

RELIGION AS RUSSIA'S SOFT POWER TOOL IN THE DONBAS SEPARATISM PROCESS

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Abstract

The article is devoted to such a pressing problem as separatism, mainly in Ukraine (Donbas region). Some experts say that separatism is a problem of the past, but the author emphasises that the XXIst century will be the century of an identification factor increase that will influence nationalistic issues. It is emphasised that separatism could be catalysed not only by domestic factors but also by exogenous ones, especially nowadays, when the structure of the world is being changed by influential actors in foreign affairs. The article contains an analysis of the reasons for military conflict that broke out in 2014 in the Donbas region and still goes on. The author analyses the exogenous influence of the Russian Federation on the political situation in Ukraine. The analysis covers Russian influence on politics, economy, culture and religion in Ukraine. Besides, for the first time in the Political Science field, the author presents a separatism revealing formula that can help central governments foresee and prevent possible separatism conflicts in future.

Key words: *separatism, Donbas, Ukraine, Russia, religion*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world is in a state of permanent transformation. It started in the 1980s and has gone at least three stages. The first stage, relatively peaceful, is characterised by a bipolar system collapse. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia led not only to the appearance of new states on the geopolitical map, some of which have not succeeded in their political and economic development, but also led to the rise of ethnic clashes, characterised by unprecedented levels of violence and cruelty against civilians. This period lasted from 1989 till 2007m and was characterised by the unilateral power of the USA. It is necessary to point out that the process of the USSR collapse has not yet finished, and it can be seen by the conflicts in Ukraine and Nagorny Karabakh.

The second phase started in 2007 when the Russian president V.Putin alleged at the Munich security conference that it is impossible for one country only to rule the whole planet. It was the end of the unilateral system of international relations after which several states started to increase their influence at a regional level, such as Germany, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, Brazil etc. In addition, the new regionalism stimulated the formation of new regional organizations and new forms of organisations such as BRICS.

The third phase, which started in 2011 and has lasted till the present moment, could be entitled *ultraconflictious* and is characterised by radical change of political regimes, borders and the appearance of failed states.

The last decade has been characterised by really serious challenges to regional and world security and such events as the Arab spring, the Ukrainian crisis, the rise of ISIS, and COVID-19 outlined the current global crisis.

This global crisis consists of three aspects: financial, geopolitical and health related. The first type, which is the financial one, shows that there is a huge gap between the richest countries and the poorest ones and this gap keeps on widening. According to the World's richest and poorest countries index, the total GDP of the first five countries is 106 times higher than total GDP of the last five countries from this list [The world's richest and poorest countries. 2021]. It shows the crisis of the current capitalistic system that was emphasised by Klaus Martin Schwab at the Davos Economic Forum in 2021. All the reasons according to which some countries prosper and some fail, have been described in "Why nations fail" by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson [Acemoglu D., Robinson J. 2021].

The second crisis is geopolitical and geoeconomic at the same time. The relations between the USA and Russia are considered to be Cold War 2.0 after the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 and it is really so, because nowadays we could see a deep political crisis between Russia and the collective West at the present time, especially after the US announced some Russian envoys as persona non-grata in May 2021. But Russia is not an enemy for the West because it has no geopolitical priorities to wage a war against the West. The second rival of the USA is China and it could be considered to

be a real geopolitical competitor because it acts in an economic sphere that is much more powerful than its political aspect. Besides, we can see that China has a powerful image in the world because it does not use military power in conquering the world, it uses economic and financial tools and countries which China invests in are really satisfied and are ready to support it. In its Interim National Security Strategy that was published in March 2021, the White House named Russia and China as the major threats to American power in the world [Interim National Security Strategy]. In June 2021, Jens Stoltenberg announced that close cooperation between Russia and China is a real challenge for NATO [Remarks by NATO. 2021]. So we can see that the geoeconomic crisis is deepening amid the really huge humanitarian crisis that is the COVID-19 pandemic.

All the three above-mentioned countries, the USA, Russia and China, try to attract as many satellites as possible.

If the former states use both soft and hard power, the latter one uses mainly soft power, but in the situation with Taiwan there is a high probability that military hostilities could take place. Besides soft and hard power, there is smart power that presupposes usage of both types, but nowadays experts already speak about sharp power which means using propaganda in their international relations. According to the Soft Power Nations Index 2021, the USA holds 6th place, Russia – the 13th, China – the 8th [Soft Power Nations Index 2021. 2021]. So we can see that soft power is used in their foreign policy in addition to hard power.

Nowadays Russia is in the epicentre of events, based on its involvement in the Ukrainian crisis, diplomatic scandals in May 2021, its active policy in the Middle East, Nord Stream – 2 constructions and the spies' scandals.

Post-Soviet space had become an epicentre of ethnic, religious and nationalistic conflicts at the beginning of the Soviet Union collapse process. The republics were struggling for independence and, when they gained it, we could observe the second wave of separatism conflicts when regions in these republics inhabited by ethnic minorities started to rebel to gain more rights, autonomy or independence. By 2000 almost all conflicts had finished or became frozen ones. We could then observe the third wave of ethnic conflicts in the post-Soviet space and they were caused by geopolitical interests. Taking into account that all the former soviet republics are under the geopolitical, economic and humanitarian influence of the Russian federation, there is the desire of influential geopolitical actors to make them less dependent on Russia. They succeeded to some degree and this activity stimulated long-term conflicts. The biggest one is in the Donbas region that has been going on since 2014. People in Russia and Ukraine have been and are still alike because they have a similar history, the same language, religion, customs and traditions. But within the last 15 years much has been done to make people of both countries as different as possible. New religious and historical holidays have been introduced in order to replace those which unite two peoples. In all aspects of society life the Ukrainian language has been im-

posed as the only one, violating the rights of the Russian minority that consists of 8 million people. Religion is a major issue of ethnic differentiation and divisiveness in this region.

Ted Gurr, one of the most brilliant experts on ethnic conflicts, believes that the contemporary world is in the state of the end of the third wave of separatism that gives him the right to say that separatism conflicts based on ethnicity will take place very seldom [Gurr T. 1993: 45]. In the author's opinion the world is in the state of the final stage of international security architecture construction due to which not only each state but also each ethnos must decide which role it wants to play in future international affairs. It can influence the stability of any country because ethnic minorities can have different opinions as regards the priorities of the foreign policy direction of the country. A good example is Ukraine in which the society has been divided for 30 years into two groups, one of them believes that Ukraine should integrate into EU and NATO and the latter considers close cooperation with Russia as the most beneficial foreign policy direction. Ukraine is a good example of a limitroff state. It means that geographically this state is located between Europe and Euroasia, politically it lies between the EU and the Eurasian economic union, it lies military between NATO and CSTO and lies religiously between the Catholic and Orthodox world. This brings a lot of problems to Ukraine because, according to S.Huntington, it is divided civilisationally and will never develop as one united state.

Ukraine has common borders with EU countries and Russia who are two antagonists in the geopolitical world. The West and Russia have always tried to influence Ukraine and use it their own way. Such politics has led to one of the cruel military conflicts of the XXI century. So the main objective of this article is to consider religion as an exogenous influence factor of the Russian Federation on Ukraine in terms of its soft power policy.

This article has become the logical outcome of the author's research of the separatism topic that has been conducted by him for more than 10 years. The second main point about this article is the formula that was developed by the author that could be used in political science to analyse ongoing separatism conflicts and predict future ones. The author uses the method of historical and political analysis that helped him to come to certain conclusions.

1.SEPARATISM FORMULA

It is really important to be familiar with the definitions that describe the processes of disintegration. The most complicated case for politicians who speculate on the topic of separatism is the difference between such phenomena as "separatism" and "secession". As for secession, it should be noted that it is the movement or fight of a certain region for leaving the state. Separatism could mean the same, i.e it is a movement for territorial secession of this or that part of the country with the purpose of forming a new state or gaining a wider range of rights or autonomy.

There are different opinions for the basic reasons for separatism. Katharine Boyle and Pierre Englebert, the authors of the work “The Primacy of Politics in Separatist Dynamics”, see separatism as a response to political conditions rather than a manifestation of cultural differences or the exploitation of economic opportunities [Boyle K., Englebert P. 2006]. It is the political component that is considered to be the only area within which it is possible to attract attention, if necessary, even aggressively. It is impossible for an ethnos to attract attention by holding cultural events, and if the cultural identity is politicised, it is possible not only to draw attention to their problems, but also to undertake an opposition campaign against the central government. The authors of this research also note that the younger the country is, the more opportunities there are for separatism movements, as the country is in the stage of development and formation of its nation. This is due to the fact that if a country is not homogeneous in the national sense, there are many opportunities when a particular ethnic group wants to impose on the whole country a model of society development, although, in most cases, the proposed model is not always true. In the case where there are several ethnic groups in the country that believe that their model is correct, or prefer not to accept a situation where their opinion is not considered or, in general, openly become opposed to the state, such an ethnic group that lives in this or that region, is prone to separatism in order to build the country on the model they believe is true. During the formation of the country, the authorities are not able to unite the population living in the country, because each ethnic group has or insists on its own vision of the country's development. Such a striking example is the situation in Ukraine.

In addition, it should be noted that the larger the country is, the greater the chances that the country will be torn apart by separatism tendencies [Boyle K., Englebert P. 2006]. This thesis has a right to exist, because there is no example where a large country would have representatives of only one ethnic group. Considering the fact that the world after the Second World War, namely the territory of Europe, was divided between the victorious countries without regard to the residence of a particular ethnic group, we have a situation where peoples were divided and now live in different countries, which gives them the right to reunite within one country and to provoke the processes of irredentism.

The political regime is also decisive for the degree of activity of separatist currents. Democratic or authoritarian regimes are relatively peaceful, while transitional regimes face separatism much more often.

The process of democratisation and economic transformation leads to the aggravation of ethnic identity. This thesis has a right to exist, because in any democratic society, especially if it was previously totalitarian, there is a process of revival of ethnic identity and, if members of an ethnic group are repressed, they begin to separate from the whole nation and begin to revive different traditions, rites, their language and their interpretation of historical events. This is also due to the fact that in a so-

ciety that is in a state of ideological, political and economic transformation, there are many problems and the ethnic group begins to believe that regardless of the country in which they live, it is possible to solve any problem.

The authors also insist that the poorer the region, the more prone it is to separatism. This is not an axiom, because we know that the more developed Northern Italy prefers independence from the economically backward South. In addition, affluent Catalonia believes that it itself has the ability to resolve issues today.

R.Stavenhagen in his work "Ethnic conflicts and their impact on international society" points out that separatism or ethnic conflicts include conflicts of interest or the struggle for rights: the right to land, education, language use, and political participation, freedom of religion, preservation of ethnic identity, autonomy and self-determination [Stavenhagen R. 1998].

It should be pointed out that secession is the final step on the way to independence, whereas it is preceded by a separatism movement that, in its turn, may contain such processes as regionalism.

In the author's opinion regionalism is a kind of policy that prioritises providing people of a certain region with socio-political, economic, mental, cultural, linguistic and other interests that are endangered by the specifics of historical development. On the one hand regionalism could be considered as positive phenomenon because it helps certain groups of people preserve their customs and traditions, but on the other hand it can work as a catalyst for separatist and secessionist movements.

Furthermore, there is a trend of protecting ethnic identity that creates an additional demand for separatism. Ethnic or regional identity can be capitalised upon by political and business groups for private gain. In this case this type of separatism demands are initiated by a certain regional community that could not be considered to be a separate ethnic group [Basarab M. 2011:278].

This idea is supported by M.Weber who said that any collective regional community can gain the features of an ethnic community. In such a way a micronation can appear [Kara-Murza S. 2016:136]. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, political experts (F.Fukuyama) said that there was no reason for people to fight with each other. But he turned out to be wrong considering the great number of violent conflicts that broke out in the territory of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, in Africa and Asia. In the author's opinion the basic reason is that ideological wars were replaced by identification wars. Identity is the basic and prime factor that influences people's behaviour. All the wars are held to control natural resources but hostilities could be instigated by identity factors. People kill each other just because they belong to different ethnic, religious and language groups. If people live on some territory that differs somehow from the rest of the country, it can develop a special regional identity even if representatives of various ethnic groups live in this or that region.

This idea can be applied to the situation in the Donbas region. Ukrainian politicians insist that it is not a civil war that is going on in the region because the Donbas region

consists not only of Russians, but also of Ukrainians and they prefer to call it a war between Ukraine and Russia, though neither Ukraine nor Russia have declared a war on each other. However, the fact that the population of Donbas during all the years of Ukraine's independence voted for pro-Russian political parties and presidents we can conclude that we can talk about a certain micronation that has been formed in this region.

A secessionist movement can evolve in the case where existing borders do not coincide with "ideal" ones, by which we understand the territories where different ethnic groups live. It could be observed in the instances when Germans live in the Netherlands or in Poland, Hungarians live in Ukraine and Romania, and Russians live in Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan etc. Ethnic minorities in this situation are likely to strive for close cooperation with the country they consider to be their ethnic Motherland and this can also turn into irredentism.

Separatism is believed to be a purely internal phenomenon. There are endogenous factors that contribute to a strengthening of separatism processes in a particular region. However, while analysing endogenous factors, exogenous factors should also be considered. In this regard, these include the main geopolitical interests of powerful neighbouring states who are interested in a weakening or disintegration of the state to strengthen their position in the region or to increase their state territories by occupying a part of the neighbouring state.

In modern political science the situation when one state provides its ethnically close minority in another country with assistance is called ethnic favouritism or ethnic protectivism.

External processes have an important influence on the internal development of the country. That is the reason and character of conflicts that are connected with the peculiarities of the geopolitical and geosocial system and its dynamics.

Separatism conflicts occur within one state no matter what kind of territorial structure it has. In some cases they develop without intrusion of a third party, in other cases – with the support of the state that is interested in the development of this conflict.

A Russian expert in politology, V.Tishkov [Tishkov V. 2005] states that separatism would not have become a global problem, if it had not been an instrument of rivalry between states and a means of geopolitical engineering.

If separatist movements in Europe are developing due to endogenous factors (Catalonia, Belgium), in the third world or in the post-Soviet space we could observe the huge influence of exogenous factors. The best examples are observed in Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, the Russia-Chechen Republic conflict and Ukraine (Donbas).

The exogenous factor could be seen in different methods – soft and hard.

The hard one has one expression – military invasion and could be fulfilled in the following way:

- a region is supplied with military support;
- the interference of peacekeeping forces with the purpose of a further solution to the conflict but taking into account the interest either of the rebellious region or the government of the state;
- the conducting of humanitarian intervention that presupposes the participation in hostilities of the side of the rebellious region.

The soft support could be divided into soft active and soft passive. Soft passive support is fulfilled just in the existence of the neighbouring country with an ethnically close population and which strives for uniting ethnic groups of the same ethnos. Soft active support is shown in the following way: economic (financing the fight, financing NGOs), technical (supply of lethal weaponry), humanitarian (making the ties with ethnically close people in the sphere of culture, education and science, financing the educational programs, scientific projects, internships), the support of the rebellious region or the authorities by international organisations, the construction of religious objects and informational (demonisation of the rebellious region or the authorities of the state).

It goes without saying that each state that has ethnic minorities should foresee a possible separatism movement and do everything possible to prevent it. It is possible to do this with the help of a formula that was worked out by the author of this article. The formula is the following:

$$P_{ij} = \frac{X - X_{\min}}{X_{\max} - X_{\min}}$$

(P_{ij} – standard assessment, X – factual index of an object, $X_{\min} = 1$. Ranging takes place within 0 and 1, the closer the index is to 1, the higher probability of separatism is).

The following groups of constituent elements are used for calculating the separatism index: 1. General characteristics of a group (language, religion, customs and traditions, ethnic group territorial concentration, historical factors, separatism experience); 2. Level of discrimination (political activity, economic discrimination, language restrictions, presence of minority representatives in authorities, political and cultural dissatisfaction, methods of demanding process, conflict with central government); 3. Exogenous influence (existence of ethnically close groups abroad, assistance to ethnically close groups, political assistance, military assistance, assistance by international organisations, desire of a neighbouring country to annex some territories, politically active ethnic groups abroad); 4. Conflict potential with central government (inter-ethnic conflict in the past, contradictions between ethnic groups in one and the same country and hatred for each other, politicians' statements concerning ethnic groups, protests by ethnic groups, rebellions and riots, civil war, repression by central government).

Having applied this formula to some regions we got the following results: Kosovo 0.74

(being a part of Serbia), Catalonia 0.32, Chechnya 0.67, Donbas 0.81, South Ossetia 0.78, Abkhazia 0.70, Iraqi Kurdistan (before the overthrow of S. Hussein) 0.79, Turkish Kurdistan 0.80, Nagorny Karabakh 0.90, Transcarpathia 0.39, Croatia in Yugoslavia 0.70, Corsica 0.26, South Nigeria 0.46.

As we see from the analysis, the closer the indicator is to 1, the higher the possibility of separatism processes in the region is. According to the author, the central government should pay attention to the potential separatist region if the figure is more than 0.50.

2. RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE AS A SOFT POWER TOOL

Religion has always played an important role in ruling any country, especially in the medieval ages. There were several wars in Europe based on religious issues. The XXth century turned out to be the bloodiest century in modern history, but its first part was characterised by ideological conflicts and the second by identity conflicts based on ethnicity, nationality and religion. All these above-mentioned aspects are the most destructive elements of any conflict. On the other hand, these elements help some ethnos to preserve their identity. As T.Gurr mentions in his "Minorities at risk", some groups lose their identities through long-term erosion as individual members become marginalised or are assimilated by other groups [Gurr T. 1993:89].

Some Ukrainian politicians believe that, since 1991, Russia has tried to use a soft power factor to keep Ukraine in its sphere 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 the Ukrainian economy and position itself as a friendly state.

On the other hand, it is very difficult to talk about Russia's planned exogenous influence on South-Eastern Ukraine as a whole, and in the Donbas region in particular, since it did not use a soft power factor in its classical sense. How can we explain it? First of all, if we analyse the first ten years of Russia's independence, it was a really difficult period for this country because it was in the transformational political and economic process itself, trying to cope with internal territorial problems and was on the edge of political, social and territorial collapse. The hostilities in Chechnya have raised the main question for Russia at that period of time - whether Russia will remain within the borders that appeared on the geopolitical map in 1991 or whether long-term separatist conflicts will spread all over the country forcing federal authorities to subdue the rebellious areas. The second decade has been spent on 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 Germany, France, 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 the people of the East-

ern regions did not want to secede from Ukraine.

Thirdly, the people of South-Eastern Ukraine have always had a pro-Russian foreign policy opinion, so it was not necessary to spend much money and develop a soft power policy to influence this part of Ukraine.

Nevertheless, we should not deny that Russian exogenous influence really existed and were expressed in economic, cultural, religious issues.

According to S.Huntington, the most obvious split between East and West was manifested in the 1994 presidential election. The president at that time, L.Kravchuk, who, despite close ties with Russian leaders, identified himself as a “national” politician, won in twelve regions of Western Ukraine with an overwhelming majority, having got 90%. His opponent, L.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” [Huntington S. 2006:133].

Following this, the contradiction between the East and the West of Ukraine was observed during all parliamentary and presidential elections and the Russian-speaking people factor has always been used by the Russian Federation to influence the results of the elections.

It goes without saying that after the collapse of the Soviet Union a lot of people who were Russian by nationality remained in other countries and not in Russia. In a speech delivered to the Federal Assembly in April 2005, Vladimir Putin noted that “the collapse of the USSR has become a real tragedy for the Russian people. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory.”

V.Putin’s doctrine set the task of “protecting the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots living abroad. On the basis of international law, it is necessary to consider the Russian diaspora as a partner in expanding and strengthening the space of the Russian language and culture; to promote the consolidation of compatriots’ organizations in order to ensure their rights more effectively in their countries of residence, to preserve the ethnocultural identity of the Russian diaspora and its ties with the historical homeland, to create conditions for facilitating the voluntary resettlement of compatriots; to promote the study and spread of the Russian language as an integral part of world culture and an instrument of interethnic communication” [Dergachov O. 2009:9].

The area that has been used by Russia in the context of exogenous influence is religion. According to various opinion polls, the church has always been in the lead in the context of public trust. Thus, the level of trust for religious organisations in 2000 was 63.1% . Then, during the 2000s it fell to 55% in 2004, 55% in 2005, 38% in 2006, 34% in 2007. In 2010, the level of trust rose again to 72.5%, in 2013 - 63.8%; 2014 - 65.8%; 2016 - 58.6%.

Besides, the exogenous influence of Russia was due to the fact that the vast majority

of the population of Ukraine and Donbas in particular are Orthodox and the level of faith is quite high. Thus, it is possible to influence the political preferences of the population by means of the church.

In Ukraine, the church began to be associated with both political forces and geopolitical centres of the world.

The troubles in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have led to the extreme politisation of the religious environment [Bogachevskya I. 2012:157]. And the split in Orthodoxy has a clear regional character, which has a negative impact on the process of consolidation of Ukrainian society.

Given the regional differences in political preferences, churches and religious issues further exacerbate the split in society.

Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine (supporters of the Moscow patriarchy) even reject the possibility of using the Ukrainian language in the procedures of worship. They substantiate their position by referring, on the one hand, to the sacredness of the Church Slavonic language, on the other to the imperfection of texts in the Ukrainian language which causes, in their opinion, the appearance of significant errors that destroy the foundations of faith.

Table 1. The number of supporters of the Moscow and Kyiv patriarchy constantly change [“Konfessijna ta tzerkovna nezaleznist gromadjan Ukraini ” 2020]:

year	Ukrainian church (Moscow patriarchy %)	Ukrainian church (Kyiv patriarchy %)
2000	9.2	12.1
2005	10.6	14
2010	23.6	15.1
2013	19.6	18.3
2014	17.4	22.4
2016	15	25
2018	16.9	33.9

What are these indicators related to? In the author's view, the level of increase of Moscow patriarchy supporters increased 4 times from 2005 to 2010. This is due to the fact that former President V.Yushchenko was in power, who constantly made statements about the need to create a united local church. This thesis was negatively perceived by supporters of the Moscow patriarchy, which increased the number of parishioners of this church. The decrease by 2016 is explained, in my opinion, by the impossibility of conducting a survey in the uncontrolled territories of Donbas, the population of which are overwhelmingly supporters of the Moscow patriarchy. The growth of the Kyiv patriarchy supporters may also be due to political reasons. In terms of political and then the military crisis, many parishioners began to associate themselves with the Kyiv patriarchy. Besides, according to a public opinion poll, 33% say that they support the Orthodox church and do not belong either to the Kyiv or the Moscow patriarchy. This also could be explained by the fact that many people are

afraid to tell the truth, which is why they attend churches that belong to the Moscow patriarchy but do not speak about it.

This thesis is supported by the words of Nicholas Gvozdev, a professor at the College of the US Navy. He believes that the split of the Orthodox Church has long occurred in the CIS and especially in Ukraine. “The creation and split of Orthodox parishes has become one of the factors of tension in relations between Moscow and Kyiv. However, even today the Russian Orthodox Church has a great influence in Ukraine and enjoys considerable authority among a large part of the population – especially in the eastern and southern parts of the country, where believers maintain close ties with the Moscow patriarchy. The Russian Orthodox Church remains an important factor in the russification of this region of Ukraine and the preservation of the idea of Slavonic unity. If you want, a stronghold of Russian influence, including cultural and religious.” [Massalskij V. 2013].

Besides a 2020 public opinion poll showed that citizens of Ukraine consider church to be a very influential tool and believe that it should be nation oriented. So it could be a kind of signal to any country that wants to influence Ukrainian citizens, that it is quite easy to do with the help of church.

Georges Corm believes that modern secular European nationalism provoked feelings of religious identity [Corm G. 2003:93]. This could be proved by the example of Ukraine when Ukraine ethnic oriented people try to become parishioners of a new church called the Orthodox Church of Ukraine which was formed under the influence of former president P.Poroschenko in 2018. Religious educational institutions are located mainly in the Western Ukraine which shows the religious division in this aspect between Eastern and Western Ukraine.

The author of this article believes that it is necessary to analyse the main directions of the doctrine “The Russian world” in terms of religious influence and highlight the attitude of both Russian and Ukrainian experts to it.

So, first, let us analyse the doctrine of the “Russian world” from the point of view of Russian researchers.

In the 1990s, two “Russian world” concepts emerged in the public consciousness: the internal (the Russian Federation itself) and the external (“Russian world outside” as a relatively new phenomenon). From the situation which developed after 1991, two main directions could be drawn. The first one is to let Russians assimilate with the population of new independent countries or to revive “the Russian world” with the help of the Russian diaspora.

The second point of view, which summarises the disagreement with the results of the geopolitical struggle of the twentieth century, includes a wide range of positions: from the idea of mass repatriation of compatriots to Russia and calling for imperial irredentism and the restoration of “historical Russia” to the 1913 or 1989 years.

Political expert Batanova proposed a more balanced definition of “Russian world”: she understands it as a “global cultural and civilisational phenomenon, consisting of

Russia as a mother country and the Russians abroad, uniting people who, regardless of nationality, feel Russian, are Russian speakers, the supporters of Russian culture and spiritually connected with Russia and not indifferent to its policy and destiny.

The green light for these “Russian world” projects was given in 2006, on the eve of the Year of the Russian Language (2007). To promote the Russian language and culture abroad, the Russian World Foundation was established. The Gorchakov Foundation later began working in public diplomacy. The activities of such structures as Russian Cooperation, the International Council of Russian Compatriots, as well as programs of cooperation and assistance to the resettlement of compatriots gradually accumulated an array of positive changes in policy to restore the “Russian world”.

The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Kirill, developed his own concept of the “Russian world” in a few years. He used the doctrine of a “Russian world” to clarify the concept of “Holy Russia”, which he considered not only in its metaphysical plan, but also as a projection on specific geographical areas, namely Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Kazakhstan [“Ukraina ta proekt “Russkogo mira.” 2014:28].

Speaking at the World Congress of Compatriots in October 2006, Vladimir Putin stated that “this day unites not only the multinational people of Russia, but also millions of compatriots abroad”.

“Russian world” turned out to be more competitive because it combines ethical attitudes, cultural views, political goals, and religious apologetics. Russian world emerged in response to the intensification of the disintegration processes that dominated after the collapse of the USSR [Ibid].

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation I. Ivanov noted that “Orthodox communities are important for establishing ties with the Russian diaspora, maintaining its spiritual, cultural and social life.” In 2004, addressing the participants of the 8th World Russian People’s Council, he assessed the cooperation between the church and the state in the international arena as follows: “the gathering of the “Russian world” is the main goal of the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox church.”

Thus, we see that it was decided that the concept of “Russian world” will be realised precisely by the use of religious means, because it is easier to unite people on religious grounds than on political ones. Political unification is already the result of religious unity.

On July 27, 2009, Patriarch Kirill paid his first visit to Ukraine. During this visit, he expressed the view that the cause of Ukrainian society’s problems is a church split based on political ideas created over the years by political parties, the government or under pressure from the authorities.

We see a rather firm position on the unity and integrity of the Russian Orthodox Church. Kirill does not intend to allow the Russian Orthodox Church to split and will fight for the Ukrainian parishioners. The visit of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in the pro-Russian regions of Ukraine – Donbas and Crimea – in contrast

revealed the differences from when visiting the capital of the country. When he came to the Donbas region and Crimea, he was met by people carrying flags of the Russian Federation.

In 2011, Kirill visited Ukraine seven times. One of the Patriarch's places of visit in Ukraine was Donetsk, during which he emphasised the special importance of Donetsk for the Russian Orthodox Church, naming Donetsk "the diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church".

As I. Zevelev, an analyst at the Carnegie Moscow Center, explains, the reason for creating "Russian world" concept as Russia's foreign policy doctrine was Russia's return to an imperial, great-power model of development and aggravation of relations with the West. "The failure of attempts to become an independent part of the Great West, again forced Russia to think about its place in the world" [Perepelitsja M. 2011: 167]. However, it should be noted that Russia's political forces and political leaders since 2000 have set the goal of reviving Russia's geopolitical influence, and therefore Russia must be the centre of the geopolitical space that will unite around it. It is impossible for Russia to be a leader in the Western world, because there is already a leader there –the United States, the antagonist of Russia.

As for Orthodoxy in Donbas, it should be noted that there were 1,100 churches and 17 monasteries in the region before the conflict. So "Donbass is considered to be stronghold of Orthodoxy in eastern Ukraine. Confessing the Orthodox faith, remaining faithful to the canonical Orthodoxy, people maintained unity with other Slavic peoples". That is, we can conclude that Orthodoxy in Donbas plays a key role in the context of unity with the Slavic peoples, and therefore, it is much easier to trace the possibility of exogenous influence, including political.

In the context of the influence of the "Russian world", we can also talk about a single information space to which Ukraine and Russia belonged until 2014. According to the authors of the work "Ukraine - Russia: the conceptual basis of humanitarian relations", any independent country should control its information space. This need is caused by various factors, which have one thing in common – they all ultimately determine the security of the state.

Thus, it should be emphasised that over the past ten years, Russia has used the soft power factor for the whole south-eastern Ukraine, not just Donbas alone. This policy was carried out in the context of building a "Russian world" which meant the inclusion of countries with a Russian-speaking population in a geopolitical project led by Russia as the centre of unification processes in the post-Soviet space. Taking into account the fact that the population of south-eastern Ukraine and Donbas belong to the Moscow patriarchy, we can conclude that the church and common religion were chosen to influence the inhabitants of the above-mentioned regions. The religious channel also influenced the political preferences of the population of the region, which eventually resulted in fierce confrontation with residents of other regions of the country in the context of the political and military crisis in the country.

3. RUSSIA'S INFLUENCE AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE MILITARY CRISIS IN DON-BAS REGION

The situation after the coup d'état that in Ukraine is called the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 has worsened in political, economic, financial and geopolitical spheres for Ukraine. The country turned out to be in a grey geopolitical zone. It has been in this zone since gaining independence and it is explained by the following factors: due to as split in society's opinion concerning geopolitical preferences, Ukraine failed to join any geopolitical union. That is why in geopolitical issue it turned out to be between Europe and Russia; in the military aspect – between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation; in the economic and financial sphere between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. Under the reign of L.Kuchma, Ukraine had a 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 the European Union and NATO are constantly promising Ukraine to accept it, but Ukraine has a conflict within its borders therefore it cannot apply for membership of the EU or NATO. Having lost its chance of being a part of a 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 the 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 would not have survived. So, let us analyse 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.

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 the national currency. Then, taking into account that the 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

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 stabilise 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”.

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, the President of Russia V. Putin signed a decree recognising the documents issued to citizens of Ukraine and persons residing in the territories of certain regions of Donetsk and Lugansk regions (Putin podpisal ukaz, 2018).

The document was ratified “to protect the rights and freedoms of people and citizens, following the generally recognised 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 (organszations)” are recognized as valid on the territory of the Russian Federation.

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 the universities (these were mainly educational institutions in the 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 centre 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 schkolah DNR i LNR 2015).

CONCLUSION

It is necessary to conclude that Ukraine always felt Russia's influence from the 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 a tellurocratic and talasocratic geopolitical clash. Ukraine has made one mistake – it did not prioritise any foreign policy directions in the 1990s, trying to stick to a 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 made 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 the 2000s. The third mistake had been made during the political crisis that turned into hostilities in the Donbas region and that was a range of allegations against the population in Donbas 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 Donbas region. Instead, Ukraine should have used an approach once offered by Karl Deutsch. He explained that in any country it is necessary to use a communicative approach that could prevent society from conflict, and that was proved by the 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 the 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.

The processes of separatism can develop for a long period of time and can transform into civil wars that can cause genocide or humanitarian intervention from the side by the main actors in international affairs. In the majority of cases separatism is the ethnic phenomenon that could be considered to be a very complex and multi-aspect phenomenon. And based on the fact that each case has its own peculiarities there is no just one solution to all cases of separatism.

To solve their geopolitical tasks influential actors in international affairs use ethnic and/or confessional contradictions in the neighbouring countries and can foster separatism there in order to gain control over those countries. Under the conditions of the transmission of the contemporary world from a bipolar to a multipolar system of international relations, the above-mentioned types of conflict will occur more often and the degree of such conflicts will be more severe.

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