

АКТУАЛЬНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ МІЖНАРОДНИХ ВІДНОСИН

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ETHNO-POLITICAL CONFLICTS IN POST-SOVIET COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN "EASTERN PARTNERSHIP" AS A TOOL OF RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN THE REGION

In the article are analyzed causes of ethno-political conflicts in post-Soviet countries-participants of "Eastern Partnership". Using the method of historical analogies, the author concludes that the conflicts were inspired by the leadership of former Soviet Union to preserve the Union State. In transforming them into "frozen" and the escalation of new ones, like the conflict in eastern Ukraine, Russian Federation authorities are extremely interested in as successor to the USSR. The Kremlin uses "frozen" and new conflicts as building tools for a new empire.

Key words: "frozen" conflicts, post-Soviet space, Empire, European integration, "Eastern Partnership".

More than twenty years ago, on the wave the collapse of the Soviet Union, accompanied by activation of national liberation movements of oppressed by the Communist empire peoples with hidden and sometimes overt military support of the Russian Federation (RF) has appeared self-proclaimed Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetian and Transnistrian Moldavian republics. Neither of them has become a full subject of international law, and yet their existence became a threat to national security and barrier for pro-European foreign policy independent Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.

In 2014, during Euromaidan and the Revolution of dignity in Ukraine, taking advantage of the overthrow of Yanukovich regime by Ukrainian people, the government of the Russian Federation annexed the Crimean peninsula and started military aggression in eastern Ukraine, seeking by these actions an opportunity to prevent the implementation of the new Ukrainian government's European integration course. Now, as a quarter of a century ago, the Kremlin tried to implement the scenario of rejection of the territory of independent state with one goal – to prevent the Europeanization of Ukraine, its exit from the geopolitical, and then – civilizational influence of Russian Federation. In this connection, the question of clarifying the root causes of Russia's aggressive behavior in the former Soviet Union arises. Having found the reasons, we can find an adequate response to aggressive actions of neo-imperial Russia on the post-Soviet space.

Historical and political preconditions of "frozen" conflicts in member states of the "Eastern Partnership" are fairly over-viewed in details by Ukrainian [1] and foreign researchers [2]. However, they are not fully able to clarify the causes of separatism in NIS countries and the role of Russian in the escalation. Because reasons of origin of most ethnic and political conflicts on the post-Soviet space, in our opinion, not to be found in the plane of ethnic hatred of neighboring nations, but in process of forming state territories of the former Soviet republics by Bolshevik totalitarian regime, which was based on the principle "divide and conquer!".

Caring about inviolability of the Union under any historical events and disasters, the communist regime in Kremlin shared holistic in the past ethnic groups between several national and state formations. The same happened with Armenians. They, having a majority in the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, found themselves, because of national territorial demarcation in 1920s, in Azerbaijan SSR. Where it was not possible to apply this principle, the imperial laws of population assimilation entered, initially in the Russian Empire and later in the Soviet Union gained forms of mixing people of different ethnic groups in national republics with an emphasis on creating a majority of Russian or Russian-speaking population and without clear identity (this circumstance played a

crucial role in the separation of the Transnistrian region of Moldova, as well as being used to implement the Kremlin's project of "Novorossia" in southeastern Ukraine).

The Bolshevik policy of assimilation was to neutralize, forced to create by Russian Bolsheviks, quasi-state structures in the form of Soviet Socialist Republics with mandatory release of the titular nation, but led eventually (communist leaders could not foresee it) to awareness by the Communist Party's elite of the Union republics their corporate interests that were not entirely matched with the priorities of Kremlin. Only totalitarian political regime was able to keep in obedience the population of the borderlands of the former Russian Empire.

Once its "basics" started to shake, such as constitutional norms of the "Communist Party as the core of the political system," removed from the Basic Law of the USSR in 1990, the Soviet Kremlin could not contrary to logic of history that has put on agenda the question of elimination of global colonial system remains, to maintain in force "voluntarily" established Union of national republics. All that it was able to keep in its orbit (read – Russian) influence, now is the self-proclaimed "state" like Transnistrian Moldavian Republic, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) and other not recognized by the international community separatist entities.

Because history does not know an example of eternal empires, communist Soviet Union also has collapsed, but its disintegration was accompanied not only by the proclamation of the new independent states and their international recognition, but also with preservation of quasi-separatist entities for a long period, with support of which a new phase of "gathering genuine Russian lands" in future third option of the Russian Empire began. At the same time, the authorities of the Russian Federation completely ignored the experience of the builders of the USSR and against the main trend of the world in the twentieth century, cherishes plans to build a new empire.

The main reason for such courses was unwillingness and inability of its leadership to live in a world in which there is no division between "historical" and "non-historical" nations subjects and objects of international relations and so on. Once in a cohort of secondary actors in international politics in early 1990s, Russian political elite sought revenge. Current president of Russia Vladimir Putin, Soviet KGB alumnus, was the personification of such political elite. According to his leadership, Russia not only strengthened its impact (military, political, economic, informational) in the self-proclaimed "states" on the post-Soviet space, but resorted to the destruction of the world's rules enshrined in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Act and other international documents, by starting war in Georgia in 2008 and completing annexation of Ukrainian Crimea in 2014 and armed aggression in eastern Ukraine.

Putting misinformation into the global information space that only through Russian Bolsheviks such countries as Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, etc. appeared on the political map of the world, the Kremlin deliberately ignores the state-millennial traditions of the peoples of the former Soviet Union, taking advantage of the banal ignorance of history of peoples of ordinary citizens of "civilized" countries and Russian and "Russian-speaking" population of the newly independent states. The purpose of these insinuations – realization of the project to recreate the Russian empire. For this purpose Kremlin willingly uses "fifth column" – Russian or Russified locals in former Soviet republics, the potential reached from assimilation policy of the Russian and Soviet empires. If the number of Russians and "Russian-speaking" population is not enough to fuel separatist sentiment in the country that seeks to get out of Russia's influence, then the impact tool of the Institute of Russian citizenship becomes influent, which is available to all who are against their historical homeland, as it was in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region of Georgia, Moldavian Transnistria and Ukrainian Crimea. Then indigenous ethnic group forcibly is displaced from historical homeland, and the Kremlin propaganda machine convinced Russian population that so-called "Novorossia" [3], the northern part of Kazakhstan and others never were part of Ukraine and Kazakhstan respectively, and should be returned to Russia [4].

If the above arguments fail, Russia resorts to a last resort – military intervention. Thus, Transnistria was taken from Moldova as a result of direct involvement on the side of Tiraspol separatist of military of the 14th Army General O. Lebed of the Russian Federation, who during acute phase of the conflict in June 1992, said to the Moldovan authorities: "If they do not stop, he will have breakfast in Transnistria, dine in Chisinau and supper in Bucharest" [5]. With the direct intervention of Russian military units deployed in Georgia, the last lost control of its former autonomies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 1992-93.

To destabilize the situation in Ukraine Russian authorities resorted to the use of tools, proven by Stalin's regime during occupation of Central and Eastern Europe after the Second World War. The technology, currently called "hybrid" War, was also used by Russia in order to occupy Ukrainian Donbas and actually copies actions of the USSR in Central and Eastern Europe in the second half of the 1940s. On this, in particular, emphasizes well-known Western researcher of Soviet totalitarianism Ann Appelbom: "I was a very strange feeling ... when I watched the occupation of eastern Ukraine. I saw how it was, they also sent advance units ... of Russian secret service officers in various places. They handed out weapons there, trying to recruit or convert to its cause criminals or other groups of dissatisfied, they immediately engaged in the construction of so-called state ideology, and it was almost the same as done by NKVD in Poland in 1945" [6]. This similarity is not surprising to A. Appelbom, because "it is not so much about the historical parallels as of historical continuity, continuity between the Soviet and current Russian special services" – sums up the researcher [7].

The fact that for Western researchers is becoming a discovery, for Ukrainian historians, who professionally explore the specificity of "establishment" of Soviet power in Ukraine and other former Soviet republics in the 1917-21, Russian occupation of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and part of Ukrainian Donbas are too reminiscent of similar actions of the Russian Bolsheviks in specified period. Unable to capture Ukraine and other national outskirts of the former Russian Empire, with the support of the general population, the Russian Bolsheviks inspired local Communists uprising, sanctified by illegitimate decisions of "popular" government authorities,

and sent detachments of the Red Army in order to help "rebels", after which puppet "national" governments arrived, formed by communist Kremlin. In this way Soviet Russia liquidated independent statehood appeared in the crucible of World War II Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, etc. This historical overview gives us reason to believe that the nature and essence of Russian imperialism remained unchanged. Like almost 100 years ago, the war of Russia against Ukraine, according to Ukrainian conflictologist H. Perepelytsia, "held in the form of military occupation (Crimea. – Ed.), and then ... it was the task of implementation of actual military intervention on the Donbas territory" [8].

Of course, not all that relates to tactics of spreading its influence, Russia repeats. For example, a purely Russian invention of post-bipolar era history has become the practice of peacekeeping service by country party of the conflict – the actual initiator and participant in the conflict, under the guise of putting peacekeepers into the conflict zone. The presence of peacekeeping forces of Russia in conflict areas only contributed to "freeze" for an indefinite period situation in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, former Georgian autonomies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

There is also in arsenal of Russian influence in the area of "frozen" conflicts confrontation parties a practice of imposing diplomatic mediation services by Kremlin. "Experience" of Russian mediation in the "5 + 2" in Transnistria or Russian joint chairmanship in the Minsk Group to resolve the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, resulting in an imitation of active steps or deliberate braking of the negotiation process, that has brought negotiations to a standstill, convinces us in real intentions of the Kremlin. Moreover, they, as known, consist in maintaining its influence and prevent accession to the European community nations of the former Soviet republics. Successful pro-European Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia – a mortal threat not only for sole power of Putin in Russia, but also for his colleagues from the "club of authoritarian leaders": Lukashenko in Belarus, Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, Karimov in Uzbekistan, etc. After all, they preserve political and economic backwardness of their countries and delay for an indefinite period liquidation vestiges of Soviet totalitarianism. Denial of this inheritance, as experience has shown in Poland, Czech Republic, Baltic countries, is the key to economic prosperity, democracy and creation common European security space.

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