ports. The only mechanism to counter such a scenario, in the first place, is to increase Ukraine's military presence in the Sea of Azov by strengthening the Ukrainian flotilla, in particular by the United States providing Ukraine with two coastguard ships, and secondly, building a strong naval base that has already been deployed in Berdyansk, thirdly, the regular conduct of joint military training exercises with the NATO and the enhancement of Ukraine's coastal defense against the background of involving the world public in the problem of annexation of the Sea of Azov by Russia. All this should increase Russia's deterrence in the Azov direction.

On the other hand, the transformation of the Crimea into a powerful naval base will be the basis for reducing the security for all Black Sea region countries. The Crimea may serve as a geopolitical foothold for the Russian Federation in a likely (albeit theoretical) confrontation with the NATO, as well as for securing further maritime expansion by strengthening its influence on Romania, Ukraine and Turkey, thereby destroying the balance of power in the Black Sea region. Given the deployment of missile systems in the Crimea with a range of up to 2.6 thousand km, Russia is projecting a threat for half of the European continent. After all, nuclear weapons may be deployed on the peninsula, as evidenced by the constant coverage of the foreign press. In response, NATO intends to increase its presence in the Black Sea region by enhancing patrolling of air and sea space [NATO cherez dii Rosii, 2016].

Thus, according to the well-known Russian geopolitician G. Nuryshchev, the Crimea became one of the key points of the Great Eurasian arc of geopolitical instability designed to hold the perimeter of the defense sphere of Russian geostrategic responsibility (the so-called Heartland) [Nuryshchev, 2012: 43]. This Eurasian arc originates not from the Balkans, but from Finland and passes

through Southeastern Europe, the southeast of Ukraine (the Crimea, Ukrainian Donbas), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan), the Middle East (Cyprus, Kurdistan, Syria, Israel, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Yemen) and goes all the way to Southeast Africa.

However, the most correct, in our view, is J. Mankoff's position, which points to the flawed Russian strategy towards Ukraine and states. Seeking to close Ukrainian path to European and Euro-Atlantic structures through annexation of the Crimea and destabilization of its internal situation, the Russian Federation only contributes to the strengthening of nationalist sentiments and ties between Ukraine and other post-Soviet states with the West, thus only pushing them away from Moscow. As a result, according to him, Russia, having conquered the Crimea, lost all Ukraine in the long run [Mankoff, 2014: 62-63].

Meanwhile, the overriding task for the Ukrainian state is to develop the strategy and scenarios for restoring sovereignty over temporarily occupied territories. The only scenario that remains as most optimal is the intensification of Ukraine's diplomatic struggle in the international arena so that the Donbas and the Crimea topics do not leave the international agenda and global information space. The second important issue is the struggle of the Ukrainian diplomatic corps for further international recognition of the Crimea as part of Russia, as was the case of the Baltic states that were annexed to the Soviet Union and gained their independence only in 1991. This would not only save but preserve and strengthen the sanctions of the collective West and countries of other regions against the Russian Federation in violation of Ukraine's national sovereignty.

Russia providing self-proclaimed L/DPR with special status in the aggregate, multiplied by the promotion of the state status of the Russian language and seeking from Ukraine to ensure neutrality, implies a gradual undermining of the unitarity of the Ukrainian state, minimizing the administrative influence of the center and finally dismantling its identity. With this geopolitical algorithm, the Russian Federation is trying to ensure that Ukraine's partnership system with the European and Euro-Atlantic structures is destroyed. However, according to the Finnish political scientist A. Racz, in the strategic sense, as intended by Moscow, the L/DPR should become the most convenient lever of pressure on Kyiv in case of further updating of the European and Euro-Atlantic foreign policy vector for the purpose of further integration into the EU and NATO [Racz, 2014: 60-61].

Well-known American historian T. Snyder considers Russia's aggressive behaviour a challenge to the world order and the European security system and sees it as an attempt to destroy Ukrainian statehood [Snajder, 2014]. The access to Transnistria together with the subordinate Crimea would enable the Russian Federation to at least partially withdraw Turkey from the American sphere of influence and create preconditions for securing the solution of the alternative sources issue and energy supplies routes to Europe by the total strengthening of positions in the Black Sea-Caspian region.

According to R. Allison, Russia's own controlled so-called Novorossiia should promote Russia's geopolitical fixation in the Black Sea region and be a buffer zone between it and the rest of Ukraine, as well as Euro-Atlantic structures, thereby strengthening the southwestern flanking made it impossible to move NATO's infrastructure to Russian borders [Allisson, 2014: 1272].

We believe that in the course of the battle for Ukraine, Russia shows its keen interest in the Ukrainian defense industry, and this also explains its desire to establish control over the southeastern regions where high-tech military enterprises are mainly concentrated that are partially integrated into the Russian economy. It is also known that powerful Russian business structures and large energy corporations of the Russian Federation, such as Gazprom, whose interests are closely intertwined with the geostrategy of the Russian state, seek to acquire powerful strategic Ukrainian enterprises in the energy, military, machine and other industries. At the same time, Russia needs first and foremost political control over Ukraine to ensure uninterrupted gas transit to Europe.

Also, according to the American political scientist O. Motyl, V. Putin challenged the territorial integrity of Ukraine, which according to his belief was artificially created from parts of the countries of Eastern Europe and Russia as a result of World War II. The Russian revisionist policy clearly shows that on the eve of the events of 2014, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian

Federation D. Rogozin openly stated that Russia could support the split of Ukraine if it signs a fatal rapprochement agreement with the EU [Motyl, 2013a].

Discourse on the inevitable division of Ukraine into Western (Catholic) and Eastern (Orthodox) is maintained by Russian academia. In the end, it follows from the efforts of the political and expert circles of the Russian Federation to confront the two political cultures in Ukraine – Western and Eurasian, since a considerable number of Russian representatives of socio-humanities, guided by S. Huntington’s ideas about civilizational collision, verify the fact of the passage of boundaries between the two civilizational platforms on the territory of Ukraine [Motyl, 2013b]. One of Putin’s leading advisers, S. Glazyev, said once that in the event of Ukraine’s withdrawal from Russian influence and its accession to the NATO, the so-called Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine could destroy its integrity. He also added that Russia would have the legitimate right to assist the Russian minority and the Russian-speaking population [Glaz’ev, 2006: 29-30].

The current geopolitical situation regarding the settlement of the conflict in the south-east of Ukraine is lose-lose, as neither of the proposed models is truly a road map for restoring peace in the country and restoring its territorial integrity. All three formats – Minsk, Geneva or Norman, proceeded / proceed both at the level of the top officials and at the level of heads of foreign ministries, effectively leaving behind the issue of the de-occupation of Crimea. Also, none of these negotiation formats offers specific mechanisms for settling the conflict and restoring Ukraine’s sovereignty over the occupied territories. In these circumstances, Russia is trying to push Ukraine further into the deadlock by turning the crisis in the Donbass into a kind of platform for geopolitical bidding where the status of the Crimean peninsula will remain a derivative issue. The authors made SWOT-analysis (Table 2).

Table 2.

SWOT-analysis of crisis management in the southeast of Ukraine

SWOT-MINSK FORMAT	
Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only currently acting format; • Allowed ceasefire; • Allowed to end the Great War and strengthen the military power of the Ukrainian Armed Forces; • Provided dialogue on the release of Ukrainian prisoners of war; • Ensured the creation of an anti-Russian coalition; • Ensured the introduction into the negotiation process of leading European countries such as Germany and France. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of the Crimean issue on the agenda of the negotiation process; • Russia is trying to push L/DPR leaders as full participants in the process; • Russia is not represented as a real party to the conflict; • Russia’s failure to comply with the agreements reached; • Absence of real mechanisms of conflict resolution; • Efforts of L/DPR leaders to position themselves as full subjects of the negotiation process.
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to reach peace through diplomatic channels; • Ability to involve a UN peacekeeping mission or non-NATO armed forces; • Possibility to involve leading international players – EU and USA in reconstruction of Donbas infrastructure; • Possibility to create mechanisms for recovering funds from Russia to compensate for the restoration of the Donbas infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imposing on Ukraine unacceptable ways to resolve the conflict by more powerful participants in the negotiation process; • Continuation of Russia’s support for L/DPR activity in the Donbas; • Lack of key US actors in the US-EU negotiation process, which may stimulate Russia to escalate the conflict; • Understanding the hopelessness of dialogue within the framework of the Minsk format and its termination.

SWOT-GENEVA FORMAT	
Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US involvement in the negotiation process; • Indirect US influence on the negotiation process; • Inclusion of the Crimean issue in the negotiation; • The starting point is the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complexity of developing the consolidated position of the 28 EU Member States; • Absence of mechanisms for restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over the occupied territories and their integration; • Ukraine as the lowest negotiating party; • High degree of probability of decision-making without taking into account national interests of Ukraine.
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of strengthening the sanction pressure of the West on the Russian Federation in case of its failure to fulfil its previous agreements; • Updating the discourse on the deployment of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Donbas; • Ability to establish a mechanism to monitor the situation in the Donbas and to implement peace agreements; • The possibility of expanding dialogue on the Crimean issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of a clear position of the EU member states regarding the recognition of Russia as an aggressor; • Expressed the pro-Russian position of individual EU members, including Italy; • Political bargaining between Russia and the US on regional and global security issues without taking into account Ukraine's national interests; • Low level of effectiveness of constant dialogue support between the USA, EU, Russia and Ukraine concerning the situation in Donbas and in the Crimea.
SWOT-NORMAN FORMAT	
Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct participation in the negotiations of the parties to the conflict; • Resistance to "soft power" and diplomacy to avoid large-scale confrontation; • Mediation between Germany and France in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia; • The Normandy format is active in the dialogue and cooperation between the parties; • Removal of heavy weapons; • Monitoring the status of ceasefire, the process of raising parties to the conflict and exchanging prisoners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of real efforts to achieve results; • Lack of legal mechanisms and binding provisions; • Lack of US involvement in the negotiation process; • Absence of the Crimean issue in the negotiation process; • The appearance of disloyal socio-political groups after the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty over the occupied part of the Donbas.
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility to discuss the deployment of the UN peacekeeping mission in Donbas; • Ability to initiate international monitoring of the implementation of peace agreements; • Ability to create a commission and international groups to intensify the conflict resolution process; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia's blocking the deployment of peacekeeping forces in the Donbas; • Russia's blocking Ukraine's restoration of control over the Russian-Ukrainian border in the Donbas; • Russia's refusal to discuss the Crimean issue; • Influence of Russia, France and Germany

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increasing the legitimacy of the political elite and the institutions of the state.	<p>on the Ukrainian position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The threat of creating socio-economic imbalance due to the de-occupation of the Donbas;Uncertainty of the status of persons involved in serious crimes after reintegration of the occupied part of Donbas.
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Source: created by the author

A significant challenge for Ukraine is the fact that its leadership is still unable to fully involve the United States in resolving the crisis in the Donbas. Actually, full participation of the United States and eventually of the United Kingdom would give new impetus to the negotiation process in the settlement of this conflict. In our view, the most optimal model is the “5 + 1” format (USA – UK – Germany – France – Ukraine + Russian Federation). It is the participation of the United States as the most powerful geopolitical player, as well as the United Kingdom, with its clear position on Russia as one of the key destabilizers of the world order, will allow to balance the geo-economic ambitions of Paris and Berlin, which continue to seek to improve relations with Moscow, including at the expense of the Ukrainian national interests including lifting of anti-Russian sanctions. This is clearly evidenced by Germany actively supporting the construction of the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline by Russia and the statements of the French leadership on the renewal of Moscow’s membership in the format of the G-7 club.

However, we find it rather difficult to discuss the final scenario of the future settlement of the hybrid conflict in the Donbas, which may be: extremely pessimistic – creating a “frozen” conflict or maintaining a “glowing” war for several decades; moderately pessimistic – the return of self-proclaimed L/DPR under the control of Ukraine on the terms of Russia, which will allow Moscow to retain control of these territories; optimistic – the return of L/DPR to Ukraine in accordance with its interests and conditions, as well as on the basis of implementation of the Minsk agreements Normandy summit

The Normandy summit held in December 2019 did not bring any significant breakthrough except for agreements to continue the deployment of troops in separate areas and the large-scale exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and the Russian-controlled enclaves – L/DPR. Russia, as before, insists on Ukraine holding local elections in the occupied territories of Donbas before Russian troops will be withdrawn, illegal military units will be dismantled and control of the Ukrainian-Russian border area in the Donbas will be transferred.

However, the mechanisms of returning occupied areas of Donbas to the control of Ukraine remain unknown. The most acceptable option for Kyiv is to bring the United Nations peacekeeping mission to the Donbas into the entire conflict area (without the so-called Russian peacekeeping forces or the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) forces), and not just to the edge of firefight to protect the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mission, as required by Russia. It is not difficult to predict that the Russian Federation will continue to oppose the introduction of the peacekeeping contingent without its participation, since this will be tantamount to the official recognition of Moscow’s aggression against Ukraine.

In general, the successful Europeanization and prosperity of Ukraine would call into question the effectiveness of the anti-democratic regimes of most post-Soviet countries, including Russia. Indeed, the triumph of the strategy of successful transformations in Ukraine would be a clear example for the Russian society of the positive consequences of the democratic uprising for the great Orthodox state. Against this background, Russia’s limited military intervention in Ukraine was intended, first of all, to prevent Kyiv from carrying out appropriate reforms for the sake of progressive domestic and economic transformations [Umland, 2015]. Russian Federation Council, granting March 1, 2014, the Russian president the right to send armed forces into the territory of Ukraine to maintain the security of Russian citizens, in fact, paved the way for direct armed

aggression of the Russian Federation. It is worth recalling that the similar decision was made by the Federation Council July 7, 2007, that is, one year before Russia's invasion of Georgia. So, Russia has officially declared twice the use of its troops outside its territory.

Conclusions. The Eurasian integration projects of the Russian Federation, primarily – the EEA and the EAEU, were aimed at attracting Ukraine and maintaining it in the sphere of Russian geo-economic influence. However, the activization of Kyiv's Euro-Atlantic choice in 2004 made it impossible for Ukraine to integrate fully into the EEA. Given that the EEA was one of the instruments to revive the Eurasian empire, in particular at the expense of the destruction of the national economy of Ukraine, its participation was limited only by the free trade area with the participation of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan within the framework of this alliance.

The next step in returning Ukraine to the bosom of the Eurasian empire was the EAEU: the key place there was envisioned for Ukraine. The union was actually established assuming potential participation of Ukraine. But due to the revolutionary events of 2014 (known as the "Revolution of Dignity") and the signature of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, the Russian strategy for engaging Kyiv in this Moscow's purely political project was destroyed. Against this background, Ukraine faces the strategic task of accelerating the reduction of economic and energy dependence on Russia and diversifying trade and economic ties with the EU Member States and countries of other regions, as well as alternative energy supply.

Transformation of the Crimea into a powerful naval base significantly reduces the level of security not only for Ukraine but also for the countries of the whole Black Sea region and thus expands Russian presence there, actually corresponding to one of the USSR. At the expense of Ukraine, the Russian Federation is trying to create a "gray zone" of instability and the geopolitical buffer on the south-western flank with NATO. For Ukraine, the issue of the occupation of the territories seized by Russia and their return to its own sovereignty is extremely acute. However, the set of mechanisms for countering Russian aggression in Ukraine is not so large at the moment, with the exception of intensifying the fight on the diplomatic and international legal arena, as well as mobilizing the world community for the non-recognition of the Crimea occupied by Russia and ensuring support for the Western sanctions policy against Russia.

Given the impossibility of Ukraine's involvement in Eurasian integration structures and the collapse of the pro-Russian regime, Russia resorted to hybrid aggression. One of Russia's key strategic goals was to create a pseudo-state "Novorossiysa" at the expense of the southeastern regions of Ukraine, which would deprive the rest of Ukraine from the access to the sea and, in the long run, it would join either the Russian Federation or the structure of the EAEU together with strategic and important for the Russian Federation enterprises. As a result of the creation of self-proclaimed republics – L/DPR and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Russian Federation has launched a mechanism to restrain Ukraine's integration with the EU and NATO.

On the whole, although the Russian Federation has achieved some tactical advantages in Ukraine, thereby slowing its rapprochement with the EU and NATO, nevertheless the design of instability strategically prevents any involvement of Kyiv in Eurasian integration projects, further distancing it from Russia, making Ukraine more Western and anti-Russian. Russia's aggressive actions, meanwhile, lead Ukraine to seek new mechanisms for further advancement to NATO and the EU, as well as open up the prospect of a transitive imperative to support its national security outside Euro-Atlantic structures such as ODED-GUAM.

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