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**THE REPOLITICISATION OF MODERN RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN  
RELATIONS**

Russia and Ukraine have a long period of common history. Today this history has become a subject of hot discussions. Russian scientific elite continues to argue that the Ukrainian language is just a Russian dialect and that Ukraine should become part of the RF; Ukrainian history is always included into Russian history. «Novorossiia» project is in the spirit of imperial ambitions of «the Russian World» and correlates with such historical terms as Pax Romana. So, historical problems and the path of development of modern conflict serve to create new myths and make worse not only bilateral but even international relations.

**Key words:** Russia, Ukraine, re-politicisation, identity, history, language.

**Basement of the Study.** There is a huge scientific problem today: the nature of the process of re-politicization of relations between Russia and Ukraine is not clear. The main research question the author is trying to solve is to understand why, how, and what way Russia uses identity, language, and history in their relations with Ukraine. The hypothesis of this research was that Russia uses identity, language, and history in order to divide Ukrainian nation, spur conflict, and destabilize Ukrainian state. That's why Russian identity, language, and history politics is an important part of the toolbox Russia uses to exert soft power. So, the peculiarities of the Russian soft power have been the main reason for the re-politicization of Russian-Ukrainian relations. Russian soft power serves not to bring together, but to separate the neighbouring societies and to slow the development of their identity. Thus, the definition «re-politicization» in this article is viewed as a purely negative trend.

**Analysis of Researches.** As a theoretical foundation of the paper the work of Nicu Popescu (EU Institute for Security Studies) and Andrew Wilson (School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London) about the peculiarities of the Russian power was used first of all. Authors compared the EU and Russian politics: Russian soft power is built on bedrock of historical and cultural affinity — the presence of Russian minorities in neighbouring countries, the Russian language, post-Soviet nostalgia and the strength of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Orange revolution in 2004 has triggered a seri-

ous Russian tactical rethink. Russia began developing a rival «counter-revolutionary» ideology, supporting «its» NGOs and using «its» web technologies. Gleb Pavlovsky described the Orange revolution as «a very useful catastrophe for Russia. We learnt a lot» [38, p. 29]. Russia's interference in regional politics has been equally important. Russia claims that it has a responsibility to ensure the security of Russian citizens, ethnic Russians and even mere Russian-speakers in «near abroad». Russia's strategy emphasises the building of alliances with all neighbouring states irrespective of their political regimes. This has often come in the form of so-called «political technology»: during the 2004 Ukrainian elections, the Russians made use of a range of political shenanigans: invented parties, agents — provocateurs, voter fraud and ultimately interference with the vote count. Support for friendly regimes in the neighbourhood is a traditional Russian tactic. But today it is complemented by a new-found appreciation for the importance of NGOs — a lesson the Kremlin has learned after the Orange revolution. Organisations like the Institute of CIS Countries and Russian World have channelled funding to Russia-friendly parties and NGOs in the region [38, p. 36]. Russia's concept of «sovereign democracy» (a political model that emphasises the need for states to follow «national paths» to democracy, free from foreign intervention) has found echoes throughout the neighbourhood [38, p. 35]. Several years ago Jeanne L. Wilson (Wheaton College) wrote about new step in envelopment of Russian foreign politics concept: «In a 2012 article Putin made his first public reference to the concept of soft power (although it had been previously discussed by many other Russian officials). Putin distinguished between legal and illegal instruments of soft power, indicating his approval of the former and condemnation of the latter» [44]. «Moscow has endorsed soft power but its understanding and adaptation of the concept differs significantly from that of the West...It uses soft power as hard state» [44]. So, she concluded: Russia under Putin concurs along with Joseph Nye that the ability to project an attractive image is an important component of power for states in the contemporary international system. At the same time Russia envisions the implementation of soft power as a state project; it rejects the notion that an autonomous civil society is the source of much soft power generation, as Nye asserts. Alexander Sergunin and Leonid Karabeshkin (St. Petersburg State University) tried to understand whether Russia's soft power strategy is the same as that of other major international players. They sought to explain Russia's soft power strategies by examining the peculiarities of the country's contemporary foreign policy thinking and by identifying the drivers of Moscow's political philosophy. Also they interpreted Russian elites' understanding of soft power — a concept that has been borrowed by Russia from the Western political vocabulary recently. According to them, the Russian understanding of soft power strongly deviates from either the 'classical' based by Joseph Nye or those suggested by other Western academics and practitioners: «The Russian interpretation of soft power is instrumentalist, pragmatic and interest-centric. The Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2013 defines soft power as a 'set of instruments' that can be helpful for achieving foreign policy aims by means of civil society institutions, informa-

tion technology and communication interactions, humanitarian outreach and other methods that differ from classical diplomacy. President Vladimir Putin was even more pragmatic and instrumentalist by defining the concept as a foreign policy tool or technology that helps either to promote Moscow's interests in foreign countries or to improve Russia's international image» [41]. They concluded that the Kremlin's officially proclaimed preference for soft power instruments, but it did not exclude the use of hard power tools: if necessary and quite often, Russian authorities have tried to combine them. Yulia Kiseleva (King's College London) dedicated her article to the reasons behind Russian elites' interest in soft power Russian policy makers; she was sure that the idea of soft power was so attractive for Kremlin because of its promise of great power-hood and status in world politics. «Russia tries to live up to Joseph Nye's criteria which are reflected in its 'cooperative' discourse on soft power, consistent with Nye's original concept. However, when Russia fails to meet the hegemonic standards for soft power and great power status, it generates a second — 'competitive' — discourse on soft power which seeks to assert Russia's great power-hood regardless of and in opposition to the West's hegemonic soft power prescriptions». So, over the past few years, «Russia has developed a dual, contradictory discourse on soft power in its foreign policy — a discourse which has its roots in Russia's dual great power identity» [32]. Victoria Hudson (Aston University) researched very complicated question whether Ukrainians could respond to Russian soft power. Therefore she explored the reaction of the Ukrainian audience to Moscow's efforts to exercise cultural leadership in the region. In 2011 (two years before conflict) the researcher went to four cities (L'viv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Kyiv) to see how Ukrainian students reacted to the culture, value and foreign policy related ideas being promoted by official Russian representatives. And to her surprise she discovered that «while the familiar East-West difference also played out in the focus group interviews, in-depth discussions simultaneously revealed scepticism and antipathy towards Russia's leadership aspirations and representatives. Such negative outlooks were expressed rather consistently across the groups in all regions. Clearly, despite efforts to use soft power, Russia's attraction of this key educated generation of tomorrow remained suboptimal» [30]. Obviously, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict 2013–2014 only increased this negative impact of Russian soft power instruments. In addition to works on soft power, important in the context of this study, there were some articles useful for understanding certain aspects of Russian-Ukrainian relations. So, for example, Marlene Laruelle's work acquaints us with the concept of «the Russian world» and its impact on foreign policy of the country. According to him, the modern concept of «the Russian world» in Russia is considered as civilization approach. Thus, it is based on: (1) Orthodoxy; (2) Russian language and culture; (3) a common historical background and views on socio-historical development. Laruelle highlighted the conceptual blurring that allows interpreting this theory differently. Firstly, it serves as an excuse for Russia toward its right to supervise the development of its neighbour states and to apply interventionist policies. Secondly, it works as a motivation for Russia in a process of recollecting its pre-

Soviet and Soviet past through reconciliation with Russian Diasporas abroad. Thirdly, it is an important tool for rebranding Russia on the international arena and promoting its own views all over the world [8]. Well-known Polish researcher Adam D. Rotfeld wrote about sources of Russian foreign politics in post-Soviet area: «The Russians are very proud that they were, are and will always be an empire... The legitimization of Putin's new rule is based on, among others, that the authorities very forcefully convince society — quiet effectively for example in the case of Crimea — that it is worthy and necessary to be a global power. Crimea did not necessary for their existence — all it does is satisfying their longing for the symbolism to a large degree that «we've regained Crimea». There were attempts to convince the nation that a «Russian nation» had been spawned — that that we conquered Crimea, we own Crimea and will have it because we are founded on success and military victories. The goal of all this propaganda flashiness is to maintain the imperial mythology. The effect is intended to be a clearly legible message: without the empire, Russia doesn't exist... The status of a world power is the new «Russian idea». Pride in the empire is an important element of consolidating society around the president and legitimizing the current authorities» [40, p. 22–23]. In this context we need to research the Russian-Ukrainian conflict as «the war of narratives» that started from 2013. According to the well-known Ukrainian political analyst Mykola Riabchuk, in this sort of war even some terms, for ex., «Eurasia» changes their meanings. As Riabchuk wrote, «the first meaning is purely geographical... The second meaning is much more versatile but in all its multi-facet representations it refers typically to a Greater Russia, to some space dominated historically by the Russian Empire and its Soviet (and post-Soviet) reincarnation... It promotes also the idea of cultural/civilizational peculiarity of the region suggesting that it is neither Europe nor Asia but some mixture of both that represents a separate and very special 'Eurasian' civilization. Its essence is Russian culture — but rather imperial than national. The common imperial past and some imprints of Russian imperial culture is the only thing that draws together the nations that otherwise are world apart in all possible terms, like Ukrainians... It would be rather impossible to pack them all into one bag if there was not a common denominator — a Greater Russia. ...it mystifies the reality... encourage Russian imperial feelings and great-power politics, endows it with some international legitimacy, and discursively resonates with the most chauvinistic, crypto-fascist tenets of today's Russian 'neo-Eurasianists'. And it discursively excludes all the European nations of the former Soviet empire from Europe» [39]. In these works more was said about the «material world» than about the world of ideas, discourse, and language. So, it is necessary to develop them. On the other hand, author does not want to divide the «world of ideas» and the «material world» in principle. The author's position is that the world is one, everything is interconnected, and ideas are material.

We can conclude the review one remark that countries of «the New Eastern Europe», especially Ukraine and Belarus, are the heart and essence of Moscow's strategic preferences. However, only Belarus is considered as a strategic

ally of Russia, while Ukraine and Moldova are clearly trying to distance themselves from Moscow's integration program proposals. This region is a kind of «window to Europe» for the Russian Federation therefore it is so important to Russia.

Peculiarities of Russian Soft Power: What, Why, Where. Discussions about the influence of the Russian Federation in Ukraine are becoming increasingly ideological in their essence. The current foreign policy of the Russian Federation is based on four key concepts that were originated by President Boris Yeltsin. Each of these concepts is closely tied with each other: the concept of a «divided nation», «protection of compatriots», «Russian world» and «great Russian civilization». The concept of a «divided nation» is the key point of Russia's statements that its sovereignty extends to all Russian people, wherever they are. The idea is closely correlated with the problem of identity. Therefore, the views of the Eurasianists are becoming extremely popular. According to them, Russia does not belong to any of the civilizations because it is a great civilization itself [4]. Thus, today the Russian Federation is developing an ambitious view that Russia is a great superpower.

Understanding the doctrinal foundations of the Russian government allows shedding some light on the processes which are taking place in the post-Soviet area, but especially in Ukraine. The crisis over Ukraine is not a result of a sudden quarrel, but a symptom of a more serious issue: the emergence of a policy based on a large-scale philosophical concept.

Since the collapse of the USSR, one thing remains unchanged in the Kremlin's tactics: the paternalistic attitude of Russia towards the post-Soviet countries, especially in Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Russia continues to view them as components of the Russian sphere of influence, where Moscow has «privileged / vital interests» [22]. Domination in the region is an attribute of great power. Today, Russia can't confirm its ambitious claims about the status of a great power, except of the place in the UN Security Council and huge nuclear arsenal. Strengthening of Russian influence in the post-Soviet area helps the country's leader to maintain the image of Russia's greatness [11]. At the same time, only a few try to analyze why Russia needs to preserve its zone of influence and what are the real benefits for the country.

The «Strategy for Russia» is the document which was formulated in the Foreign and Defence Policy Council and covered the main positions of the Russia toward newly independent states. This Council was closely associated with President Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. At that time, it was headed by Sergei Karaganov, Russian foreign policy expert. Based on the thesis on the «non-viability of fully independent states after the collapse of the USSR» and «... inevitability of integration in a strategic perspective», the authors of the Strategy believed that there is only one alternative for Russia: 1) the policy of unification with the most of the former Soviet republics and the creation of a new federal state; 2) the policy of securing the independence of these states in exchange for «obtaining unrestricted access to their markets of goods, services, capitals, and creation of an effective military and political alliance» [14].

The threats to the internal and external security of the Russian Federation were defined in the National Security Concept (2000), which was replaced by the National Security Strategy (2009, 2015) [13; 20].

Among the main external threat, attempts made by individual states to deprive Russia from the status of a great power were defined. These attempts are aimed at bypassing the existing international order, weakening integration processes within the CIS, stimulation and escalation of conflicts near Russian borders. The post-Soviet region was clearly defined as a zone of Russia's special interests, where Russian Federation will exercise a dominant influence on the course of integration processes and the formation of a single economic area with CIS member states. The Russian Federation military doctrine among specific threats has also outlined the conflicts near the Russia's border, and the main forms of usage of the armed forces were determined by peacekeeping operations. The doctrine allowed the deployment of troops outside the state territory, as well as the conduction of military operations on the territory of any allied states in order to defeat the aggressor.

To understand the peculiarities of Russian-Ukrainian relations, it is necessary to analyze not so much official documents as the basic characteristics of the identity of both nations.

The identity of the Ukrainian people is defined by the following factors: Orthodoxy; the East-Slavic idea; «Large space» and uncertainty of its borders [21]; before 1991 Ukraine wasn't an ethnic country as well as it wasn't a stable independent country at all. But Ukrainians have in the core of their identity dignity, desire of equality and democracy; among others they need to feel equality with Russia [15]. Unlike Russians they prefer to obtain security through diplomacy; diplomacy always was the most important tool of nation building policy. Unlike Russians Ukrainians spend all the time in the search of a strong partner, but at the same time in the search for more freedom in the internal issues and from the patron state, in case if they considered to be pressured too much. And what is very important, Ukrainians always open for any types of integration and engagement with «others» [25].

It should be noted that the idea of nationalism, which is the main reason for criticism of modern Ukraine in Russia, has always been in the interest of a minority of the population of Ukraine. A rapid growth of interest to nationalism in the society becomes visible only after the revolution of 2013–2014. This situation was escalated by post-revolutionary chaos in politics, the annexation of the Crimea, the occupation of Donbas region, the return of oligarchs to power and growth of crime. The nationalist forces made several attempts to take places in official institutions, but all these attempts failed. In 2016 former commander of the «Azov» battalion and People's Deputy of Ukraine Andrei Beletsky formed the «National Corps» party. The party consists of veterans of the Russian-Ukrainian war, social activists, volunteers and etc. The official ideology of this party is called the «Nationalcracy». In 2017 Ukrainian nationalist forces signed the National Manifesto, consolidating their forces in their struggle for power. Other parties such as Svoboda, Right Sector, OUN, KUN and C14 joined the National Corps. The main re-

quirements of the National Manifesto are the returning of the nuclear status for Ukraine, acceptance of the right to keep and bear arms, the recognition of the Russian Federation as an aggressor and the break up of diplomatic ties, the elimination of the oligarchy, recognition of the Ukrainian language as the only official state language, the promotion of a state church with a centre in Kiev, agricultural possession trade ban and etc. [34, p. 235].

So, nationalists, remaining in the minority and being under the supervision of civil society and the international community, prefer to associate themselves with other parties of traditionalist views. They try not to emphasize on ideas that might somehow resemble the «integral nationalism» of Dmitry Dontsov and other leaders of the first generation.

The identity of the Russian people is defined by the very same factors as Ukrainian: «Large space»; Russia's uncertainty of its borders; the fact that Russia was never been an ethnic country before 1991; the East-Slavic idea; the struggle of the idea of a civilian nation («we are all — Russian») with the idea of an ethnic state («Russia for the Russians»); Orthodoxy (traditional beliefs); the idea of «nationals» (compatriots) who are identified by usage of Russian language. According to Polish journalist and editor at New Eastern Europe Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska, the situation with Russian-Ukrainian conflict is understandable because of «the fears of fascism, historically embedded in painful memories of the Second World War, were skilfully utilised to portray Ukrainians as Banderites, supposedly radical militant right-wingers, and the Kiev government as a US-sponsored fascist junta involved in the persecution of Russians» [36, p. 49]. In 2014 this resulted in the annexation of Crimea and 90 percent of Russians supported it. According to VTsIOM's data, «such a reaction reflects the urge to overcome the post-traumatic syndrome and win back the respect of the outside world, even if it's through fear» [36, p. 49]. Pikulicka-Wilczewska resumed: «The annexation helped Russians regain a sense of pride, boost self-esteem and increase trust in Vladimir Putin. While for the outside world, the move might have seemed irrational, if considered in the context of Russia's emotional trauma following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its search for national identity and new symbols it begins to make sense» [36, p. 49].

Countries of the Black Sea Region are the heart and essence of Moscow's strategic preferences. For these strategic interests, as the events of recent years confirm, Moscow is ready to fight using hard power. This region is a kind of «window to Europe» for the Russian Federation, but in fact — it is a «crack», which in the event of an acute confrontation will tear apart the Russia-European «cloth». However, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova are clearly trying to distance themselves from Moscow's integration program proposals.

According to prominent Russian political analyst Andrei Piontkovskiy, for the Kremlin, this greatly increased the «price» of defeat in these areas. Having strengthened his position during his first years, Putin staked both traditional Russian patriotism and a new post-imperial nationalism. The official nationalism of the Kremlin has been reflected in such twin-concepts as «sovereign democracy» and «energetic superpower», which came to the fore in 2005 [37].

During his first two presidential terms, Putin has rebuilt the centralized system of the state, and in recent years he was focused on reviving Russia's hard power, constantly increasing defence spendings and modernizing the army. The president of the Russian Federation does not show a clear desire to resurrect the Soviet Union (because in that case Russia will have to assume responsibility for a situation in a number of economically weak states), but he clearly intends to create a sphere of Russian dominance [26].

Russia considers it is necessary to create around itself a space where its leadership is recognized in all senses — political, economic, cultural and ideological [24]. Strengthening of Russian influence in the post-Soviet space is considered necessary to preserve the image. It means that the civilization and geopolitical views of the Kremlin are the signs of a revival of imperial ambitions in the post-Soviet area. With the coming of Putin to power, he modified the doctrinal interpretation of politics in the region. After settling internal conflicts and reviving the Russian economy, the president began more active implementation of geopolitical projects in the post-Soviet area [19].

Robert Orttung and Christopher Walker argue that Putin's regime is implementing a large-scale scheme of destabilization in the post-Soviet area, where «frozen conflicts» are used as «Trojan horses» that slowing down the implementation of reforms. Undermining the territorial integrity of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, Russian Federation tries to distract the governments of these countries from improving their political status and joining various Western structures. For this reason, these states must cope with all the territorial issues, corruption and growth of nationalistic movement [35].

Main targets of Moscow's information policy were Georgia and Ukraine. The conceptual approach of the Russian side in both conflicts was to form the image of Russia as a «peacemaker country». Moscow's propaganda works with natural reactions of the population toward known negative symbols: Georgia was accused of applying the policy of «genocide» against ethnic Ossetians; events in Ukraine were associated with the coming to power of the «fascist junta» in Kiev [7].

After the end of the armed phase of the Russian-Georgian conflict, the whole situation was frozen. Now it helps us to understand several important things. The result of the August war was the Russian revisionism of post-Soviet borders. Russia for the first time in its post-Soviet history acted as a country, ready to review both interstate borders and its relations with non-regional players (the US, the EU) [23]. The August war also showed that «frozen conflicts» can not be resolved by force. After all, the armed actions of Georgia military immediately led to the entry of the Russian armed forces into the war.

Perhaps the main lesson of the «Five-Day War» is our understanding that nowadays a security model in the region is being built only according to Russian interests. Russia for the first time demonstrated that it can openly use force outside its territory. Attempts to build a security model «against Russia», as Georgia tried to do, resulted in a collapse since there is red line in post-Soviet area beyond what Russia will not retreat [23].



«The August war» (and the events that preceded it) brought new vision of Russian foreign policy. They created the ideological foundation of the regional policy of the «Russian world». In addition to this, the crisis in Ukraine brought key adjustments to the modern doctrine of the Russian Federation which now is more revisionist.

The significance of Ukraine for Russia is determined by several key factors. Ukraine is home to the largest part of the Russian-speaking population outside the Russian Federation, which lives in the East and South of Ukraine. The Russian Orthodox Church considers Ukraine along with Russia and Belarus as an integral part of its «canonical territory» [3].

Russia and Ukraine have a long period of common history. But today this history has become not only a subject of hot discussions, but it has also turned into one of the «stumbling blocks», over which both sides will not be able to agree for years. «Novorossiya» project is in the spirit of imperial ambitions of «the Russian World» and correlates with such historical terms as Pax Romana [34, chapter 2].

If to speak about Russia, there is an impression that political elites are obsessed by Ukraine. There are several reasons for this: the struggle of the Kremlin with colour revolutions in case to prevent the same scenario in Russia; the perception of Ukraine as a mirror reflection of Russia; Putin's and Russian elites common beliefs that Ukraine is «an artificial country» and «a state which failed» [17].

There was very characteristic speech of Vladimir Putin at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008. President hinted at plans to split up Ukraine because «it is a conglomerate of territories belonging to other countries»: «... In Ukraine, one third — are ethnic Russians. According to the official census, from forty-five million people seventeen million are actually Russians. There are regions where the Russian population is almost 100 % ... let's say, in the Crimea. Ninety percent are ethnically Russians.... Who can convince us that we have no interests there? South and south of Ukraine as a whole there are only Russians who live there» [10]. This part of his speech has clearly demonstrated Putin's desire to make his dreams come true. In fact, there is no 17 million of Russians who live in Ukraine, and the proportion of Russians living in Ukraine is only 17 % (as of 2001). In Crimea, the proportion of Russians before the occupation was about 58 % [9].

The attitude to history under Putin has been changed significantly. Thanks to the rapid development of the mass media, this process is no longer a privilege of a narrow circle of researchers or politicians. In Russia a selective approach is practiced when whole layers of history are submitted exclusively through the prism of negative attitudes.

The information about historical events today primarily appeals to human emotions. Moreover, the flexibility of the tools of informational and psychological influence provides additional opportunities for manipulation. If the Ukrainians were regarded as a «brother nation» because of the Slavic roots for some time in Russian propaganda, after the beginning of aggressive informational campaign the existence of the Ukrainian nation was questioned

again. A number of ideological clichés were also proposed, the usage of which varies depending on the audience and the time. The most common of them are: «The Ukrainians and Ukrainian language were invented by the General Chief of Staff of Austro-Hungarian empire during the First World War to weaken Russia», «The Ukrainians language is just a mix of Polish and Russian», «There is a war against Orthodoxy in Ukraine, led by the Uniates (Eastern Catholic Church), Protestants and apostates (supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate)», «All patriotic actions in the south-eastern regions are organized by people from western Ukraine» [33].

The informational warfare is becoming a popular tool of Moscow's foreign policy. The key task of this policy is to undermine the enemy's informational field, to change the moral and ethical norms and values of the population, as well as to undermine its national and religious self-awareness, political orientation and attitude toward specific facts [29].

The first studies on informational warfare appeared at the end of the twentieth century. Military officers described the essence of this tactic as follows: the most unprotected place on the battlefield is the soldier's brain. And this is understandable, because everything can be protected by armour... except of human mind. If you are not analyzing the situation with your mind, but with your emotions, a person does not adequately assess what is really happening, and this seriously weakens his combat capabilities [1].

Russia Today (RT), founded in 2005, is Russia's only official propaganda tool that has a direct access to a foreign-language audience. It is broadcasting in more than 100 countries around the world and has a 700 million audience (with 24/7 broadcast). To influence the audience, the Kremlin also actively uses and give financial support to «Internet trolls» [42]. Their essence is the creation of a group of hired individuals whose only task is to praise Putin's policies and criticize opponents.

In the Russian mass-media this problem as well as everything that was related to Ukrainian independence was presented as the work of «nationalists». The Russian public believed that the Ukrainian political elite were the only thing blocking the «heartfelt desire of ordinary Ukrainians to reunite with Russia.» At the same time, some representatives of the Russian political elite continued to argue that the Ukrainian language is just a Russian dialect and that Ukraine (as well as Belarus) should become part of the Russian Federation. In June of 2010 Mikhail Zurabov, the former Russian Ambassador to Ukraine, said that: «Russians and Ukrainians are one nation with own nuances and peculiarities». In addition, Ukrainian history was not considered a separate subject in Russian universities; it was always included into Russian history [2].

Through the dissemination of fake information, the process of dehumanizing Ukrainian military and also Ukrainians as a whole is taken place. That's why we hear stories about «playing football with the severed head of the Berkut soldier», «crucified boy», «raped granny with epilepsy» etc. Such stories would have been perceived as nonsense in the past.

The rejection of European identity and the proclamation of its own Eurasian civilization point on Moscow's ambitious plans to become a separate

centre of power. The actions of Russia are aimed at supporting allied governments in neighbour states. If this can not be achieved, the task is to maintain the instability of the unfriendly governments. The events of recent years show that Moscow is ready to defend its interests in the region using not only soft but its hard power.

Influence of Crimea and «Novorossiya» Projects on Bilateral Relations. Russia's radical changes in foreign policy took place not immediately after Vladimir Putin came to power. But between 2003 and 2005, the Kremlin defined Russia as an independent, great state, insisting that both the United States and the European Union treat Russia as an equal partner [24].

After the Orange revolution in 2004, several problems of bilateral relations, including Ukraine's desire to join NATO and a gas dispute, worsened immediately. Firstly, there was a sense of threat towards the regime which spread in Kremlin after the Ukrainian revolution. Democratic development of Ukraine (whether it wants it or not) influences the internal social and political development in Russia. Thus, the Ukrainian Maidan of 2004 became possible, and, in the opinion of officials, this was undesirable for Russian society [27].

Soon after the Orange revolution, Moscow understood that Yushchenko's victory was not the end of the world; it was necessary to change the conditions of the big game. Moscow's new tactics were based on four key elements: 1) ignoring the pro-Western policy of Kyiv, especially the ambitions regarding NATO at the official level; 2) provoke destabilization within Ukraine, deepening the historical division of the country and restraining the movement towards NATO; 3) to use direct economic, social and cultural pressure as an instrument of foreign policy; 4) offer assistance in securing Ukraine's security through various forms of cooperation with the CIS or bilateral channels.

From a practical point of view, preparations for the partition of Ukraine began after a «Five-Day War» with Georgia through reform and the build-up of military forces within the Southern Military District [9]. Moscow intended to achieve its goals by establishing control over the Ukrainian ruling elite. However, the regime of Yanukovych failed to survive the Maidan protests.

It was necessary to go for plan «B» — the project «Novorossyia», which purpose was to separate the south-eastern part of Ukraine. It includes separation of the Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhja, Mykolayiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Kherson regions and Crimea from Ukraine and transference of these territories to Russia. As the Russian leader noted, «Novorossyia» was not a Ukrainian territory historically, it was a «gift» from the Soviet government. Russia lost these territories, but the Russian people remained, and Moscow's responsibility is to protect them from the «Kiev fascist dictatorship» [5].

In February of 2014 the Kremlin began to use the arsenal of measures a whole arsenal of means to further destabilize the situation in Ukraine. First of all, it was claimed that an unconstitutional armed seizure of power took place in Ukraine, although the Verkhovna Rada, which was elected in October 2012, continued to work in full force. The powerful propagandistic machine of the Kremlin began to gain momentum. All mass media was used especially Internet and satellite television. «The Russian world» is the analogue of the

British Council (since 2007) and «Rossotrudnechestvo» — of USAID (since 2008). Also, the Russian Orthodox Church and the so called non-governmental organisations were used for propaganda as well [38, p. 58].

February 23, 2014 Putin gave the order to begin an invasion of the Crimea. The successful annexation of the Crimea in March 2014 was the first stage of a hybrid war, officially named in Russia «the protection of Russians in Novorossiia». The second stage was the escalation of a separatist movement in the Donbas region. «Donbas scenario» was also planned to be successful in other south-eastern regions of Ukraine. However, at the end of May 2014, it became clear that Moscow overestimated the possibility of a «national uprising of the Russian-speaking population», and the new Ukrainian government was able to suppress sabotage activities in three key south-eastern regions — Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Odesa. As Andrei Piontkovskiy said, «many things were cleared up in Putin’s speech of March 18, 2014, which he gave on the day of the official joining of Crimea to Russia. In that speech, not only did Putin formally justify the annexation, it essentially was a remake of Hitler’s speech on the Sudetenland in the Reichstag. For the first time in Russian or Soviet political language, there were used such expressions as «separated nation» and «gathering of historical Russian lands.» In that speech, Putin declared his right and even a holy duty to protect not only Russian citizens, for any state is obliged to protect its citizens, but also ethnic Russians, Russian-speakers, and, in later interpretations, also all citizens of the former Soviet Union, Russian Empire, and their descendants, united under the conception of the so-called «Russian world» [37].

Putin could not accept the loss of Ukraine. Russian Special Services was preparing the Donbas rebellion for many years and it became possible thanks to the direct aggression of Russia. At the beginning of Donbas rebellion, separatists succeeded, because the police and security service in Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts almost completely turned to the separatist side. Today «Novorossiia» is an example of pseudo-reality; it is in the spirit of the imperial ambitions of «the Russian world» and correlates with such historical terms as Pax Romana. These ideas serve to create new myths [28, p. 11].

Of course, it should be noted that the situation with the project of «Novorossiia» could turn out to be a worse disaster for Ukraine if the further escalation of the armed conflict not actually stopped due to Western sanctions. Formally, the Donbas region remains under the jurisdiction of Ukraine, but in fact it will play the role of a «Trojan horse» of Russia. At the moment, the Donbas region is considered by the Kremlin as an incurable wound that will impede reforms and suppress activity of Ukrainian society in the future.

In fact, the tactics of the hybrid warfare were firstly tested in Ukraine. Today the theory of hybrid war is actively developing based on the Ukrainian experience. Analysts agree that this type of warfare involves a combination of direct and indirect (with the involvement of irregular military formations) military activity, information warfare, and economic pressure. Moreover, the high level of national economies integration and the geographical location of nations on the global information space make states more vulnerable to new threats.

In order to solve the tactical tasks of the hybrid warfare of Russia against Ukraine, various means are used: escalation of cross-ethnic and inter-confessional hatred; reinforcement of traditional mistrust towards state institutions and political elite; usage of the desire of citizens to obtain information from alternative sources for its own purpose; facilitation of tension in the regions of Ukraine, where the strong pro-Russian position is dominating; strengthening the European Union citizens fears and the formation of a negative image of Ukraine in Europe.

As the Ukrainian well-know Security Studies researcher Grygoriy Pereplytsa notes, «The goal of this warfare does not include the formation of frontlines with a significant concentration of troops for large-scale military operations in the physical environment... but the whole environment is human consciousness, information space and cyberspace. ...this type of warfare loses its physical parameters and turns into a war of perceptions, or psychological warfare... which is happening in the global information space. The main element of such warfare is the type of informational and psychological influence on public consciousness which allows ensuring the voluntary submission of the country's population to the aggressor and support of his aggressive course» [14].

Rapid mass media development and the emergence of social networks made information and psychological operations more ambitious and effective. The audience also became more vulnerable to this type of manipulations. The Russian government launched clearly fake information. For example, the statements that the Ukrainian troops shot down the Malaysian Boeing in July 2014 and nationwide hysteria around the Dutch referendum on the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine.

The set of tools and methods of political influence which is used today by Russia against Ukraine (from television broadcasting to the so-called «Olghinskaya trolls») indicates not an individual informational and psychological operations but a full-scale informational warfare. It's about creating a virtual picture of the world that is parallel to the existing reality. And it is concentrated on the emotional impact on people's feelings and forces them to give up rational thinking about what is really happening [18].

In fact, we are talking about the successful usage of stereotypes, phobias and ideological clichés, including those, which are understandable for different age groups. For example, regarding new Ukrainian leadership, which came to power after the Revolution of dignity, for a while only the definition of «junta» was applied. That appealed to the experience of the 45+ generation, for which the use of the phrase was associated with «Pinochet junta» (Republic of Chile in 1970–1980's). That's why the «junta» is associated only with blood and chaos. The association of processes in modern Ukraine with the events of the Great Patriotic War was also popular: Volunteer units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the National Guard were called «chasteners», and the anti-terrorist operation in the Eastern part of Ukraine was named «chastening operation». The events of May 2, 2014 (when 48 people were killed as a result of clashes between the supporters of the unity

of Ukraine and the separatists) were called «Odessa Khatyn». It is an analogy with the Belarusian village of Khatyn, which was destroyed by the German military in 1943 because of their support of the Soviet partisans [14].

Along with the spreading of frankly fake news, the simulation of controversial situations is also widely used. For example: the organization of fake protest in order to create a virtual «image of danger»; the creation of fake organizations, such as the so-called «People’s Council of Bessarabia», which was established in Odessa in April 2015 and didn’t include a single representative of the Danube region; a series of terrorist acts which were conducted in order to create an illusion of existence of a powerful anti-Ukrainian partisan movement and etc. [31].

Today it is difficult for the state to apply reliable mechanisms of counteractions against informational attacks. The Ministry of Information Policy was created in Ukraine, but this caused controversial reactions about possible violation of freedom of speech both in the international community and within the Ukrainian society. Among the officially identified vectors of countering the informational warfare against Ukraine, the following points should be mentioned. 1. Prohibition of broadcasting of Russian television channels, which are the main instrument of propaganda, as well as the prohibition of Russian movies and TV products, which glorify Russian law enforcement agencies, etc.; IP blocking of Russian social networks Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki and media resources Yandex.ru and Mail.ru; rejection of Russian software. Such measures to some extent limit the access of the average Ukrainian citizen to Russian information resources. The audience of Russian social networks has significantly decreased. However, the availability of satellite television, the Internet, programs that allow you to bypass the blocking of websites and social networks, do not allow to use these measures in full; 2. Establishment of a network of websites that: a) targeted at «distribution of pro-Ukrainian and neutral-positive news» (for example, high casualties among terrorists in the Eastern part of Ukraine, Russia’s economic crisis, etc.), which will be actively disseminated through social networks; b) focused on the dissemination of disinformation among the enemy or websites disguised as pro-separatist with the purpose of dissemination of inaccurate information. Such resources are usually published in Russian and focused primarily on opponents. However, the use of such resources is limited by the already mentioned «Room of echo» effect [42].

However, the representatives of non-governmental organizations have played the biggest part in debunking of Russian fake news. In particular, we can name such projects as StopFake and Informnapalm. Fake Russian reports about changes and state institutes were checked for validity and then debunked with the help of grounded facts [16].

Conclusions. In the CIS area Russia offers a wide range of projects (more or less successfully): the EurAsEC, the Union State of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, the SES, the CSTO, and the SCO. Within the framework of the initiated regional projects, Moscow implements the concepts of «multi-level» and «multi-depth» integration. Thanks to them the core in-

tegration positions of allied states were formed. However, the political reintegration of the CIS countries is almost unattainable. «Revival of the USSR» or the formation of a unitary «superpower state» which is supposed to be the Eurasian Union looks extremely unlikely. Even the most loyal partners, such as Kazakhstan and Belarus, are not ready to give up their formal independence to the former union centre. On the other hand, the Eurasian Union as a confederation with an uneven contribution of resources, but equal rights for all its members, is unlikely to suit Russia. The real economic, demographic, political and military power of Russia exceeds the corresponding indicators of its partners by more than several times. As a result, there is a dead-end situation that does not add to the Russian integration programs either efficiency or attractiveness.

The crisis over Ukraine has clearly shown the main vectors of the new national ideology of Russia. It is based on a fusion of nostalgia for the past, hate toward oligarchs, and xenophobia. Its nationalistic shade is explained by the Russians' confidence in the presence of an external threat. Unification against an external enemy, as it was during the Second World War, is a political tradition in Russia.

After the annexation of Crimea, Russia retreated from the old tactics and sharply raised the stakes. Moscow's readiness to go further in the Crimea than in previous cases was conditioned by Ukraine's strategic importance for Russia.

Without Russia's interference, Ukraine could theoretically be an example of success; because of ambitious reforms of the new government and the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU, Ukraine could repeat the path of the neighbouring Slavic countries (Poland, Slovakia, and Czech Republic). On the contrary, the failure of Ukraine can be presented to the Russian public as the inevitable consequence of a democratic uprising and rapprochement with the West. Putin wants Ukraine to collapse because of internal instability, rather than destroy it by military means from the outside; he wants to achieve the greatest possible collapse of the Ukrainian Europeanization. Also, Russia seeks to acquire an unofficial right of veto to prevent the further expansion of NATO and the EU to the East. The neutrality imposed on Ukraine on the international level, first of all, would mean Russia's ability to influence the situation in Ukraine much more than the EU. The status of a buffer state would have become a factor that affirmed the tumultuous situation in the region. Russia has already shown the breadth of its geopolitical ambitions and, obviously, intends to continue to act from the standpoint of the difference between «Russian civilization» and the West. This will not only be the source of many difficulties in relations between Russia and the West, but also the greatest threat to the existing system of international relations.

The negative sides of the conflict prevail but at the same time the conflict with Russia cemented Ukrainian political identity. Even though, as a result of Maidan, Ukrainians remained a divided nation, the Ukrainian civil society has become more mobilized. It could be concluded that the current conflict gave Ukraine a national idea, the lack of which has painfully affected the process

of post-communist development of our country for a long time. It is also evident that during the conflict, initiated by non-Ukrainians, they for the first time abandoned the traditionally passive role of those who are not trying to protect themselves, but only looking for a new strong partner.

The Russian policy in Ukraine is based on the combined application of soft and hard power. At the disposal of Moscow there is a whole set of formal and informal tools for strengthening regional influence — bribery, energy resources policy, trade ties. In addition, there is a rather large share of the Russian population whose fate also becomes a subject of political «trade-in» in Moscow's favour.

Backing of separatist movements remains the most powerful weapon in the Russian arsenal. Russia tries to create a «controlled chaos» and destabilize internal situation. In this case Russia will look like a model of prosperity, and accession to its geopolitical projects will be unquestionable. Throughout the post-Soviet period Russia is playing an already familiar scenario: first incites ethnic clashes and deploys a limited military contingent when political instability on its rise, and then approves territorial changes, which allows Russia to maintain influence in the region. Since the early 1990's Russia either directly supported, or contributed to the emergence of four separatist regions in Eurasia: Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. With the participation of Moscow «frozen conflicts» appeared in these states. Central governments lost control over the separatist regions and local authorities received full support and protection from Russia.

Returning to our hypothesis about the peculiarities of the Kremlin's soft power we must conclude that we have identified in the case of Ukraine the use of not a purely soft or hard power but rather a sort of Russian response to the «smart power» of Barack Obama. Putin is trying to work out his own version of «smart power» which would combine the most effective characteristics of previously trained in the CIS area soft and hard instruments. And as in the case of Obama the results of these attempts are rather unsatisfactory. However, although the results in Ukraine are counterproductive and for Moscow it is lost in the medium term, for the outside world Putin's strength can clearly be described as «smart», because the number of his fans is constantly growing. The latter fact is one of the greatest threats to bilateral relations and the modern system of international relations which Russia wants to revise.

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**РЕПОЛІТИЗАЦІЯ СУЧАСНИХ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКИХ  
ВІДНОСИН**

**Резюме**

Росія та Україна мають довгий період спільної історії. Сьогодні ця історія стала об'єктом палких дискусій. Російська наукова еліта продовжує доводити, що українська мова є лише діалектом руської та що Україна має стати частиною РФ; українська історія завжди включається в РФ до курсу російської історії.

Підготовка до розділу України почалася після «п'ятиденної війни» з Грузією через реформування та нарощування військових сил в Південному військовому окрузі. Москва прагнула досягти своїх цілей, встановивши контроль над українською правлячою елітою. Проте режим Януковича не витримав протести Майдану. Тому було застосовано план «Б» — проєкт «Новоросії», який створено у дусі імперських амбіцій «русського світу» та корелюється з таким історичним терміном як *Rex Romana*. Метою Москви було відокремлення південно-східної частини України та Криму від України та включення цих територій до Росії. Арсенал заходів для дестабілізації ситуації в Україні Кремль почав використовувати у лютому 2014 року. Почала діяти потужна пропагандистська машина Кремля. Для пропаганди використовувались і Російська Православна Церква та неурядові організації.

Політика Москви в Україні є реакцією Росії на «розумну силу» Барака Обами. Путін намагається виробити власну версію «розумної сили», яка поєднує в собі характеристики підготовлених в країнах СНД м'яких та жорстких інструментів. І, як у випадку з Обамою, результати цих спроб є досить незадовільними. Однак, хоча результати в Україні є контрпродуктивними, а для Москви це означає програв в середньостроковій перспективі, для зовнішнього світу сила Путіна може бути чітко визначена як «розумна», оскільки кількість його шанувальників постійно зростає. Останній факт є однією з найбільших загроз для двосторонніх відносин та системи міжнародних відносин, яку Росія хоче переглянути. Історичні проблеми та шлях розвитку сучасного конфлікту служать створенню нових міфів та роблять гіршими не тільки двосторонні але також міжнародні відносини.

**Ключові слова:** Росія, Україна, реполітизація, історія, мова.

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**РЕПОЛИТИЗАЦИЯ СОВРЕМЕННЫХ РОССИЙСКО-УКРАИНСКИХ  
ОТНОШЕНИЙ**

**Резюме**

Россия и Украина имеют долгий период общей истории. Сегодня эта история стала объектом дискуссий. Российская научная элита продолжает доказывать, что украинский язык является только диалектом русского и что Украина должна стать частью РФ; история Украины включается в РФ в курс русской истории.

Подготовка к разделу Украины началась после «пятидневной войны» с Грузией из-за реформирования и наращивания военных сил в Южном военном округе. Москва стремилась достичь своих целей, установив контроль над украинской правящей элитой. Но режим Януковича не выдержал протесты Майдана. Поэтому был применен план «Б» — проект «Новороссии», созданный в духе имперских амбиций «русского мира», коррелирующий с историческим термином *Rex Romana*. Целью Москвы было отделение юго-восточной части Украины и Крыма и включение этих территорий в Россию. Арсенал мер для дестабилизации ситуации в Украине Кремль начал использовать в феврале 2014 года. Начала действовать мощная пропагандистская машина Кремля. Для пропаганды использовались и Русская Православная Церковь и неправительственные организации.

Политика Москвы в Украине является реакцией России на «умную силу» Б. Обамы. Путин пытается выработать собственную версию «умной силы», которая сочетает в себе характеристики предварительно подготовленных в странах СНГ мягких и жестких инструментов. И, как в случае с Обамой, результаты попыток неудовлетворительны. Однако, хотя результаты в Украине являются контрпродуктивными, а для Москвы это означает проигрыш в среднесрочной перспективе, для внешнего мира сила Путина может быть четко определена как «умная», поскольку количество его поклонников растет. Последний факт является одной из самых больших угроз для двусторонних отношений и системы международных отношений, которую Россия хочет пересмотреть.

**Ключевые слова:** Россия, Украина, реполитизация, история, язык.