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Iryna Kravets

Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University

Vinnysia

Research Supervisor: I. H. Panina, PhD in History, Senior Lecturer.

Language Advisor: V. I. Kalinichenko, PhD in Philology, Ass. Prof.

THE CRIMEA PROBLEM IN THE UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

Introduction. The Russian attack has become a shock for the majority of the Ukrainian citizens, but the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation has deep historical roots. The absorption of Ukraine, its material and human resources – one of the key prerequisites for the deployment of the Russian imperial project. The history of relations between the Ukrainians and Russians is a chronicle of wars, liberation uprisings of Ukrainians and a consistent policy of russification and assimilation of Ukrainians.

The review of recent publications. The topic under consideration has been highlighted by A. Bebler, J. Mearsheimer and M. Klotz. The source of the study consists of bilateral agreements, legislation, press conferences and interview materials, media materials, reference literature and statistical sources [5].

Armed aggression is just one of the tools of the Russian Federation (the RF) against Ukraine, the last argument when all other means to conquer Ukrainians have exhausted themselves. Aggression is conducted in several dimensions: military, political, economic, social, humanitarian, and information. Elements of the hybrid war have been implemented as propaganda based on lies, manipulation and substitution of concepts, denial of the very fact of the war and the RF participation in it; accusing Ukraine of its own crimes, distortions of the Ukrainian history; trade-economic pressure and energy blockade; terror and intimidation of the Ukrainian citizens [2].

An information campaign focused on weakening the patriotic mood in the Ukrainian society, for example, due to the active use of the myth about the common past, “older brother”, nostalgia for the USSR, the discredit of our heroes and the Ukrainian history in general. Russia uses manipulation of history to justify and intensify aggression against Ukraine. The illegal separation of the territory of the Crimea from Ukraine and joining the Autonomous Republic to the Russian Federation have become a powerful impetus for the change in the mass historical perception.

The objective of the current paper is to investigate the main points of contradiction between Ukraine and Russia in relation to the Crimea; determine the place the Crimea takes in the foreign policy strategy of the Russian Federation and Ukraine; consider possible scenarios for returning the Crimea to Ukraine and suggest ways to solve this problem.

Results of the research. Four years have passed since the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea, the administrative unit of Ukraine, by Russia. During this time, the Crimea officially remains an internationally recognized part of Ukraine. The vast majority of the Russian politicians in the 1990s and early 2010s regarded the Crimea as the Russian historical territory that belonged to the Russian state for more than two centuries, despite the international treaties and commitments of Russia since 1991.

They tried to defend the concept of so-called “Royal gift”, claiming the legal unlawfulness of the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1954 “On the transfer of the Crimean region from the RSFSR into the USSR”. The main argument, according to the Constitution, is that such decisions could only be taken by the supreme body of the republic, the Supreme Council of the RSFSR [1].

An important factor in the “Crimean problem” was the division of the Black Sea Fleet, which was able to reconcile at the official level in 1996, being the prerequisite for signing the Great Russian–Ukrainian Treaty of 1997.

Strong exclusion of the Crimea does not deprive Ukraine of the legal title on the Crimean Peninsula, which is legally part of its territory. Moreover, both Ukraine and the international community qualified the Crimean referendum as illegitimate and did not recognize its results. From the point of view of the law, the results of the illegitimate referendum, as well as the acts that were issued by the annexation of the Crimea, are legally null and void [3]. In practical terms, this means that the Ukrainian state has every reason to demand the restoration of its territorial sovereignty regarding the Crimea and take measures to implement such a requirement in future.

Conclusion. In relations with Russia, Ukraine needs to continue the policy of sanctions and restrictions, designed to create mechanisms of negative, ideally, a devastating impact on the economic and social situation in the Crimea and Russia in general.

In the domestic policy of Ukraine, the tasks of Ukraine are quite fully and clearly formulated in the results of last year parliamentary hearings “Strategy of reintegration into Ukraine of the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea and the city of Sevastopol: problem issues, ways, techniques

and methods” [6]. In brief, we mean an improvement of the legal and regulatory framework, the creation of a system of state bodies for tackling the issues of de-occupation and reintegration, creation of training centers for educational, scientific, administrative and other needs in the Crimean direction.

In addition, a comprehensive program for encouraging the citizens of Ukraine in the temporarily occupied territories to maintain constant contact with the homeland should be developed. It is necessary for Ukraine to create effective mechanisms for protection of the comprehensive interests of Ukrainians living in temporarily occupied territories (from obtaining documents – to the possibility of gaining education or medical assistance, etc.).

Of course, all this would make no sense if Ukraine did not acquire an economic and military power sufficient to deal with the problem of de-occupation within a reasonable period of time.

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Mariia Levanchuk

Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University

Vinnitsia

Research Supervisor: I. Yu. Charskykh, PhD in History, Assoc. Prof.

Language Advisor: V. I. Kalinichenko, PhD in Philology, Ass. Prof.