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Ethnic and political conditionality of the crimea annexation and hostilities in Eastern Donbas and national minorities in Ukraine attitudes towards them

The article is dedicated to outlining the ethnic and political conditionality of the Crimea annexation by Russia, as well as Russian promoting the warfare in Eastern Donbas. The author argued that "hybrid war" in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimea are ethnopolitical conflicts, which are the results of hyperbolisation of regional ethnic and cultural differences and their promotion within the regional ethnic policy instead of conducting by Ukraine a national policy of consolidation. Meanwhile, the researcher argued that representatives of national minorities in Ukraine (even of Russian national minority) are mostly negative about the annexation of the Crimea and hostilities in Eastern Ukraine, the do not justify them and do not find tem rationally and ethnically caused.

Keywords: *the annexation of the Crimea, Eastern Donbas, Ukraine, national minority, "hybrid war", conflict.*

Етнополітична зумовленість анексії криму та воєнних дій у східному Донбасі і ставлення до них національних меншин в Україні

У статті окреслено етнополітичну зумовленість анексії Криму Росією, а також сприяння нею ведення воєнних дій у Східному Донбасі. Аргументовано, що «гібридна війна» на сході України та анексія Криму – це сумарно етнополітичний конфлікт, який є наслідком гіперболізації регіональних етнокультурних відмінностей і їх заохочення в межах регіональної етнонаціональної політики замість проведення Україною загальнонаціональної політики консолідації. Одночасно з цим, виснувано, що представники національних меншин в Україні (навіть російської) здебільше негативно ставляться до анексії Криму і воєнних дій на сході України, а також не оправдовують їх і не вважають раціонально та етнічно зумовленими.

Ключові слова: *анексія Криму, Східний Донбас, Україна, національна меншина, «гібридна війна», конфлікт.*

Since February 2014, direct and indirect military intrusion of the Russian Federation and pro-Russian separatists against Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, have resulted into the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and occupation of a great (eastern) part of Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine. The Crimea, due to the results of the so-called referendum of March 16, 2014 was declared a part of the Russian Federation (according to the occupying authority's official data 96.77% of the Crimean inhabitants and citizens of Sevastopol city have voted for it), and on the territory of the occupied parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, the so-called "Luhansk people's republic" and "Donetsk people's republic" were established, which during 2014-2015 have been in the situation of an armed conflict with Ukraine. This can be explained not only by the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation, but also by various ethnic and political reasons, the consequences of which are conceived nowadays in different ways, especially by the representatives of the various national minorities in Ukraine. Therefore, the analysis of ethnic and political conditionality of the Crimea annexation and hostilities in Eastern Donbas, as well as the national minorities' attitude towards them, create a very important sphere of comprehending those processes which occur on the abovementioned territories and can hide elements of the conflict solution or relaxation of the conflict potential.

In this regard, S. Alanov states that ensuring of ethnic and political security of the state is impossible without achieving ethnic and political stability. Protectability of the social and political system, especially ethnic and political ones, becomes substantially complicated or impossible when it is in the unstable, imbalanced state. It is proved by the political events of 2014-2015 in Ukraine[1], namely the annexation of the Crimea and hostilities in Eastern Donbas. The scientist argues, that the infringement of the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine in the ethnic and political sphere on the side of numerous national minorities of the neighboring countries has been observed earlier. The point is that the regional ethnic and national policy in the regions of the national minorities' inhabitancy was quite different to the nation-wide. This problem concerned such ethnically and politically unstable regions of Ukraine as the AR of Crimea, where the predominant place was occupied by the Russian minority (58.5%), Chernivtsi and Zakarpattia regions, where Romanian (12.5%) and Hungarian (12.1%) minorities respectively prevail. Russia, Romania and Hungary for a long time have been practicing a simplified procedure of conferment of nationality for the representatives of their national minorities in Ukraine. But financial, organizational, informational support of these national minorities have not just contributed to the ethnic and cultural environment, but also have given life to various disintegration tendencies and demonstration of separatism, especially Russian-oriented[2].

[1] S. Aslanov, *Etnopolitychnyi konflikt (hibrydna viina na Skhodi Ukrainy) yak naslidok rehionalnoi etnonatsionalnoi polityky*, „Viche" 2015, nr 14.

[2] S. Aslanov, *Etnopolitychnyi konflikt (hibrydna viina na Skhodi Ukrainy) yak naslidok rehionalnoi etnonatsionalnoi polityky*, „Viche" 2015, nr 14.

Thus, the representatives of the national minorities and their organizations in the Crimea have repeatedly demanded annexation of the Crimea to the Russian Federation. However, in Ukraine, none could even imagine the real scale of the problem, namely the extension of dual-citizenship, which is prohibited by the Ukrainian legislation. As the annexation of the Crime proved, such ethnic and political activity of Russia had been carried out under the guise of protection of national minorities' ethnic and cultural rights, aiming at destabilization of the ethnic and political situation in the region, i.e. disintegration of Ukraine in terms of reducing contacts, weakening of relations and cooperation between the components of the system, as well as declining the activity of mutual coordination institutions[3]. The situation in 2013 - early 2014 even more contributed to the nostalgic moods of the biggest part of the Ukrainian inhabitants for the Soviet Union, which were used by the Russian Federation during the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and warfare actions in the eastern part of Ukraine. Consequently, such Russian-oriented conception of "the Crimea and Russia reunification" and early hostilities in Eastern Ukraine (within the so-called concept of "Novorossiia") at first was apprehended as a prospect of renewal of the Soviet way of life, and in the ethnic and political light it created enormous danger of disintegration of Ukraine. Even more it has been promoted by the so-called "hybrid war", which, on top of everything else, presupposes "hidden annexation" by means of attraction of local gunmen and ethnic groups and under the leadership of the state, which formally denies its participation in destabilization of the ethnic and political situation (in the analyzed case it is Russia in Ukraine). "The war" is conducted in the format of separatism, terrorism, occupation, annexation, propaganda, informational pressure and so on[4]. This, as S. Aslanov[5] assumes, gives the reasons to conclude that the "hybrid war" in Eastern Ukraine, as well as the annexation of the Crimea (totally ethnic and political conflict) is the result of the exaggeration of regional ethnic and cultural differences and their facilitation in the frames of regional ethnic and national policy, instead of carrying out the nation-wide policy of consolidation.

However, the political events of 2014-2015 in Ukraine are also the result and evidence of the fact, why Russian-separatist ideas almost have not been spread to other territories of Ukraine. The point is that within the ethnic and national context only the Crimea and Eastern Donbas have always been and still are "problem" regions in Ukraine. As V. Balushok supposes, despite the fact that in the east and south of Ukraine there are many national minorities, in general south-eastern part of the state is predominantly Ukrainian both as to the ethnic composition, and the essence of the existent traditions. Ukrainian traditions are especially strong

[3] O. Kartunov, *Vstup do etnopolitolohii: nauk.navch. posibnyk*, Wyd. Int ekonomiky, upravlinnia ta hospodarskoho prava „Krok" 1999, s. 215.

[4] S. Osnach, *Movna skladova hibrydnoi viiny*, „Slovo i dilo", źródło: http://slovoidilo.com/109-polityka/18891-movna-skladova-hibrydnoi-viiny.html (odczyt: 11.08.2015).

[5] S. Aslanov, *Etnopolitychnyi konflikt (hibrydna viina na Skhodi Ukrainy) yak naslidok rehionalnoi etnonatsionalnoi polityky*, „Viche" 2015, nr 14.

in Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, where at the time many people from Western Ukraine were resettled and this contributes to the reinforcement of the Ukrainian element. In regards to the Crimea, as it has been mentioned above, this region was in fact inhabited mainly by Russians, than by any other national minority. In Donbas (especially in its eastern part, namely in separate districts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions) there is a great massif of ethnically and socially specific people: during all years of Ukrainian independence there lived the biggest number of anti-social inhabitants, who do not have any occupation, and most of whom have been imprisoned. Moreover, in Donbas there are many people, who do not have any relation to the local ethic or cultural environment. Namely such medium has created a mixture of criminal Donetsk "elite" multiplied by a large number of ethnic Russian representatives and direct nearness to the Russian Federation, which is under Russian influence and oriented on separatism[6].

Due to this fact, Russia, which controls the Crimea and Eastern Donbas, pays special attention to the theme of xenophobia in Ukraine. It takes an important place in Russian propaganda. A number of "pocket" pseudo human rights and civil organizations specialize in preparing propaganda products, which is sometimes disguised as "monitoring" missions, which describe violation of national minorities' human rights in Ukraine. However, in accordance with the information provided by international organizations, this net of agents which deliberately works for the Kremlin, not only exaggerates the problem or just makes up various incidents, which do not happen, but also initiates events for propaganda purposes. For example, a great role in organization of invasion of Donbas was played by political strategists, and due to this the significance of the informational war against Ukraine should not be underestimated. In this situation, it is naturally to suppose that such important topic as xenophobia has become a significant vector in the Kremlin's propaganda[7].

As a result, the specificity of the "hybrid war" is the fact that the Russian ethnic minority in Ukraine, as well as other national minorities in the country are not consolidated as to apprehension of the annexation of the Crimea and warfare in Eastern Donbas. Especially, it can be seen in the context of the annexation of the Crimea, where national minorities' rights and liberties are greatly violated. Information, concerning the situation around people's and national minorities' rights in the Crimea, which is continually made public in the form of reports and statements by various international organizations, proves the degradation of the situation concerning compliance with the human rights at the temporary occupied territory of Ukraine, and also signifies the rise in the amount of human rights violation. That is why,

[6] H. Skrypnyk, *Suchasna sytuatsiia v Ukraini ochyma etnoloha*, „Etnohrafiia – sait pro narodnu tvorchist i etnohrafiiu Ukrainy", źródło: http://ethnography.org.ua/content/suchasna-sytuaciya-v-ukrayini-ochyma-etnologa (odczyt: 11.08.2015).; V. Shvets, *Etnichna skladova rosiisko-ukrainskoi viiny*, „Slovo prosvity", źródło: http://slovoprosvity.org/2015/06/12/etnichna-skladova-rosijsko%EE%80%84ukra%D1%97nsko%D1%97-vijni/ (odczyt: 12.06.2015).

[7] V. Lykhachov, T. Bezruk, *Ksenofobiia v Ukraini v 2014 r. v konteksti revoliutsii ta interventsii: Informatsiino-analitychna dopovid za rezultatamy monitorynhu*, Wyd. Kongres natsionalnykh hromad Ukrainy: Hrupa monitorynhu prav natsionalnykh menshyn, źródło: http://www.kngu.org/content/ksenofobiya-v-ukrayini-v-2014-r-v-konteksti-revolyuciyi-ta-intervenciyi (odczyt: 01.05.2015).

the number of compelled settlers, who leave the territory of the peninsula and move to mainland Ukraine constantly grows[8]. Crucial examples of national minorities' rights violation concern such legislative spheres as: citizens' rights to will expression, human rights regarding citizenship and nationality, indigenous people's rights and discrimination on ethnic grounds (it mainly concerns the Crimean Tatars' population), rights to free movement, rights to education, rights to freedom of religion and world-views, freedom of speech, mass media and views expression, rights to private property and doing business, rights to labor. Moreover, rather frequent phenomena in the Crimea are violent conflicts, tortures, illegal arrests and many others[9]. Comprehension of hostilities in Eastern Donbas is even worse, as in fact national minorities' rights are not protected.

That is why, representatives of various national minorities in Ukraine, even Russian, very often (in their majority) negatively appertain not only to the events in the Crimea and in the east of Ukraine, but also to the Russian Federation's participation in them. The point is that the events in the Crimea and hostilities in Eastern Donbas have not been usually supported by the inhabitants of the region, where they take place. But the main case is that they are not supported by ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Such a conclusion is rather relative, as it does not always rely on scientifically confirmed data, namely on the results of sociologic surveys. In Ukraine in 2014-2015 there has not been any sociologic research, which would attest the comprehension of the events in the south and east of Ukraine by various representatives of national minorities. However, the sample of such research has been solely represented by ethnic Russians, who comprise the biggest national minority in Ukraine. That is why, arguing the fact how nationals minority apprehend political reality in the Crimea and Eastern Donbas, we come from the statistic description of ethnic Russians' position in Ukraine, and then the description of separate positions of other representatives of national minorities in Ukraine.

According to the results of the sociologic survey of March 26-29, 2014 conducted by Donetsk institute of sociological research and its consequent analysis, only 26.5% of Donetsk inhabitants approved pro-Russian separatists' actions, and 40.8% stood for Ukraine's integrity[10]. Moreover, in accordance with the results of the sociologic survey, conducted by the group "Rating" of March 14-26, 2014, the idea of federalization was supported by 14% of citizens, whereas 64% were convinced that Ukraine must stay a unitary state, 10% believed that Ukraine must become a unitary state, but without the Crimea. Even in the east and south of Ukraine support for federalization was small: 26% versus 45% in the eastern regions of Ukraine and 22%

[8] *Prava liudyny v Krymu: naslidky okupatsii*, Wyd. RNBO, źródło: http://mediarnbo.org/2014/12/22/prava-lyudini-v-krimu-naslidki-okupatsi/ (odczyt: 22.12.2014).

[9] Y. Tyshchenko, *Do richnytsi tak zvanoho referendumu. Pro porushennia kulturnykh, movnykh, osvitnikh prav natsionalnykh menshyn, chy menshyny v menshyni i korinnykh narodiv v Krymu*, „RU" 2015, vol 3, nr 728.

[10] *Bol'shynstvo donchan ne odobryayut deystvyya separatystov – opros*, „Liha. Novosty", 09 kwiecień 2014, źródło: http://news.liga.net/news/politics/1294647-bolshinstvo_donchan_ne_odobryayut_deystviya_separatistov_opros.htm (odczyt: 16.05.2015).

versus 44% in the southern regions.[11]. According to the poll carried out by the fond "Democratic initiatives" of March 16-30, 2014, 10.3% of Ukrainian citizens supported annexation of the southern-eastern regions of Ukraine and their incorporating to Russia. Namely, in Donbas (Luhansk and Donetsk regions) there were 26.8% of supporters, in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions – 10.6%, in Mykolaiv, Odesa and Kherson regions – 9.5%[12]. The exception was the Crimea, where, in accordance with the results of the sociologic survey of February 8-18, 2014 conducted by Kyiv international institute of sociology, 41% of the Crimea inhabitants wished to merge in the Russian Federation[13], though even there the majority would like to see the relations between Ukraine and Russia as those of two independent countries. On March 6, 2014 on the site of the ATR channel the internet-referendum was conducted and the majority of respondents voted against the annexation of the Crimea to Russia. The most interesting point is that, in the light of non-support for Russia's and pro-Russians' actions at the occupied, but officially Ukrainian territory, the position of ethnic Russians was rather controversial to the Kremlin" position. Thus, according to the results of the poll of February 8-18, 2014 conducted by Kyiv international institute of sociology[14], Russians, in their majority, wished to see Russia and Ukraine as two independent and friendly countries with open borders, without visa and customs (68% and 63% respectively). However, 32% of Ukrainian Russians wanted to be united into one country: at that among young people up to 30 years, only 5% wanted that, in the age group 30-54 – 11% strived for that, and among people over 55 years – 17% wished that.

Comparing the data of ethnic Russians settling over the territory of Ukraine, as well as regional peculiarities of Russian ethnicity politicization in Ukraine, we can see that structurally, Russian minority in Ukraine did not display itself as a consolidated ethnic group. Most Russians in Ukraine, who supported the annexation of the Crimea and the concept of "Novorossiia" (including warfare in Eastern Donbas) as it has been mentioned above, territorially represent the inhabitants of the Crimea and Eastern Donbas. On the contrary, the rest of Russians in Ukraine found themselves critical as to the current political actions of the Russian Federation and pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. There are certain preconditions for that, as according to the poll, carried out by International republican institute of March 14-26, 2014 (in fact after the Crimea annexation), only 29% of ethnic Russians in Ukraine voiced

[11] *Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Ukraine*, „International Republican Institute", 14–26.03.2014, źródło: http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%205%20IRI%20Public%20Opinion%20Survey%20of%20Ukraine%2C%20March%2014-26%2C%202014.pdf (odczyt: 16.05.2015).

[12] *Chy vlastyvi ukrayintsyam nastroyi separatyzmu?*, „Demokratychni initsiatyvy imeni Il'ka Kucheriva", źródło: http://www.dif.org.ua/ua/events/nkdfkedlkrjgkje.htm (odczyt: 16.05.2015).

[13] *Dynamika stavlennya naselennya Ukrayiny do Rosiyi ta naselennya Rosiyi do Ukrayiny, yakykh vidnosyn z Rosiyeyu khotily b ukrayintsi*, „Kyyivs'kyy mizhnarodnyy instytut sotsiolohiyi", 04 marzec 2014, źródło: http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=news&id=237 (odczyt: 16.05.2015).

[14] *Dynamika stavlennya naselennya Ukrayiny do Rosiyi ta naselennya Rosiyi do Ukrayiny, yakykh vidnosyn z Rosiyeyu khotily b ukrayintsi*, „Kyyivs'kyy mizhnarodnyy instytut sotsiolohiyi", 04 marzec 2014, źródło: http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=news&id=237 (odczyt: 16.05.2015).

concerns for suppression of the status and possibility to use the Russian language in Ukraine (what is often named by the Russian Federation as the biggest problem of Russian minority in Ukraine). However, 66% of ethnic Russians in Ukraine believed that nothing prevents them to use the Russian language freely[15]. Similar results were received in the regional context, as only 24% of respondents from the south of Ukraine and 17% from the eastern parts voiced anxiety as to their right to use the Russian language freely. Thus, only 27% of respondents in from the south and 24% from the east of Ukraine supported the idea of the Russian military intervention into Ukraine. To tell the truth, among ethnic Russians who supported the idea of Russian military intervention in defense of (in case of necessity) people of Russian-descent was higher: 43% of citizens voted for and against.

But the description of the place and comprehension of Russian ethnos in Ukraine as a result of events of 2014-2015 is greatly complicated. The main reason is the situation of the military conflict, under conditions of which, one can mention, a priori, the rise in hostility on the side of title ethnos towards other nationality or ethnic group, especially of the group the core of which is a part of the conflict. The point is that during military actions it is possible to observe consolidation of homogeneous nation (unnecessarily ethnic and political) against the mutual enemy, though it can affect inter-ethnic understanding inside the country. This is attested by the data of the sociological survey conducted by Kyiv international institute of sociology "Resistance to the Russian propaganda in the region of conflict", of February 26-28 2015. The conclusion is that the percentage and number of ethnic Russians in Ukraine is reducing or must start lowering. Moreover, the internal and territorial structure of Russian national minority in Ukraine is changing. Thus, first of all, a large number of ethnic Russians and people of other nationalities in Ukraine, which show pro-Russian sympathy and support annexation of Ukrainian territories, have migrated from the annexed Crimea to Russia. Secondly, a great number of ethnic Russians in Ukraine, especially those, who stay within the territories of their inhabitants, except the Crimea and Eastern Donbas, are politically neutral or voice against Russia's or other countries' intervention into Ukraine's internal affairs.

Even a bigger percentage of such people can be found among representatives of other national minorities. It means that in the context of apprehension of other national minorities' attitudes in Ukraine the situation is even more interesting, though it does not always have a sociologic basis. The point is, as D. Kryvtsun states, that Russian intervention into Eastern Donbas and the Crimea has become the war not only for Ukrainians[16]. Peoples, which had suffered from the Russian aggression earlier came to the aid to Ukraine and now fight on its side being a part of volunteer battalions and national defense forces. Among them, for instance,

[15] *Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Ukraine*, „International Republican Institute", 14–26.03.2014, źródło: http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%205%20IRI%20Public%20Opinion%20Survey%20of%20Ukraine%2C%20March%2014-26%2C%202014.pdf (odczyt: 16.05.2015).

[16] D. Kryvtsun, *Kreml yak spilnyi suprotyvnyk. „Den" potsikavyvsia, yak predstavnyky natsionalnykh menshyn Ukrainy stavliatsia do aneksii Krymu i rosiiskoi ahresii na Donbasi*, „Den" 4 bereznia 2015, źródło: http://www.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/tema-dnya-podrobyci/kreml-yak-spilnyy-suprotyvnyk (odczyt: 05.03.2015).

there are representatives of the Belorussian national minority (like "Pohonia" formation), the Georgians[17], the Poles, the Chechen-Dudayev people (for instance battalion named after Dzhokhar Dudayev, which also includes the Ingush, the Azerbaijani, the Tatars), the Americans, the French, the Croats, the Swedes, the Spanish, the Italians, the Germans, the Finns, the Norwegians, the Slovenes, the Czechs, the Greeks and others. Moreover, even Russian people participate in the war against the pro-Russian separatists[18].

One can observe another kind of national minorities' representatives' activity in Ukraine, on the basis of which it is possible to assert that there is negative attitude of most ethnos' representatives in Ukraine towards the annexation of the Crimea and occupation of Eastern Donbas. Thus, members of the Poles society in Ukraine at first participated in the Maidan events, and now support national minorities' events aimed at discussion and resistance to the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Ethnic Poles in Ukraine adopted an appeal, in which they acknowledged Russia as an aggressor, and the "DPR" and "LPR" as terrorist organizations and they constantly urge all other national minorities to join their initiative. Similar position is expressed by the Hellenic community "Enotita", whose representatives (ethnic Greeks in Ukraine) show negative attitude towards the annexation of the Crimea and occupation of Donbas by Russia, and that is why they participate in military actions in the east of Ukraine, and act as volunteers. The idea of territorial integrity of Ukraine is supported by ethnic Germans in Ukraine, which are represented by the Germans Community in Ukraine. Among them there are activists, volunteers, officers and soldiers, who have been serving or still serve in the forces, participating in antiterrorist operation. A bit diversified is the position of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine, but their absolute majority show extremely negative reaction towards the Russian aggression and the annexation of the Crimea. However, it is very difficult to state the position of Russian and other national minorities concerning the annexation of the Crimea and hostilities in the east of Ukraine. Most of the abovementioned conclusions are relative, as there are no unified and nation-wide statistical data.

Therefore, we conclude that the situation concerning the annexation of the Crimea and occupation of Eastern Donbas is the result of the exaggeration of regional ethnic and cultural differences and their facilitation in the frames of region ethnic and national policy, instead of carrying out the nation-wide policy of consolidation in Ukraine, and the Russian Federation take advantage of it. But, the representatives of national minorities in Ukraine (even Russian) in general have negative attitude towards the annexation of the Crimea and hostilities in Eastern Ukraine and they do not justify them as well as do not consider them to be rationally or ethnically stipulated.

[17] *Saakashvili povidomyv pro uchast hruzynskykh ofitseriv na botsi Ukrainy v ATO*, „Gazeta.ua", źródło: http://gazeta.ua/articles/politics/_saakashvili-povidomiv-pro-uchast-gruzinskih-oficeriv-na-boci-ukrayini-v-ato/596219 (odczyt: 16.09.2015).

[18] *Yaki inozemtsi voiuiut proty Putina na Donbasi*, Telekanal „Espreso.tv" 5 veresnia 2014 roku, źródło: http://espreso.tv/article/2014/09/05/yak_i_za_koho_inozemni_hromadyany_voyuyut_v_rosiysko_ukrayinskiy_viyni (odczyt: 16.09.2015).

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