

Yevgeny RYABININ

Mariupol State University

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3027-0680>

DOI : 10.14746/ps.2020.1.6

## **RUSSIA'S EXOGENOUS FACTOR IN THE DONBASS CONFLICT**

The issue of separatism has been a pressing problem for many countries since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when some European nations, mainly Balkans ones, strived for independence from the Osman empire. In author's opinion it turned out to be the first wave of separatism movement in relatively contemporary history. This wave ended with collapse of Osman, Russian and Austria-Hungarian empires. The second wave took place after the WWII when there were some ideological clashes that caused split of some countries under the influence of the USSR and the USA. It was a bright example of exogenous influence of top actors of international relations. This artificial split caused a lot of tragedies and forced people to live in different countries for many decades. The third wave started in 1989 with the end of the cold war. Former USSR and Yugoslavia became the epicenter of the most cruel hostilities in modern history. Yugoslavia split into sovereign republics, though the final split was completed only after the conflict between the Serbs and Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija, who couldn't have got independence but for the USA that provided them with military and diplomatic assistance. Here we can see an example of exogenous influence of the country that didn't expand in terms of territory but benefitted geopolitically. The same situation was observed in former USSR republics, some regions of which wanted to get independence from brandnew states. There were various reasons for separatism conflicts, i.e. some nations were oppressed by the state authorities due to the fact that their territories were shifted from one republic to another one by the Soviet government without taking into account possible ethnic clashes (Pridnestrovian moldavian republic in Moldova, Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorniy Karabakh in Azerbaijan etc). It is necessary to underline that in the majority of cases Russian Federation served as mediator in all these conflicts on the one hand, but on the other hand all these conflict could be beneficial for Russia from geopolitical point of view. Supporting rebellious areas Russia has blocked the NATO entrance procedure of former Soviet republics (according to NATO charter, a country that has conflict on its territory or with neighbouring state can not be accepted to the union). In such a way Russia guarantees that rival states will be in so-called grey or buffer geopolitical zone.

But the third wave that started in 1989 didn't finish with collapse of the USSR and the collapse procedure of the USSR didn't finish in 1991. We can observe its process now in terms of Ukrainian political and military crisis that is also called Russia-Ukraine hybrid war/separatism conflict in Donbass/Ukraine-Donbass war etc. And it

is happening not only due to geopolitical shift process, but the ongoing process of the former USSR collapse.

So the main aim of this article is to consider exogenous influence of Russia on military conflict in Donbass region.

It is believed that separatism is a purely internal phenomenon. There is a number of internal factors that contribute to strengthening separatism processes in a particular region. However, while analyzing internal factors, exogenous factors should also be taken into account. In this regard the forefront geopolitical interests of powerful neighboring states should be taken into account that are interested in weakening or disintegration of the state to strengthen their position in the region or increase their state territories by occupying a part of the neighboring state.

### **RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE ON UKRAINE IN 1991–2013**

In author's perspective the exogenous influence has two approaches – hard and soft. Hard one could be fulfilled by military intervention. Soft support can be fulfilled in the following way: economic (funding fight, financing NGOs), technical (weaponry), humanitarian (networking with ethnically related people in cultural, scientific and educational spheres, funding educational programs, research projects, internships, support in the international arena, condemning the central government/rebellious region in world organizations such as UN, OSCE, constructing the same religion objects (Orthodox/Catholic churches, Muslim mosques), information (demonization of the central government) (Ryabinin, 2015: 264).

Before the start of political and then military crisis in Ukraine in 2013 we could observe four regions that could in this or that way feel external influence, namely the Crimea, Donbass, Bukovina and Transcarpathia. It's really interesting to emphasize that the political tension was mainly around Bukovina and Transcarpathian regions because they got exogenous influence by Romania and Hungary respectively. So, according to non-official information more than 100,000 people in Bukovina got Romanian passports and are Romanian citizens. Hungary in its turn provides ethnic Hungarians in Transcarpathia with financial support, sponsor Universities and pay additional salary to the teachers of Hungarian language. There were some tensions in 1990s in the Crimea but nobody could expect that such a fierce and violent conflict would break out in Donbass region.

Though the conflict in Eastern Ukraine (namely Donbass region), which began after the political crisis of 2013–14, has been in a latent state of its development for a long period of time. The most active fighting took place during the second half of 2014 – early 2015, after which agreements known as “Minsk – 1” and “Minsk – 2” were signed. Failure to comply with these agreements hinders the solution to the military and political crisis in Donbass region. The last straw that stimulated this conflict was disagreement in Ukrainian society concerning the situation when President V. Yanukovich refused to sign agreement with European Union concerning political association. It is an official reason but the main reason was authoritarian influence of V. Yanukovich and his family members in financial and business areas. Ukrainian tycoons (in Ukraine they are called oligarchs) combined their efforts to top him down

with the help of the USA curators. It was really easy to ignite civil conflict because for many years there were harsh disputes between inhabitants of Eastern and Western Ukraine concerning such issues as Russian language as the second official one, foreign policy priorities, and attitudes towards the events of the World War II, religious issues. But the issue of separatism has never been as acute on the agenda as we have been observing it for the last six years.

Some Ukrainian experts believe that since 1991 Russia has tried to use a soft power factor to keep Ukraine in its area of influence. On the one hand, we can agree with this viewpoint, because Russia has been selling gas to Ukraine at lower prices showing that it can invest in Ukrainian economy and positioned itself as friendly state.

On the other hand, it is very difficult to talk about Russia's external influence on southeastern Ukraine as a whole, and on the Donbass in particular, since there was no total use of the soft power factor in its classical sense. How can we explain it? First of all, if we analyze the first ten years of Russia's independence, it was really difficult period for this country because it was in the transformational political and economical process itself, trying to cope with internal territorial problems and was on the edge of political, social and territorial collapse. The hostilities in Chechnya has raised the main question for Russia at that period of time – whether Russia will remain within the borders it appeared on the geopolitical map in 1991 or long-term separatism conflicts will spread all over the country forcing federal authorities get rid of rebellious areas. The second decade has been spent for rebuilding its potential and strengthening its position in the international arena.

Secondly, it must be acknowledged that the use of soft power by Russia has always been at a very low level and has not been particularly actively funded in comparison with the United States, China, the United Kingdom, etc. There were some political parties in Ukraine that had pro-Russian geopolitical viewpoints, but they have never won parliamentary elections, proving that people of Eastern regions didn't want to secede from Ukraine.

Nevertheless, we shouldn't reject that Russian exogeneous influence really existed and it was expressed in peopolitical, economical, cultural, humanitarian issues.

Therefore, it is really necessary to analyze the political, economic, humanitarian exogenous influence of Russia on the Donbass in the period from 1991 up to current moment. We can divide policy of exogenous influence of Russia into two periods: the first period started in 1991 when Ukraine gained its independence, till 2013 – the starting point of active phase of the social conflict; the second period starts in 2014 (the active separatism conflict) up till present moment.

The results of the December 1991 referendum were one of the few events in the history of the country when the opinion of the inhabitants of all regions was unanimous in choosing the model of state development, i.e. to become independent. However, serious shocks in the economic sphere, the financial sector, raised the question of geo-economic and geopolitical priorities of the population of the Western and Eastern Ukraine. After disappointment in gaining independence and the breakdown of trade and industrial ties with the republics of the former USSR, the people of southeastern Ukraine chose to resume economic, political, military, and cultural ties with the CIS countries, and especially with Russia (Ryabinin, 2017: 131).

According to S.Huntington, the most obvious split between East and West was manifested in the 1994 presidential election. The president at that moment L.Kravchuk, who, despite close ties with Russian leaders, identified himself as a “national” politician, won in twelve regions of Western Ukraine with overwhelming majority, having got 90%. His opponent, Leonid Kuchma, won in thirteen eastern regions. This election, as one US expert noted, “crystallized the split between Europeanized Slavs in Eastern Europe and the Russian-Slavic vision of what Ukraine should turn into. It is not only ethnic polarization, it is the issue of different cultures” (Khantington, 2006: 255).

It was the first election campaign that got Russia’s exogenous influence for the first time. Candidate L. Kuchma was supported by leading Russian politicians and his interviews were broadcast on Russian TV.

Thus, Russia has signaled to the voters of the Southeast which candidate it supports. Donbass was at that time already the forefront of pro-Russian foreign policy vector. The results of the election of the President of Ukraine and the elections in the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian parliament) clearly showed real political preferences. In addition, in his election program, L. Kuchma included a point about close economic cooperation with Russia: “I consider it to be of high priority to restore mutually beneficial economic ties with Russia and the countries of the former USSR. I will ask Verkhovna Rada to join CIS Economic Union” (*Predvybornaya programma*, 1994).

If we take a look at the statistics, we have the following results: L. Kravchuk received 18.49% in Donetsk region, 10.11% in Lugansk; L. Kuchma – 79% in Donetsk region, 88% in Luhansk. Since this period Russian factor was a determining one in all subsequent election campaigns in Ukraine.

The 1999 election had different picture: L. Kuchma was already more popular in the West than in the East of Ukraine. As for the election results in two regions of Donbass, the results were approximately the same: in Donetsk region, Kuchma even won, which can be explained by the use of administrative resources, the support of plant directors and labor collectives, who in 1994 voted massively for Kuchma and believed in a new political course (*Predvybornaya programma*, 1994).

With regard to the second round of the presidential elections, which took place on November 14, 1999, we had the following results – Donetsk region: L. Kuchma 52.9%, P. Symonenko 41.23%; Lugansk region: L. Kuchma 40.74%, P. Symonenko 53.87% (Nel’ha, 1999: 5).

The 1998 parliamentary elections were characterized by the opposition of the pro-Western political parties in Western Ukraine and the Communist Party of Ukraine in the East that set a goal to reconstruct the Soviet Union, although it should be emphasized that those elections were driven not by ideological, but economic factors when the whole population of Ukraine found themselves in poor financial situation and the overwhelming majority of people lived below poverty line. In Donbass region Communist party was the sole winner, having received 35.45% in Donetsk region and 45.97% in Lugansk region (*Rezultaty holosuvannya*, 2002).

It is believed that it was the pro-Russian factor that helped the Communist party. According to the author of this article, the main factor in the victory of the Communist Party was the radical impoverishment of the population due to ineffective policy of

the central government, high level of corruption and the beginning of the process of oligarchization of the state.

In 2002 parliamentary elections the political bloc “Za edinu Ukrainu” (For united Ukraine) won in Donetsk region having received 36.83%.

The victory of this bloc was possible due to support of industrial factories in the southeast and administrative resources. In their program, they advocated a new content of relations with Russia and the CIS countries (*Porivnyal'nyy analiz*, 2002).

The 2004 presidential election finally and completely split Ukraine into two camps according to political preferences. In Donbass, V. Yanukovich won: he got in Donetsk region 93.54%, in Lugansk 91.24% (*Vybery prezidenta*, 2004). In the election program, Presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich noted that “Ukraine will participate in world and regional integration processes, European integration progress, will cooperate with the Russian Federation and other states that are our traditional partners, and all these processes will deepen” (*Peredyborna prohrama*, 2004). It is necessary to underline that none of Yanukovich and Yushchenko's supporters analyzed their election programs, because people voted due to ideological mindset and geographical basis. By this time, the contradictions between East and West of the country concerning foreign policy, language, culture, events of the WWII have intensified.

In 2000 power changed in Russia as well, and the new president V. Putin came to power. Unlike his predecessor he was more pragmatic, and having solved its problems with insurgents in Chechnya, Russia started to assert its geopolitical regional interests. Having put forward a proposal to Ukraine to join the United Economic Union in 2003, Russia has outlined its interests on the post-Soviet territory.

According to Ukrainian politologist V. Fesenko, Russia tried to influence the election results not directly but indirectly, that is, through the mass media, which had a great influence on the Ukrainian electorate. According to the public opinion poll held by the Razumkov Center 62% of experts believed that the influence of Russian TV was quite high during the presidential election, and 60% considered the influence of Russian newspapers published in Ukraine to be really important. Due to the fact that Russian mass media has always been very influential in Ukraine, it was banned in Ukraine by the politicians that came to power in 2014.

The parliamentary elections, held in March 2006 again split Ukraine into two parts: in Western Ukraine people voted for V. Yushchenko and Y. Tymoshenko, in the East voters supported V. Yanukovich's Party of Regions: they got 73.63% in Donetsk region and 74.27% in Lugansk regions, in 2007 The Party of Regions received almost the same results (Donetsk region – 72.05%, Lugansk – 73.53%).

The 2010 presidential election was again a confrontation between the West and the East, represented by Y. Tymoshenko and V. Yanukovich. Y. Tymoshenko in the Donetsk region received 6.45%, in Lugansk – 7.72%. V. Yanukovich received 90.44% and 88.96% respectively (*Vybery prezidenta*, 2010). In his election program, V. Yanukovich paid more attention to the humanitarian aspects in order to attract the maximum number of voters of the Southeast and, possibly, the center of Ukraine. He constantly alleged that he was in favor of giving Russian the status of the second state language, in favor of a balanced state language policy that would adequately respond to the language needs of society. He also promised to “resume friendly and mutually

beneficial relations with the Russian Federation and CIS states” (*Peredvyborna prohramma*, 2010).

How to explain such results in Donetsk and Lugansk regions? The main reason is the orientation of the above-mentioned presidential candidates and parties to cooperate with the Russian Federation. It can be considered as a certain passive influence of the Russian Federation, passive soft policy. It is possible that the political experts of the Russian Federation participated in the development of programs of candidates and political parties. However, in author’s opinion, there was no need to make special efforts, as Ukraine was in a state of deep split that played into the hands of candidates from the western or southeastern regions, and Donbass in particular.

Public opinion polls testified, even before the political crisis of 2013, about disappointing forecasts for Ukraine. In June 2011, a poll was conducted by the Institute of Sociology concerning attitude of Ukrainians to Russia on some issues. 26% (42% of which were in the East) of people supported the idea to strengthen the Eastern Slavic bloc (Ukraine, Russia, Belarus).

84% of the population in the eastern regions supported the idea to join Russia-Belarus Union. 28% of people in the East supported the idea to cooperate with EU and only 4% were for cooperation with NATO. In such a situation political parties and candidates for presidency used these ideological differences in term of shaping their election campaigns (Shul’ga, 2011: A6).

There were also parties in the political arena that supported the reunification with Russia. However, their popularity was quite low, the degree of popularity did not exceed a few percent. It is unlikely that these parties were created by Russia, and their task was to get votes from the Communist Party, which positioned itself as an opposition party not only in foreign policy, but was also against the formation of an oligarch regime. In 2010 there was even a movement the main objective of which was to create Donetsk autonomous republic, but it didn’t get any support from the side of local people and the meetings failed having gathered not more than a couple of dozens of people.

So, as we can see from this brief analysis, the influence of the Russian Federation in the political sphere was not so significant. Our main proof that political influence was negligible is the following – if Russia’s influence on the political sphere of Ukraine and Donbass in particular had been high enough, Ukraine would be actively involved in integrational projects in the Eurasian/post-Soviet space, and Donbass autonomous slogans would have been heard for a long time and had started much earlier. Taking into account the fact that Ukraine did not join the CIS and other geopolitical projects initiated by Russia, it can be stated that the exogenous Russian influence factor was not effective enough.

There is an opinion that Russia didn’t want Ukraine to split and it wanted to spread its influence on the whole territory of the country. But Russian politicians didn’t realize that it was really difficult to do taking into account negative attitude of Western Ukraine population towards Russia.

The second sphere where one can try to trace the exogenous influence of Russia is the economic sphere. The high level of interaction between Donetsk and Lugansk regions with the border regions of the Russian Federation is explained by geographical

location and established in the times of the USSR production and trade relations. Establishment of economic and trade cooperation has developed rapidly and deeply. On the one hand, this is a natural phenomenon, and we can see this by the example of the Euroregions in the EU, when the border regions of neighboring countries, as peripheral ones, by means of cross-border cooperation, have reached a new level of their development. Donetsk and Lugansk regions were not an exception. On the other hand, this has led to a decrease in the level of interregional cooperation within Ukraine, which can be considered as a “rejection” of these areas from close cooperation with the regions of one and the same country.

It is necessary to emphasize that official Kyiv delegated to Donetsk and Lugansk regions local foreign economic functions in the system of relations with border territories, without giving them the status of autonomy. Every year, this process of empowerment has only intensified. Cross-border trade relations developed. The process of entry of Russian manufacturers into Ukrainian markets and Ukrainian into Russian one was launched (which was dominant and Ukrainian exports were 1.5–2 times higher than Russian). Within the euroregions, legislation on the goods export/import was simplified (Bredikhin, 2015: 128). That is, to some extent, Russian business and goods manufacturers were entering Ukraine through Donbass, that is, through regions that shared a border with Russia, and on the territory of which Russian finance was adapting to Ukrainian realities. Besides more than 3 million people from all regions of Ukraine have been working in Russia having no opportunity to find a jobplace in Ukraine, sending money to their families in Ukraine that made their families loyal to Russia.

Therefore, it should be noted that there was no direct influence from Russian Federation aimed at Donbas regarding political life, since the population of this region always supported pro-Russian vector of the country's foreign policy. Thus, we can conclude that the exogenous Russian influence on the political and economic life of Ukraine was negligible and ineffective if we take into account the fact that Ukraine did not participate in integration projects developed and implemented by Russian Federation, and the population of Donbass was more interested in such issues like language, history, culture, religion, because from historical point of view this region has been tightly connected with Russia than European civilization.

It's worth mentioning that there was one more influential exogenous factor and that used to be religion. It is known that orthodox church is widely spread in Ukraine and the biggest part of Ukraine was under the rule Moscow patriarchy and its influence was even harder that political or economic one. The South-East part of Ukraine recognize only Moscow patriarchy and even now under creation of Kiev patriarchy the overwhelming majority of people in Southeast of Ukraine, and especially in Donbass, are not eager to accept Kyiv patriarchy. So it is necessary to underline that Moscow patriarch Kirill has visited Ukraine several times and constantly alleged that Ukrainian and Russian peoples are one and the same ethnos that has common faith and traditions. When he came to Donbass region and the Crimea was met by people carrying flags of the Russian Federation that could show the attitude of people towards him and religion as a symbol of unity with Russia and their desire to associate themselves with Orthodox civilization. Besides he constantly mentioned that “Russia, Ukraine and Belarus

are the core of the Russian world, the fundamental of which is the Orthodox church.” This statement was constantly repeated him and supported by Orthodox church-goers and it is understandable that religious doctrines are disputed – they are accepted as they are. So, it is necessary to emphasize that Russia used to spread its influence by means of religion that it is too easy to do because, as it was mentioned, religion is not politics and people are supposed to do what they are said to.

### **RUSSIA’S INFLUENCE AND INVOLVEMENT IN MILITARY CRISIS IN DONBASS REGION**

The situation after coup d’etat that in Ukraine is called the Revolution of Honour in 2014 has worsened in political, economic, financial and geopolitical spheres for Ukraine. The country turned out in grey geopolitical zone. It has been in this zone since gaining independence and it is explained by the following factors: due to split in society’s opinion concerning geopolitical preferences, Ukraine failed to join any geopolitical union. That’s why in geopolitical issue it turned out to be between Europe and Russia; in military aspect – between NATO and Collective Security Treaty Organization; in economic and financial sphere between European Union and Eurasian Economic Union. Under the reign of L. Kuchma Ukraine had multivectoral foreign policy and it was quite successful. But the current world is on the final stage of forming geopolitical systems and Ukraine has failed to join any of them. On the one hand European Union and NATO are constantly promising Ukraine to accept it, but it goes without saying that it will not happen in the nearest thirty years or even longer because Ukraine doesn’t correspond to norms and standards of European and Euroatlantic organizations. Having lost its chance of being a part of European or Eurasian geopolitical construction Ukraine turned out to be a buffer zone that is now used both by Europe and Russia.

As it is known Russia supported rebellious republics of so-called “DPR” (Donetsk People’s Republic) and “LPR” (Lugansk People’s Republic) and it is understandable that without Russia’s support these republics wouldn’t survive. So, let’s analyze various aspects of direct Russia’s support provided to these rebellious regions:

1. Economic support. There were and there are still problems with the supply of staple commodities, which include food and medical supplies, during military operations in any territory. There are two ways of providing people with these issues: 1) providing humanitarian assistance to the population of the region, but in this case it would mean “eating policy.” If any state wants the economy to function in the region, it must create favorable conditions for it, and this is the second principle 2) economic and trade support for the region.

Russian entrepreneurs are involved in coal export operations extracted from the LPR and DPR mines. OSCE observers at the Gukovo and Donetsk checkpoints have recorded coal exports to Russia since October 2014. The volume of coal exports from the LPR to Russia was within 3 thousand tonnes per day (Golunov, Artem’yev, 2015).

In February 2015, Naftogaz of Ukraine blocked the gas pipelines in Donbass. In order to prevent gas blockade, Gazprom started supplying fuel to the territories through

the gas stations “Prokhorovka” (border of Rostov region and “LPR”) and “Platovo” (border of Rostov region and DPR). Natalia Timakova, spokeswoman for Dmitry Medvedev, explained: “Gazprom will supply gas in the south-east as a humanitarian aid on a commercial basis.”

Since the start of the coal blockade in January 2017, “DPR” and “LPR”, which has been announced on both sides, continue to refocus on trade with Russia. According to the DPR Council of Ministers, “the supply of high-energy coal to Ukraine has been stopped and is no longer underway.” The same information was confirmed by “LPR,” adding that coal supplies to Ukraine are now moving to Russia. The possibility of its transportation to the Crimean peninsula is also discussed (Zakharov, Kirillov, 2017).

Besides, the trading company “Magnit” carries out trading activities on the territory of the republics. In 2016, exports of goods from “DPR” to Russia increased by \$ 34 million. Imports to “DPR” grew in 6.5 times. The share of Russian products was 84%. That is, we see territories that are not under control of Ukraine, are establishing trade relations with Russia, moving into its economic trading space (Golunov, Artem'yev, 2015).

2. Financial assistance. In 2014–2015, financial transactions were conducted in the national currency of Ukraine, in hryvnas, on the territory of the republics. This was due to the fact that the population of these territories had some savings and received pensions and salary in national currency. Then, taking into account that amount of hryvna currency began to end, the authorities of “DPR” and “LPR” decided that it was possible to make financial transactions in rubles, euros and dollars, that is, a multi-currency zone was proclaimed. However, the last two types of currency are not widely spread, and therefore, the ruble has become a local currency. Besides, if in 2014–2015 the hryvna-ruble exchange rate was unprofitable (in “DPR” 1 hryvna was equal to 2 rubles, whereas on the territory of Ukraine the rate was 1 to 4) in 2016–2017 the currency exchange has levelled. Thus, DPR and LPR residents do not need and to travel to the territory of Ukraine for currency exchange.

Lugansk also introduced the ruble as the main currency of the LPR. The LPR Council of Ministers has stated that such a step is necessary to stabilize the financial system in the region, as well as due to the fact that most of the money transactions are made in Russian rubles there. In addition, it should be noted that “DPR” and “LPR” have already entered the banking zone of Russia.

3. Humanitarian assistance. This component is related to the provision of free humanitarian assistance to the inhabitants of these territories. Throughout the period of hostilities, Russia provided humanitarian assistance to “DPR” and “LPR.”

Since the start of hostilities in Donbass region, Russia has sent more than 70 humanitarian convoys there with food and building materials. Besides, humanitarian aid contains fuel, seeds and fertilizers, electrical equipment, medicines, school textbooks, newsprint. The goods are selected in accordance with the applications from “DNR” and “LPR” (Ryabinin, 2017: 7).

4. Diplomatic assistance. When one state recognizes the separatist region as an independent state or lobbies its interests on the international arena it has to provide this region with diplomatic assistance. Russia did not recognize “DPR” and “LPR” officially, but on February 18, 2017, President of Russia V. Putin signed a decree recogniz-

ing the documents issued to citizens of Ukraine and persons residing in the territories of certain regions of Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

The document was ratified “to protect the rights and freedoms of people and citizens, following the generally recognized principles and norms of international humanitarian law.” According to the decree and on the basis of the Minsk agreements “identity documents, documents on education and (or) qualification, birth certificates, change of name, death, vehicle registration certificate, driving license, issued by the relevant authorities (organizations)” are recognized as valid on the territory of Russian Federation.

The decree also permits entry into and departure of residents of “DPR” and “LPR” without a visa issued on the basis of passports issued by the authorities on these territories (*Ukaz Prezidenta*, 2017).

In April 2019 Russian president signed a decree according to which it became much easier for people of “DPR” and “LPR” to get Russian citizenship. What could it mean? First of all, people who live in this region have an opportunity to go to Russia and become its citizens. It will be profitable for Russia from the point of view of solving several issues. The first one is the solution to demographic problem, i.e. the number of population will increase, besides these people belong to the same civilization. It means that Russia will not have problems due to different language, religion, life mindset, down to the situation that we observe in Western Europe that suffers from immigration crisis. The second issue is geopolitical – people, who get Russian citizenship but stay in “DPR” and “LPR”, become Russian citizens and in case of worsening military situation Russia will be able to use military force to protect its citizens as it was done in Russia-Georgian conflict in August 2008.

And it could be one more step to huge geopolitical revival of Russia. We know that there are some areas on the post-Soviet space that are close to Russia from civilizational point of view (language, religion, history, family ties), such as Prydnestrovie, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Donetsk and Lugansk regions. All these areas became rebellious in the countries (Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine) that announced about pro-European/anti-Russian foreign policy. In some cases Russian people were suppressed because of their desire to preserve their language, religion, traditions. We can predict that one day all these territories can become part of Russia and the process of territorial and geopolitical revival will finish. If it happens, the countries that above-mentioned territories belong to, will not be able to do anything. They may want to enter EU/NATO, but they will have to recognize the fact that those insurgent territories don't belong to them anymore.

The diplomatic component was also carried out when Russia represented the interests of DPR and LPR in the Normandy negotiations, as well as during the signing of the Minsk agreements in 2014 and 2015.

Besides, from a diplomatic point of view it is worth mentioning the event that took place on March 17 in the Livadia Palace, which hosted the inaugural meeting of the Integration Committee “Russia-Donbass,” which was attended by senators and deputies of the State Duma of Russia, heads of “DPR” and “LPR,” politologists and leaders of humanitarian organizations.

The work of the forum was aimed at approximation of the legislation of the “DPR” and “LPR” and the Russian Federation, development of direct economic, cultural, edu-

cational and humanitarian relations, establishment of direct dialogue between Donbass and the regions of Russian Federation. The fact that the work on integration has become a practical area, the establishment of the company “Center for Economic Cooperation of the Republics,” the purpose of which is to establish relationships between the subjects of economic activity of Crimea and Donbass.

So, we can observe how Donbass is reorienting its diversified activities to cooperation with Russia and reducing the same activity with Ukraine.

5. Educational assistance. All educational institutions have switched to Russian educational programs. Besides, over the past six years, Russia has been providing “DPR” and “LPR” educational institutions with Russian textbooks in terms of humanitarian aid.

Russian universities have launched preferential free of charge admission of graduates of Donetsk and Lugansk schools in August 2014. First of all, it was about young people whose parents remained in the republics, or about those who lost their homes as a result of hostilities. The main expenditures of universities (these were mainly educational institutions of Rostov and Belgorod regions) are carried out at the expense of the local budgets.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Russia has established a training and methodological center in the Rostov region that will assist the “DPR” and “LPR” schools to implement Russian educational programs. Students of higher education institutions will be able to receive Russian certificates (*V shkolakh DNR i LNR*, 2015).

6. Military assistance. There were a lot of speculations concerning presence of Russian military troops on the territory of Donbass, but none could provide evidences of it. But, to think logically, it is necessary to underline that rebels in Donbass region could get weaponry only from Russia. Besides, it was necessary to teach rebels how to handle weaponry, so we can presume that there/are military instructors who organised the training process without which it could be impossible for the rebels to fight effectively.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary to conclude that Ukraine always felt Russia's influence from geopolitical and geoeconomic point of view. It was and is now important for Russia to keep Ukraine in the sphere of its geopolitical influence in terms of tellurocratic and talasocratic geopolitical clash. Ukraine has made one mistake – it hadn't prioritised any of foreign policy directions in 1990-es, trying to hold to geopolitical balance between the West and the East. But at that period of time it was one of the smart solutions to its foreign policy issues due to its geopolitical location. The second mistake has been done by oligarchs who agreed to split Ukrainian society into those who were eager to join EU/NATO and those who wanted closer cooperation with Russia. Political experts have deepened this split in 2000-s. The third mistake has been done during political crisis that turned into hostilities in Donbass region and that was a range of allegations against population in Donbass region who wanted their civil rights to be observed and protected. Russia has used this situation having spread its military influence on the Crimea and Donbass region. Instead, Ukraine should have used an approached once offered by Karl Deutsch.

He explained that in any country it is necessary to use communicative approach that could prevent society from conflict, and that was proved by European Union, members of which have never had any military conflict with each other.

Besides it would be better to use an approach offered by Arend Lijphart (consensus democracies) and it is presupposed that all ethnic groups of the country must have right to participate in the decision-making process of the country. This concept is fulfilled in Ukraine to some degree, but the civil rights of some ethnic minorities are not fulfilled as it should be in free European country. So, the main objective of the current ruling political party is to involve the whole population in the development of the country and guarantee everyone that their rights will not be violated.

## REFERENCES

- Bredikhin A. V. (2015), *Istoriya rossiysko-ukrainskogo prigranichnogo sotrudnichestva (na primere yevroregiona „Donbass“)*, Moskva.
- Golunov I., Artem'yev A. (2015), *Rassledovaniye RBK: na ch'i den'gi zhivet Donbass*, <https://www.rbc.ru/investigation/politics/15/06/2015/5579b4b99a7947b063440210> (12.06.2018).
- Il'chenko A. P. (2014), *L.D. Kuchma v Prezydents'kykh vyborakh 1994 r. – pochatok zarozhennyya bipolyarnoyi systemy ukrayins'koho elektoral'noho polya*, „Intelihentsiya i vlada”, No. 31.
- Khantington S. (2006), *Stolknoveniye tsivilizatsiy*, Moskva.
- Nel'ha O. (1999), *Vybory yak indyikator i chynnyk natsional'noyi intehratsiyi*, „Nova polityka”, No. 6.
- Peredyborna prohrama* (1999), *Peredyborna prohrama kandydata u prezydenty Ukrayiny Kuchmy Leonida Danylovycha*, <https://constituanta.blogspot.com/2014/10/1999.html> (03.05.2018).
- Peredyborna prohrama* (2004), *Peredyborna prohrama kandydata na post Prezydenta Ukrayiny V.F. Yanukovycha*, <https://constituanta.blogspot.com/2014/10/2004.html> (02/03/2017).
- Peredyborna prohramma* (2010), *Peredyborna prohramma kandydata na post prezydenta Ukrayiny Yanukovycha V.F.*, [https://constituanta.blogspot.com/2014/10/2010\\_25.html](https://constituanta.blogspot.com/2014/10/2010_25.html) (07.04.2018).
- Pidsumky holosuvannya* (2006), *Pidsumky holosuvannya po partiyakh (vyborchyykh blokakh partiy)*, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua> (07.04.2018).
- Pidsumky holosuvannya po partiyakh (vyborchyykh blokakh partiy)*, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua> (07.04.2018).
- Porivnyal'nyy analiz* (2002), *Porivnyal'nyy analiz peredyborchyykh prohram politychnykh partiy ta vyborchyykh blokiv*, <https://tomenko.ua/docs/pc02-2002-02a.htm> (07.04.2018).
- Predybornaya programma* (1994), *Predybornaya programma kandidata v Prezidenty Ukrainy Kuchmy L.D.*, <https://constituanta.blogspot.com/2014/10/1994.html> (02.03.2017).
- Putin podpisal ukaz* (2017), *Putin podpisal ukaz o priznanii Rossiyye pasportov DNR i LNR*, [https://www.znak.com/2017-02-18/putin\\_podpisal\\_ukaz\\_o\\_priznanii\\_rossiye\\_pasportov\\_dnr\\_i\\_lnr](https://www.znak.com/2017-02-18/putin_podpisal_ukaz_o_priznanii_rossiye_pasportov_dnr_i_lnr) (11.02.2018).
- Rezul'taty holosuvannya* (2002), *Rezul'taty holosuvannya v bahatomandatnomu okruzi (po rehionakh Ukrayiny)*, <http://www.cvk.gov.ua> (11.10.2019).
- Ryabinin YE. V. (2015), *Ekzohenni chynnyky etnoseparatyst-s'kykh protsesiv: teoretichnyy aspekt*, „Visnyk Mariupol's'koho derzhavnogo universytetu. Seriya: Istoriya. Politolohiya”, No. 12.
- Ryabinin YE. V. (2017), *Polityko-ekonomichnyy vymir rosiys'koho vplyvu na Donbas (1991–2013 rr)*, „Politykus”, No. 1.

- Shul'ga N. (2011), *Khochet li Ukraina byt' s Rossiiyey? Rezul'taty sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniya Instituta sotsiologii NAN Ukrainy*, Yezhenedel'nik „2000”, No. 24.
- Ukaz Prezidenta (2017), *Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 17.07.2019 № 343 O vnese-nii izmeneniy v Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 29 aprelya 2019 g. № 187 “Ob otdel'nykh kategoriyyakh inostrannykh grazhdan i lits bez grazhdanstva, imeyushchikh pravo obratit'sya s zayavleniyami o priyeme v grazhdanstvo Rossiyskoy Federatsii v uproshchennom poriyadke”*, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201907170036> (30.12.2019).
- V shkolakh DNR i LNR (2015), *V shkolakh DNR i LNR vnedryayut rossiyskiye programmy*, <http://zavtra.ru/events/v-shkolah-dnr-i-lnr-vnedryat-rossijskie-programmyi> (09.07.2017).
- Vybory prezidenta Ukrayiny (2004), *Vybory prezidenta Ukrayiny*, <https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2004/wp0011> (25.06.2019).
- Vybory prezidenta Ukrayiny (2010), *Vybory prezidenta Ukrayiny*, <https://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2004/wp0011> (25.06.2019).
- Zakharov I., Kirillov D. (2017), *LNR i DNR perenapravili torgovlyu uglem s Ukrainy v Rossiyu*, [https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2017/03/06\\_a\\_10560857.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2017/03/06_a_10560857.shtml) (11.10.2018).

## ABSTRACT

The hypothesis of this research is that Russia has been imposing its influence on Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Before the political and military crisis in 2013, it was an indirect influence, whereas since 2014 it has been a direct impact in many spheres.

It is necessary to underline that Ukraine has always been split into two parts in terms of foreign policy priorities, language, religion, and culture. This fact was mentioned by Samuel Huntington, who predicted an intense crisis in bilateral relations between Russia and Ukraine in his work *Clash of Civilizations*. There were two parties in Ukraine that were widely supported in South-Eastern Ukraine, namely the Party of Regions and the Communist Party. The former never spoke about the integration of Ukraine as part of Russian integrational projects because its politicians were afraid of aggressive Russian capital. So they only used pro-Russian rhetoric to win elections. The Communist Party openly backed integration with Russia, but didn't get enough support as for this idea. It is also demonstrated that there were no parties that were backed financially by Russia, because the parties that offered a kind of a union with Russia never got any seats in the parliament.

Since 2014, Russia has been imposing its influence on Ukraine in various spheres, such as economics, politics, diplomacy, the military sphere, etc. Having signed two cease-fire agreements, Russia and Ukraine have failed to apply them and the crisis continues to this day.

**Keywords:** Russia, Ukraine, separatism, Donbass, rebellious, DPR, LPR

## ROSJA – ZEWNĘTRZNY CZYNNIK KONFLIKTU W DONBASIE

### STRESZCZENIE

W badaniu postawiono hipotezę mówiącą o wpływie wywieranym przez Rosję na Ukrainę od czasu rozpadu Związku Radzieckiego. Przed kryzysem polityczno-wojskowym w 2013 r. był to wpływ pośredni, a po 2014 r. przerodził się w wielu sferach we wpływ bezpośredni. Nale-

ży podkreślić, że ze względu na priorytety polityki zagranicznej, język, religię i kulturę Ukraina zawsze była podzielona na dwie części. Wspomniał o tym S. Huntington, który w swoim „Zderzeniu cywilizacji” przewidział intensywny kryzys w stosunkach dwustronnych między Rosją i Ukrainą. Na Ukrainie istniały dwie partie, które uzyskały szerokie poparcie w południowo-wschodniej Ukrainie, mianowicie Partia Regionów i Partia Komunistyczna. Partia Regionów nigdy nie mówiła o integracji Ukrainy w ramach rosyjskich projektów integracyjnych, ponieważ jej politycy obawiali się agresywnego kapitału Rosji. Aby wygrywać wybory posługiwali się jedynie retoryką prorosyjską. Partia Komunistyczna natomiast otwarcie popierała integrację z Rosją, ale nie uzyskała wystarczającego poparcia dla tego pomysłu. Udowodniono też, że żadne partie nie były wspierane finansowo przez Rosję, ponieważ partie, które oferowały coś w rodzaju unii z Rosją, nigdy nie uzyskały mandatów w parlamencie.

Od 2014 roku Rosja narzuca Ukrainie swoje wpływy w różnych sferach, takich jak ekonomia, polityka, dyplomacja, sfera wojskowa itp. Po podpisaniu dwóch porozumień o zawieszeniu broni Rosja i Ukraina nie zdołały ich zrealizować, wobec czego kryzys wciąż trwa.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rosja, Ukraina, separatyzm, Donbas, zbuntowany, DRL, LRL