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THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS IN THE YOUTH ESTIMATES OF THE BOUNDARY REGION (EVIDENCE FROM THE ROSTOV REGION)

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Abstract

The article describes the current stage of the development of Russian-Ukrainian relations. The authors describe the public opinion of the youth of the Rostov region bordering with Ukraine. Thus the scenario for the development of these relations depends on the image of Ukraine formed in the minds of young Russians. The article suggests a new methodological concept “transconflict region”. The authors use this concept to analyze the influence of the events occurring on the territory of Ukraine on the border regions of Russia (the example of the Rostov region).

Key words

Russian-Ukrainian relations, geopolitics, border region, transconflict region, Russian youth, public opinion.

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1. Introduction

Modern state of affairs of the Russian-Ukrainian relations is marked by systemic crisis because of geopolitical and culture-historical contradictions. Despite centuries-old experience of united national identity, cultural, language and religious proximity, Russian and Ukrainian political development pathway focus on mutual confrontation at the present day, and it is estimated by many experts as a hybrid war condition. At the same time Ukraine is the closest neighbor of Russia, and both political trends, and people social well-being on both sides of frontier depend on a configuration of the Russian-Ukrainian relations.

Anti-Russian and anti-Ukrainian preferences are formed on both sides hit chord with youth public attitudes, as unlike old-timers, Russian and Ukrainian citizens aged up to 25 years have no experience living within the confines of unified country with the ideologized system of socialization of new generations. Within this framework you must consider that from the youth attitude towards the prospects of the Russian-Ukrainian cooperation, from what image of Ukraine was created in consciousness of young Russians, the concrete scenario of development of these relations depends. Environmental risks of development of the Russian-Ukrainian relations stipulate nihilistic perception by the Ukrainian young people

living in Russia their ethnicity, that intensifies assimilatory trend of reproduction of the Russian regions population ethno cultural structure including border area. In general, the similar situation aggravates a civil and civilizational break between the population of Russia and Ukraine, and it is an ethnic segregation factor, guaranteed designing of anti-Russian model of the Ukrainian nation and grading supra-ethnic consolidation potential inside the Russian society. In the current situation, the Russian youngsters support an official political discourse concerning Ukraine, but at the same time, it is important to find out what trends are traced among young people, what estimates dominate in perception of the processes happening in Ukraine, and what young Russians seize room for normalization of the Russian-Ukrainian relations.

2. Methodology and sources of empirical information

The modern scientific discourse in regards to Russian-Ukrainian relations concentrates mainly around the political issues (the conflict in the Donbass, the Crimean issues, the Russian language status in Ukraine (Kulyk, 2016; Wanner, 2014), Ukrainian nationalism, anti-Ukrainian and pro-Ukrainian trends in Russian political sphere and at the international arena (Veebel, Markus, 2015), etc.

The works analyzing the evolution of Russian-Ukrainian relations in the post-Soviet period include the articles by A.G. Zdravomyslov (Здравомыслов, 1998), W. Zimmerman (1998), S.S. Zhiltsov (Жильцов, 2014a, 2014b), S.S. Zhiltsov et al. (Жильцов et al., 2010), N.P. Sidorova (Сидорова, 2000), A.V. Lysenkov (Лысенков, 2011) etc. There is an attempt to identify the origins of the 'Russian national homeland' outside Kyiv Rus as the first steps towards a revision of traditional Russian perceptions of Russian-Ukrainian relations. One point of view on this question is that the new trends have become particularly visible following the signing of the Russian-Ukrainian interstate treaty in May 1997, which is the important landmark in Russia's acceptance of the independence of Ukraine (Tolz, 2002; Moshes, 2000).

The current stage of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis is considered in the works by V.I. Pantin, V.V. Lapkin, A.V. Ryabov (Пантин, Лапкин, 2013, 2014, 2015; Лапкин et al., 2014), in which the construction of Ukrainian state-civil identity is analyzed. The authors distance from the Soviet past and Russian-Ukrainian cooperation in favor to the articulating contradictions and conflicts.

In this field some authors focus on the coercive and legitimate forms of power in Ukraine (Wanner, 2014). They describe the crisis of legitimacy in Ukraine as a contradiction between a system of capitalism dominated by a few oligarchs, and the remnants of a Soviet mentality. According to K.V. Korostelina (2013) two strategies are used by the Government to stoke the crisis. First, increased identification with ethnic or regional groups are instrumentally used by the Government to take attention from economic and class issues. Second, the incorporation of a Soviet meaning of power into the new national identity and presentation of it as core norms, beliefs, and values of the people of Ukraine competes with alternative Ukrainian identity concepts. As a result in Ukraine, the society has no identity of «us», no civic accountability, nor even any real interest in such matters. Civil society levels are very low, as reflected by limited opportunities for civic responsibility and participation and few demands from the society.

Other researches reveal that history education in Ukraine emphasises the idea of victimhood as the core of national identity and posits Russia as an oppressive and aggressive enemy. It provides a basis for an early warning and resolution of identity-based conflicts (Korostelina, 2011).

The publications by S.V. Kozlov and D.V. Bereznyakov (Березняков, Козлов, 2015; Козлов, 2012, 2014) examine the impact of Ukrainian public discourse, the exploitation of anti-Russian images in Ukraine's politics and media on the state of Russian-Ukrainian relations. The investigations of O.I. Vendina, V.A. Kolosov, F.A. Popov, A.B. Sebentsov (Вендина et al. 2014; Колосов, 2001), D.O. Bats (Бац, 2017) are made in a similar field. The authors argue that a sustainable transformation of the Ukrainian crisis requires an accurate analysis of the context of the conflict, which should include an understanding of Moscow's perception of the threats to its interests. This policy brief develops a theoretical understanding of the Ukrainian crisis through the lens of Stephen M. Walt's balance of threat theory (Bock et al., 2015).

There is a point of view that Ukrainophobic and anti-Western xenophobic propaganda is spewed in Russia. The authors show how the growth of Russian nationalism, 'conservative values' and anti (Ukrainian) nationalism has taken place during specific periods of history (Kuzio, 2016).

Recent events have led to a great deal of speculation about Russia's objectives and their implications for European security. The authors examine Russian intentions by means of an analysis both of official rhetoric and of Russia's actions in Donbass (Kuzio, 2015; Mitrokhin, 2014, 2015). The point is

that concludes that far from instigating the rebellion in Donbass and using it to destabilise Ukraine, revise the international order, or seize additional territory, Moscow has largely been reacting to events and trying to gain some control of a process which was originally almost entirely outside of its control (Wilson, 2015). Its primary aim has been to get the Ukrainian government to negotiate directly with the rebels, in order to produce a permanent peace settlement based upon some form of special status for Donbass within Ukraine. It has also used its influence over the rebels in order to persuade them to cooperate with the peace process set up at Minsk. The researchers conclude that Russia's objectives are very limited, and do not pose a serious threat to European security as a whole (Robinson, 2016).

In the discourse about the Ukrainian crisis much attention has focused on the use of military forces without country or unit insignia, a crucial part of this operation involved a complex and multilayered perception management campaign to advance a self-interested narrative, which defined the contours of debate, justified their actions at home and abroad, and provided those actions with legal and normative legitimacy. The authors define Kremlin's rhetoric in three areas: Crimea's secession from Ukraine was a legal act of self-determination; Russia possesses justifiable historical, cultural, and legal claims to Crimea; and, Western criticism of Russia's actions are dishonest and a reflection of their anti-Russian, Cold War mentality (Ambrosio, 2016).

Russia's foreign policy decisions towards Ukraine in the context of the "Ukraine crisis" have been portrayed largely in a negative light which crudely paints Russia's actions as being imperialistic, evil and largely irrational. Though on the other hand, Russia's actions in Ukraine can be, to some degree, rationalized. First, Russia's Eurasian-oriented great power role identity and its perceptions of Ukraine as represent a vital national interest. Second, the European Union and the United States are perceived as embodying a Western team of anti-Russian imperialists, which led Moscow to pursue hazardous foreign policies (Smith, 2017).

Also the interpretation of the Donbass conflict is highly controversial – not only in Ukraine, but also among external observers. Two theses are represented particularly prominent: First, the conflict is characterized as a prime example of a "hybrid war"; secondly, based on the perspective of geopolitics, the war is interpreted as the result of competitive, hegemonic claims of the West and Russia. However, both theories operate with a steering and control imperative which reduces the role of local actors and their agendas to dependent variables of great

powers (Auer, 2015; Bezruk, Umland, 2015). U. Schnecker (2016) claims that the external actors to a much greater extent are driven by local conflict dynamics than both theses would admit.

In general, most publications devoted to Russian-Ukrainian relations are considered in the context of elitological and institutional approaches. They are determined by the public discourse on this issue in Ukraine and to a lesser extent in Russia. The analysis reveals a certain vacuum in the sociological diagnosis of the transfer of the interstate relations between Russia and Ukraine on the public opinion of Russians against Ukrainians and the neighboring state as a whole. Moreover, this kind of research in the youth environment is urgent, since this demographic group lacks the experience of living together with Ukrainians in a single state. The youth has a lesser degree of blood-family ties with the population of Ukraine and is most susceptible to the manipulative impact of the negative information space about Russian-Ukrainian relations in the past and present.

The authors use the sociological concept of structuralism as the methodological basis of the research. According to this concept, social and cultural phenomena do not have an independent substantial nature, but are determined by their internal structure and system of relations with other phenomena in particular social and cultural systems. The marginal status of the youth as the most surveyed socio-demographic, social and cultural community is the internal structural factor that determines the perception of Russian-Ukrainian relations by the youth. The modern social and political discourse framing the relations between Russia and Ukraine act as an external catalyst for the assessments and images.

Along with the sociological concept of structuralism, the theoretical model of transconflict region is used in the methodology of the study. The authors consider the transconflict region as a non-stationary, unstable regional unit characterized by the destructive internal potential, that is actualized by an external source of conflict (a region with an active conflict). In this case the prefix "trans-" reflects the immanent feature of such regions: (1) they can dissect the space of regional target units by the formed external conflict area with a significant potential for destruction and disintegration; non-stationary regional entities with increased conflict can appear in this space; and/or (2) they can have the indirect influence on the regional unit, located even beyond the main focus of the conflict (the influence in the form of increased flows of migrants, institutional constraints, barriers, etc.). The transconflict regions have a clear internal structure: a stable core of the conflict (where the main focus of the conflict is

concentrated) and an unstable periphery area that contains the fading conflict impulses (for example, the border region of the southeast of Ukraine and the south-west of Russia).

The concept of the transconflict region determines the geographical boundaries of the study that include the territory of the border subject on the south-western borders of Russia – the Rostov region. This region is the most close to the zone of armed conflict in the east of Donbass. It adopted several tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees in the period of 2014–2016 years. The population of the Rostov region traditionally has the extensive family and relative ties with the Ukrainian population, the borderline type of language and culture, an ambivalent form of ethno-regional identity, expressed by such endo-and exoethnonym as “Khokhol.” The assessments of Russian-Ukrainian relations by the population of the Rostov region is indicative due to the fact that living in the immediate vicinity of the Ukrainian zone of armed conflict, they perceived the events in the Donbass not only from the information channels, but also from direct eyewitness account.

The empirical basis of the research includes several sources of information:

The data of the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, which characterize the national composition of the population of the Rostov region according to the results of the 1989, 2002 and 2010 censuses, and the migration dynamics of the population in the region for the period from 2010 till 2016.

The data of migration registration and appeals of Ukrainian citizens to the migration and social services of the Rostov region for the obtaining of the refugee status, material or other assistance from the Russian Federation.

The results of a sociological survey of the youth in the Rostov region, conducted in June–August 2017, using a standardized questionnaire interview. The sample size is 950 respondents. Only the stationary population of the region aged between 18 and 25 are questioned. The territorial coverage of the sample is Rostov-on-Don and 8 municipalities of the Rostov region. The multistage stratified sample (type of settlement, territory, sex, age, level of education) ensures the representativeness of the research procedures.

3. Results

In the framework of the study, the respondents were asked about the key issues of Russian-Ukrainian relations: the causes of the current conflict, the

prospects for normalizing the relations, the opportunities for cross-border cultural and economic exchange, the impact of Russian-Ukrainian relations on the formation of civil-patriotic youth orientations. According to the developed research construct and the results of its approbation, it can be said that the youth evaluations of events that caused a new turn in Russian-Ukrainian relations are noteworthy. It is significant that 54.9% of the respondents estimate the reunification of Crimea with Russia as an event that had equally positive and negative consequences. This change in the initial patriotic and pathetic evaluations of reunification of Crimea is explained not only and not so much by the consequences of Western sanctions policy towards Russia, but rather by an awareness of the complexity and scale of the tasks to ensure the transport, food, energy security of the peninsula, and by the changes in the attitudes to the reunification with Russia among the residents of Crimea. At the same time, 13.4% of the respondents have negative view on the reunification process. It can be explained not only with the decline of the “Crimean euphoria” and the pragmatically rational calculation of the Crimean reintegration consequences, but also with the influence of the hybrid war that is massively conducted against Russia. For most of the respondents, the position of “balanced patriotism” is typical. It means that the respondents understand that the Crimean question unites the Russian society, that an effective reaction to external pressure is social and economic growth, the solution of structural and institutional problems in the economy, social sphere of life and politics.

An important point is that the respondents separate the problems of Crimea, as a Russian region, from the Russian-Ukrainian relations. The key aspect here is that the respondents view the Crimea as a returned Russian territory. This conclusion is consistent with the results of the all-Russian study “Russian Society and Challenges of The Time”. The youth of the Rostov region agree that this event was of great importance for the actualization of patriotic values, the strengthening of faith in the constructive forces of Russian society, in the upholding of the right to have independence and sovereignty. In this view, the reunification of the Crimea could become a driver of social and socio-cultural modernization, positively influenced the development of the region on the basis of the formation of new directions for economic and cultural cooperation. Negative and limiting effect is caused by the skeptical assessment of the situation in the country as a whole (changes for the worse are recognized by 31% of the respondents, and 26.2% note significant changes for the worse). It is obvious that such opinion of young

people is determined by the growth of the influence of internal challenges related to economic crisis, the fall in living standards and the narrowing of the window of opportunity for young people in the sphere of professional and career facilities (Tab. 1).

Thus, the patriotic impetus given by the reintegration of the Crimea, has a certain decline, it is fixed in the idea that "Crimea is a Russian region and can not be a subject of political bargaining". In this sense, the youth of the region shares the view on the events of 2014 that prevails in the whole Russian society. Touching upon the problem of Russian-Ukrainian relations, which is increasingly being considered in isolation from the problem of the Crimea, it can be stated that for the youth of the Rostov region, the influence of the Ukrainian factor appears only in 2014. It can be explained by the fact that before this period the Ukrainian question did not take the priority positions in the sentiments of the younger generation. The increase of the interest in the Russian-Ukrainian relations was also caused by the information activity, including the Internet, real facts of migration from the Ukrainian borderland and a sharp reduction in humanitarian (family) contacts.

Despite the fact that until 2014 the prevailed attitudes in the relations between Russians and Ukrainians were mainly positive and not leveled by the events of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, Russia has established a fairly stable assimilation trend in the reproduction of the Ukrainian community. Thus, in the border Rostov region many Ukrainians change their ethnic identity in favor of Russian identity. It is one of the main sources of demographic increase of Russians in the population structure. The number of Ukrainians in the post-Soviet period

decreased, and the results of such cuts were several times higher than the gross regional indicators of negative natural growth and migration outflow. Between 1989 and 2002, the number of Ukrainians in the population of the Rostov region decreased by 33.7% (from 178,803 to 118,486 people), then by another 34.3% and finally in 2010 it reached the amount of 77,802 people (Tab. 2). As a result, Ukrainians lost their traditional second position in the ethno-demographic structure of the population of the Rostov region, moving to the third place. In general, their demographic reproduction was characterized by the largest negative indicator, both in the Rostov region and in other regions in the South of Russia.

There are several reasons for the intensive assimilation of Ukrainians in the Rostov region. First is that children born in Russian-Ukrainian marriage accept Russian identity because it is the ethnic majority identity of their region of residence. Moreover, the spouses do not perceive such marriages as interethnic due to the fact that the Russian language is recognized as the native language of both spouses and also due to the absence of any ethno-cultural distance between them. Second reason is that in Soviet times the maintenance of the Ukrainian identity, especially in the cross-border, cross-cultural regions, was artificial. It served as an illustration of the Soviet ideologue about the brotherhood and equality of all the peoples of the USSR and the creation of all necessary conditions for preserving and developing their national culture. The deactualization of the ideological factor has become one of the main reasons for the change of the identity. Moreover, the very ethnic identity of Ukrainians in the South

Tab. 1. How do you assess the changes occurred in Russia over the past three years (2014–2017)? (%)

The significant changes for the better have been occurred	2.8
Some changes for the better have been occurred	24.6
Some changes for the worse have been occurred	31.0
The significant changes for the worse have been occurred	26.2
No changes have been occurred	7.7
Notsure	7.7

Source: Own studies.

Tab. 2. The dynamics of the number of Ukrainians in the population of the South of Russia (the results of the 1989, 2002 and 2010 censuses)

Constituent entity of the Russian Federation	1989	2002	2010
The Krasnodar territory	195,883	131,774	83,746
The Stavropol territory	69,189	45,892	30,373
The Rostov region	178,803	118,486	77,802

Source: Official website of the All-Russian Population Census 2010: http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

of Russia was mainly of an assigned type and it was not reproduced by the real ethnocultural practices of everyday level.

At the present time, the tendency to reject the Ukrainian identity has increased. It is provoked by the modern nature of the international relations development between Russia and Ukraine and by the retransmission of negative ethnic stereotypes towards Ukrainians, Ukrainian language and Ukrainian national culture in the Mass Media. According to the results of the monitoring sociological surveys among the population of the Rostov region in 2015, 8% of the respondents have negative attitudes to the representatives of Ukrainian nationality, while in 2016 the level of Ukrainophobia among the population increased to 12%; the results correlate with the all-Russian data (11 in 2015 and 14% in 2016). At the same time, the insignificant growth of Ukrainophobia allows us to predict the increase of the assimilation trend in the demographic reproduction of Ukrainians in the Rostov region and in Russia as a whole. It is explained by the fact that the level of mass consciousness, Ukrainian identity is often associated with the geopolitical orientations of its subjects.

The migration factor is one of the factors that strengthen the anti-Ukrainian sentiments among the population of the region and in Russia as a whole. The wave of stressful migration from Ukraine to Russia determined the presence of several hundred thousand Ukrainian refugees in the Russian regions. At the same time, the public opinion trend towards the settlers from the conflict regions of Ukraine moved rather quickly from the pole of the need to

help the needy former compatriots to a defensive model of the perception of new flows of migrants as the competitors in the labor market, the factor of the deterioration of criminal situation, additional burden for the regional budgets in terms of economic recession. By the end of the active phase of fighting in the Donbass (June 2016) in the Rostov region more than 25 thousand citizens of Ukraine were accommodated, more than 11 thousand of them were employed in the region (Tab. 3). The return migration by July 2017 was 32%. The data testifies certain mythologization of the migration factor, which due to the objective parameters is not able to change the situation on the labor market or social sphere in the regionsignificantly. The annual balance of Russian-Ukrainian migration in the pre-conflict period was about 3.5 thousand people, which did not cause any outbreaks of anti-Ukrainian sentiment in the regional society. The modern growth of Ukrainian migrant-phobia in the region is caused by a distorted perception of the media's information tape by the public opinion and occasional experience meeting the Ukrainian refugees at the railway stations, social and medical centers.

The overwhelming majority of youth respondents (more than 90%) characterize Russian-Ukrainian relations as tense and hostile. We can say that the young people do not consider the relations lost, but representing a potential threat to the interests of stability and security of Russia (Tab. 4).

In general, the young Russians take a restrained position: they realize that in Ukraine the anti-Russian government has been established and that the situation in the country is developing according to the

Tab. 3. The dynamics of the migratory population growth in the South of Russia due to the Ukrainian citizens in 2012–2016 years

Constituent entity of the Russian Federation	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The Krasnodar territory	1,024	1,003	5,698	8,454	4,167
The Stavropol territory	1,069	1,122	4,342	4,465	3,153
The Rostov region	1,028	1,443	4,189	6,238	3,874

Source: The official statistics of the Stavropol territory, the Krasnodar territory and the Rostov region (2012–2016).

Tab. 4. How do you assess the current relationship between Russia and Ukraine? (%)

Strained relations	50.0
Adverserelations	40.8
Stand-offrelations	4.9
Friendlyrelations	0.0
Neighborlyrelations	0.7
Goodfellowship	0.0
Neutralityrelations	2.9
Notsure	0.7

Source: Own studies.

negative scenario for the Russian-Ukrainian relations; young people express sympathy for the Donbass inhabitants (45.2%). At the same time, more than 40% do not welcome the violent outcome of the events and would like to reduce the suffering of ordinary people; they believe that Russian state structures should pay more attention to the humanitarian aspects (help the refugees from Ukraine). At the same time, the level of civic activity, where young people could demonstrate the experience of volunteering, does not exceed 17.6%. The youth, demonstrating support to the state policy of the Russian Federation in relation to Ukraine, is oriented to the sympathetic waiting at the level of humanitarian contacts and in the interpersonal sphere (Tab. 5).

Thus, the respondents are oriented toward the future normalization of the Russian-Ukrainian relations; under current conditions they name among the priorities the creating the conditions for the integration of migrants from Ukraine into Russian society, peaceful outcome of the conflict in the Donbass and in general a soft power in influencing the domestic political situation in Ukraine (diplomatic, political, economic sanctions). We can state that the youth of the Rostov region assesses Russian-Ukrainian relations within the framework of the consolidated position on the Crimean issue. They recognize that the events in Ukraine are developing under a negative scenario, express the expectations of the restoring peace and harmony in Ukraine, returning to neighborliness relations with Russia, preservation and expansion of cooperation with the border Donbass region, or as an autonomy within Ukraine (15.5%), or as an unrecognized state, (the experience of Transnistria).

We can say that the state of Russian-Ukrainian relations is assessed in the context of civil-patriotic feelings, the approval of Russian government policy concerning Ukraine. At the same time, most of young people are not ready to participate in the implementation of programs for restoring neighborliness and cooperation; they choose the position of symbolic support. According to the research, the young people perceive Russian-Ukrainian relations through the lens of loyalty as the sphere of responsibility of the state and regional authorities with the approval of the youth. Thus, there is a certain gap between civil patriotism, as a public discourse, and the algorithms of everyday activities.

Noting that the distribution of youth responses demonstrates the absence of significant discrepancies with other age groups, it is possible to identify the accents and meanings typical for young people. First, the negative impact of the conflict in Ukraine on certain aspects of life in the Rostov region is recognized in the youth circles (55.6%) (Tab. 6).

More precisely, it affects the sphere of employment of young people, increasing the competition in the labor market, housing market. This opinion is partly the result of the rumors about the granting of privileges to refugees from Ukraine. Thus there is a worth noting moment that long-term integration programs for the hosting of compatriots are not being implemented in the region. In addition, for the young residents of the Rostov region, there is considerable concern about the growth of crime related to the risks of uncontrolled migration and ammunition trafficking. It is obvious that the conflict in Ukraine has a negative impact and in the reduction of ties with European youth structures that under the political pressure began to scrap the programs

Tab. 5. Attitude towards the refugees from Ukraine (%)

Sympathize and ready to help	17.6
Sympathize, but the help should be provided by the relevant bodies	35.2
Neutral, without sympathy, but without dislike	32.4
With the hostility, it is necessary to restrict their entry to the region	9.2
Notsure	5.6

Source: Own studies.

Tab. 6. How do you assess the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the development of the Rostov region? (%)

The Rostov region has received a new positive impulse to the development	6.3
These events did not affect the Rostov region development	23.3
The conflict in Ukraine had a negative impact on certain aspects of life in the Rostov region	55.6
The Rostov region has been seriously affected by the conflict in Ukraine	4.2
Notsure	10.6

Source: Own studies.

Tab. 7. How do you assess the impact of Ukrainian conflict on various aspects of life of the population of the Rostov region? (%)

	Got better	Remained unchanged	Got worse	Notsure
Material situation of the Rostov region population	2.8	41.5	42.3	13.4
Rising of the prices for food products, housing services, etc.	2.1	23.2	62.7	12.0
Safety of the population, threats to life and health	8.5	33.8	47.8	9.9
Social tension in the society	2.8	23.3	69.0	4.9
Labour situation, competition for job positions	5.6	21.1	62.0	11.3
Access to regional universities / colleges	4.9	35.9	50.0	9.2
Transport and road problems in the region	3.5	57.7	26.1	12.7
Crime situation in the region	4.2	42.3	37.3	16.2
Property value, possibility for buying / renting a house	4.2	49.4	23.2	23.2
Visiting relatives / friends in Ukraine	4.9	2.8	76.1	16.2
Traveling to Ukraine	4.2	4.2	81.0	10.6

Source: Own studies.

of professional and educational cooperation with regional educational structures (Table 7).

Another important factor is the reduction of the opportunities for recreation, for visiting relatives, which is noted by the overwhelming majority of respondents. Speaking about the indicators of social tension in the society, the growth of prices for goods and services, we can state the modality of these problems, which little depend on the state of Russian-Ukrainian relations. Granting benefits to graduates of schools in Crimea and Donbass in the provision of the access to educational resources caused certain tension in 2014–2015. Nowadays the source of tension has disappeared and the state of Russian-Ukrainian relations is perceived as an external systemic challenge that does not have a significant impact on the life strategies of young people. At the same time, young people share the optimistic scenario expectations, if Russian-Ukrainian relations can not be restored to the full extent, then Ukraine will not stay an actor of anti-Russian politics. However, the respondents note that the key aspect in solving the Ukrainian problem lays in the greater extent outside of Ukraine. In this context it is clear that the external forces are interested in maintaining the status of Ukraine as an anti-Russian state, a constant source of tension on Russian borders.

4. Discussions

In general, the youth of the Rostov region assesses the prospects for the normalization of Russian-Ukrainian relations very restrainedly. In public perception of Russian-Ukrainian relations there is a tendency, which can be characterized as the

normalization of risks. Young people accept the life in a conflict, contradictory world as natural, and that Russian society has entered a complicated stage of international development. The future of Russian-Ukrainian relations is determined by the extent of solving the internal social and economic problems, leveling the interregional differences, improving the socio-psychological climate in Russian society and growing of the institutional trust. We can assume that for young people the prospect of a positive scenario for the development of Russian-Ukrainian relations is related to the growing prestige and attractiveness of Russia as a state with sufficient military and political power, implementing a project of rapid modernization within the framework of integration in the Eurasian space.

Social structures of youth subjectivity in the transboundary conflict region are characterized by the sustainable dispositions, assessing Ukraine as the nearest neighbor, but with an independent trajectory of development. In youth social sentiments the stereotypes of a friendly people, "Bandera nationalism", Ukrainian "nativism" take an important place. We can state that the schemes for reconciliation of Ukraine by the youth are conditioned by the notions of a society, perceived "as a close other". The fact that Russian-Ukrainian relations are evaluated by young people in the context of everyday practices forms the condition of static assessments. At the same time, we can say that changes in Russian-Ukrainian relations have created a new image of Ukraine – the state in which an unconstitutional coup took place, anti-Russian forces, oriented toward the implementation of the European integration project came to power. From this point of view, the state of Russian-Ukrainian relations is considered

as an external challenge that has negative consequences for the youth.

There are several criteria in youth perception of the state and prospects of Russian-Ukrainian relations. They can be qualified as objective (view on political, socio-political and socio-economic consequences), subjective (influence on personal plans and strategies), symbolic (images of Ukraine and Ukrainian society). These criteria are important in the occupying of social positions by young people, in their integration into society, in the process of political socialization. The youth of the border region is oriented towards supporting and approving the activity of power structures in the implementation of Russian policy in Ukraine. We should emphasize that there are differences between the correlation between the socialization process to the Russian-Ukrainian problems and the level of youth readiness to become a group of social and civic activity in terms of these events. It is obvious that the events surrounding Russian-Ukrainian relations have determined the patriotic mobilization of young people, but at the same time, they have not created a field of common interests for coming on board of consolidating the among young people within existing public and political associations.

In order to obtain the reliable results, it is necessary to distinguish young people's evaluations of the changes that have occurred in Russia in current terms and the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the development of the border region. It is important for several reasons. First of all, it helps to determine the opinion of young people regarding the development of Russian society, which since the mid-1990s has been going in a different scenario in comparison with Ukraine. Second reason is connected with the understanding that the Rostov region, as a border region, is focused to a greater extent on Russian-Ukrainian relations at the level of local, humanitarian and socio-economic contacts, tightly integrated Russian interregional and intra-regional ties. Thirdly, the evaluation of Russian-Ukrainian relations by young people, in comparison with older generations, is not overburden by the memories of Soviet heritage and contains actuality and pragmatic meanings. Fourth, the attitudes of the youth were affected by the state of "sentimentality" in Russian society, which naturally followed the patriotic effect of the reintegration of Crimea in 2014.

5. Conclusions

In light of the foregoing it is possible to make the following conclusions. First, the attitude of the Rostov region youth to the Russian-Ukrainian relations demands studying structural, subjective-pragmatist (motivational and estimated) youth characteristics

as sociocultural and socioage group. Peculiarity of young people position concerning Russian-Ukrainian relations fixes lack of influence of the Soviet heritage, weak peek into a public discourse of the Ukrainian society and shift of Ukraine perceptual schemes to the sphere of family related and humanitarian contacts.

Secondly, status assessment of the Russian-Ukrainian relations by youth is characterized as intense or negative that coincides with a position of other age groups and testifies to a position of civil solidarity. The way of youth estimates of a situation in the Russian-Ukrainian relations is what the emphasis on symbolical loyalty, on approval of the state policy, the regional authorities, but at the same time weak orientation in volunteer initiatives for neutralization of negative consequences of crisis in the Russian-Ukrainian relations is prolonged.

Thirdly, the youth of the Rostov region is primed in medium-term measurement for normalization of the Russian-Ukrainian relations; moreover there has been reproduction of the Ukraine status as the anti-Russian state policy from outside the interested external forces. However, it can be said that more opportunities of the Russian-Ukrainian relations move towards the solution of internal problems, strengthening of political and economic Russia sovereignty, possibilities of the effective answer to the policy of economic warfare and sanctions against Russia which has become a trend.

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