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ОНТОЛОГІЧНІ АСПЕКТИ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ

Анотація. Викладено політичну суть, причини та мотивацію сторін російсько-української війни. Розглянуто ідеологічні передумови, причини, етапи ескалації та наслідки російської збройної агресії проти України, а також еволюцію політичних і безпекових доктрин правлячого режиму в росії. Підкреслено, що російська держава на хвилі своєї діяльності в Україні фактично стала найбільшою терористичною організацією у світі. Розкрито глибинний, фундаментальний взаємозв'язок між темами політичного лідерства в російській федерації, витоками російсько-української війни та питаннями ідентичності, постколоніалізму. Висунуто твердження, що ця війна є результатом неминучого зіткнення двох протилежних несумісних історичних парадигм щодо подальшого розвитку України та всього пострадянського простору. У контексті норм міжнародного права акцентовано також питання відповідальності за геноцид, який вчиняють росіяни проти українців та власного народу (переважно національних меншин). В окремих частинах статті автор розглядає актуальні проблеми православної церкви московського патріархату та російської культури. Теоретичний дискурс автора, який формулює політичну природу, сутність, причини та особливості цієї війни, засновано на положеннях класичної військової теорії. Фундаментальні ідеї набувають нової актуальності в умовах гібридної війни з одночасною наявністю різних елементів і чинників військового протистояння. Автор підсумовує, що сучасна війна вимагає докладання всіх необхідних політичних, економічних, військових та інтелектуальних зусиль світової спільноти для розв'язання цієї глобальної проблеми, для побудови нового, безпечнішого світового порядку, який унеможливить у майбутньому спроби військової агресії та ядерного чи будь-якого іншого шантажу планети зброєю масового знищення.

Ключові слова: гібридна війна, збройна агресія росії, геноцид, державний тероризм, рашизм, «руській мір», військова ескалація.

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ONTOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Abstract. The article gives an insight into the political nature, causes, motivations of the parties, and the essence of the russia-Ukraine war. The author considers the ideological preconditions, reasons and consequences of the russian armed aggression against Ukraine, as well as the evolution of political and security doctrines of the ruling regime in russia. The author's theoretical discourse, which formulates the political nature, essence, causes and peculiarities of this war, is based on the provisions of the classic military theory. The fundamental ideas are gaining new relevance in the context of hybrid war with the simultaneous presence of elements and factors of military confrontation of several successive generations of warfare.

It is argued that this war is the result of the inevitable collision of two opposite incompatible historical paradigms regarding the further development of Ukraine and the entire post-Soviet space. The author clearly states the peculiarities of the russian-Ukrainian war.

Keywords: hybrid war, russia's armed aggression, genocide, state terrorism, ruscism, russian world, military escalation.

Among many research publications on military affairs, philosophical, historical, and epistemological aspects of war, its tactics and strategy, referring to the origins, the two most famous classic works are mentioned significantly often, written on different continents in different historical eras but included in the world scientific depository of military theoretical classics [1, 2]. The fundamental ideas formulated in these works have been developed in thousands of other specialised studies at different times but have not lost their significance, and vice versa, have acquired new meanings and relevance in the context of modern wars, in particular, due to their significant hybrid nature. In addition to the hybrid elements that distinguish the current russian-Ukrainian war, it is also characterised by the facts of nuclear blackmail used by the aggressor country, its President and other high officials. In our opinion, those indicated elements fundamentally differentiate this war from the wars of previous eras.

I. Weaponisation of history for justification of modern russia's aims. As rightly noted [3]: 'Nationalist leaders often weaponise the past to justify their present aims' and also: 'Vladimir Putin is not the only world leader who has harkened back to an ahistorical past to justify his decisions in the present'. The evolution of his revisionism is seen in his public statements throughout more than 22 years of his authoritarian rule.

Some references [4, 5] present the principles and practical implications of putin's russia foreign policy towards the post-Soviet states before the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Russia's domestic legal and regulatory documents, as well as public statements of its leadership, give grounds to conclude that *the kremlin has laid out a new foreign policy strategy and a corresponding doctrine – the “new doctrine of limited sovereignty” (“Putin Doctrine”)*, featuring the concept of “limited sovereignty”. During the Cold War, it was also a major component of the “Brezhnev Doctrine” – the USSR's foreign policy doctrine regarding the states of the so-called “people's democracies”. It is emphasised that for more than 20 years, the de facto form of russian government has been a personal dictatorship conducting aggressive international activities, especially against Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries. Such manifestations of russia's domestic and foreign policy, at least for the last 15 years, indicate that its actions meet the criteria set out in [4, 5] for the implementation of the “new doctrine of limited sovereignty”.

In his 2005 annual state of the nation address, v. putin called the *collapse of the Soviet empire “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century”* [6].

The first stage of escalation of russia's policy is traced to *putin's speech at the 2007 Munich Security Conference* [7–9], which, according to some of its high participants, smacked of the Cold War rhetoric. Exactly one year before the end of his second presidency, he has already been a seasoned politician but still a relative “democrat”, although he may have already decided on the future scenario of his authoritarian transformations in russia. Putin accused Washington of attempting to force its will on the world. He blamed the US for leading the world into a more dangerous place by pursuing policies aimed at making it unipolar. Demonstrating the ambitions of a resurgent energy superpower, putin was actually making unfounded claims that russia should be treated as a separate powerful pole of world politics.

Remarkably, the kremlin had been hinting for weeks before that putin, who would have had to step down the following year after two terms in office, was preparing a major foreign policy speech that would have pointed the way for his successor.

The reaction of the international political community to this speech was unambiguously negative and disapproving. An opinion was expressed that the speech was provocative and marked by rhetoric that sounded more like the Cold War ultimatum. At the same time, kremlin spokesman D. Peskov denied the russian president was trying to provoke Washington: *“This is not about confrontation. It's an invitation to think”* [7–9].

Although such ultimatum statements by putin made a negative impression, the West politicians still generally ignored them. *The trial balloon for the modern aggressive policy of the russian federation was the war in Georgia in August 2008,*

which led to casualties, destructions, and the actual annexation of about 20 percent of Georgian legitimate territories recognised in international law as the integral part of this country – Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia). These Georgian territories were illegally recognised by Russia as “independent states”.

The continued sluggish reaction of the collective West and, above all, the United States, the virtual impunity of the presumptuous aggressor allowed the political “gopnik” (thug) Putin to raise the stakes of his external aggression and “tighten the screws” to the bitter end regarding the restriction of elementary human freedoms in the internal Russian arena.

A further ideological escalation constituted a number of Putin's official speeches as well as programme and conceptual documents on foreign policy, security, and defence, published in 2014 and reviewed in [4, 5]. All this went alongside the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russian troops, which began on 20 February 2014, as well as certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Russia's ongoing hostilities in Donbas alone have resulted in the deaths of some 15,000 Ukrainians and massive destruction of the infrastructure and the residential sector of this Ukrainian region even before the start of a full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Putin liked to emphasise in his numerous interviews that the criminal St Petersburg gateway played an important role in his teenage upbringing. The political behaviour of the Kremlin dictator fits the stereotype of the criminal elements of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, the so-called “gopniks”. The basic principle of Russian street criminals goes as follows: *«If a fight is unavoidable, you gotta hit first»* and has actually become the modern ideology of foreign and security policy of Putin's autocracy. He stated this in a speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club in Sochi in the autumn of 2015, at the height of Russia's military operation in Donbas [10].

The further escalation of political rhetoric at the highest level began in mid-summer 2021. At that time, V. Putin, following the traditions of his idol Josef Stalin, turned to the epistolary amateur historical genre and published a rather lengthy article *“On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians”* [11, 12] in both Russian and Ukrainian on 12 July, which many analysts even then compared to the declaration of a real war or at least as a final ultimatum. Despite the very controversial and biased nature of its provisions, the article received considerable publicity in Ukraine and Russia, as well as in the world. It has become mandatory reading for servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces. However, the test of the “young historian's” pen was not taken seriously by the scientific community, even in Russia per se. As befits a KGB officer, Putin did not employ truly scientific research methods, when a scientist studies numerous facts and events and formulates scientific conclusions and concepts based

on scientific analysis. This approach was not taught at the KGB school of the USSR. The Russian dictator, as a “young historian-scientist”, formulated his “theoretic” conclusions without relying on any set of facts, so to speak, *a priori*. He formulated all his “theoretical” postulates in advance, without any research, among which are the following: Russians and Ukrainians are “one people”; anti-Russian conspiracies of Western countries are to be blamed for the collapse of bilateral Russian-Ukrainian relations. It is claimed that a significant part of the modern territory of Ukraine covers “historically Russian lands”, including even such an accusation as “Russia was robbed”. There were claims for new territorial annexations: “I am becoming more and more convinced that Kyiv simply does not need Donbas”. Ukraine was denied the right to statehood independence from Moscow: “I am confident that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia.”

Speaking about the alleged fact that Ukraine is moving from the concept of “not Russia” to “anti-Russia”, Putin actually declares war on Ukraine: ‘We will never allow our historical territories and people close to us living there to be used against Russia. And those who will make such an attempt, I want to say that in this way they will destroy their country’ [11, 12].

By manipulating real history, Putin (or a group of people who wrote this essay on his order) applied only those facts that fit into his pseudo concept, completely ignoring the ones that do not. Here we do not reject the legitimacy of *a priori* scientific methods. We only emphasise that historical science is rather a posteriori, based on a rigorous accumulation and analysis of historical data and facts.

There is a certain analogy with another “outstanding historian” and the inspirer of the incumbent Kremlin leader J. Stalin and his infamous work “*A Short Course in the History of the CPSU (b)*” published in 1938. Stalin’s “new communist Bible” was a compulsory study for at least two generations of Soviet students. There has never been any doubt that the university history textbook was “written” by a man with allegedly only four classes of a church school under his belt.

The subsequent attempt at an epistolary “blow” against Ukraine was made at a lower political level by **D. Medvedev**, the former President of Russia and current Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council. Even in a more boorish and disrespectful form this time, the article titled “***Why contacts with the current Ukrainian leadership are meaningless***” was published by the ***Kommersant newspaper on 11 October 2021***. “Ukraine is headed by weak people who only seek to line their pockets... There was no leader who could sacrifice himself for the sake of Ukraine, and it looks like there won’t be any... Negotiations with such people are absolutely pointless”. Such a statement by a formerly important figure in Russia, who is now in a much less significant position even though trying to stay afloat, is similar to the actual war threat. If the need and possibility to negotiate with the current democratically elected leadership of Ukraine are

denied, the only remaining form of relations with such a state is war. Whether it is a real or hybrid war is no longer of fundamental importance. In his boorish gopniks' manner D. Medvedev, the former professor of Leningrad University, even allowed himself certain anti-Semitic statements in relation to V. Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine [13].

Among the series of "iconic" belligerent and xenophobic political statements that appeared in the Russian media before and after 24 February 2022, one cannot fail to mention the notorious article *by T. Sergeytsev "What Russia should do with Ukraine"*, which was published on *RIA Novosti state agency* website *on 4 April*, on the same day when the whole world saw terrible evidence of the genocidal crimes committed by the Russian military against civilians in the town of Bucha, Kyiv region [14, 15]. The author describes how the *denazification* of Ukraine should be carried out. "The nazified mass of the population, which technically cannot be subjected to direct punishment as war criminals" should be subjected to denazification. The military personnel of the Ukrainian Armed Forces should be "destroyed to the maximum on the battlefield". *Denazification* should be carried out through "ideological repression and strict censorship". The process of *denazification* should touch at least the last 30 years of Ukrainian history or several generations of Ukrainians. In fact, it was meant to be the *de-Ukrainisation*, the rejection of "artificial inflation of the ethnic component of self-identification of the population on the territories of historical so-called Little Russia and New Russia". According to this chauvinistic manifesto, the very name "Ukraine" shouldn't exist. Isn't this a modern version of the Hitler's *Mein Kampf*? It is nothing else but a clearly declared manifesto of the revisionist and expansionist aggressive ideology of the "Russian world", and an action plan for the destruction of the entire Ukrainian nation and everything Ukrainian, designed for the next 30 years. The authors of the Russian-fascist manifesto do not even bother with at least formal attempts to cover up their neo-Nazi ideology with some kind of quasi-democratic "arguments".

II. Russia's genocide and state terrorism. Putin's claims of genocide of Russians and Russian speakers by Nazis in Ukraine are completely unfounded and could be considered as a bad and stupid joke or misunderstanding. However, they form a part and parcel of a propagandistic narrative repeated by Russian media and politicians for years. Moscow made wild allegations that Ukraine was building a plutonium-based dirty bomb and was running special NATO laboratories to develop chemical and biological weapons. Some of the accusations were so beyond the common sense to state that Ukraine was raising birds capable of contaminating exclusively Russians or Russian speakers. Now, it is *Russia* itself against *which the international community levelled accusations of committing atrocities in Ukraine* [16, 17]. *Ireland, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the USA, and Ukraine have gone further*

and called it genocide on the parliamentary level. [18]. Russia's aggressive war in Ukraine has revealed obvious manifestations of genocide in russia itself, where we can see the genocide of russia's own ethnic minorities residing in the poorest areas of the "one-seventh of the world's land." We are talking about the policy and results of the military draft during the intense phase of the russo-Ukrainian war. Russia is increasingly losing its military in the war. The krem-lin is trying to make up for these terrible losses in every possible way, despite the fact that the russian dictator is afraid to openly conduct a full-scale military mobilisation. According to British military intelligence, the russian army has already lost 40 percent of its ground forces that it had before the war in Ukraine. In the situation of an acute shortage of "cannon fodder" for the war, the country is not engaging in full-scale mobilisation, highly unpopular in russia, but in covert partial mobilisation, particularly of the male population from remote depressive regions with a compact residence of national minorities, notably from russia's Far East, North Caucasus, Buryatia, Khakassia, Yakutia, as well as the occupied areas of Georgia, Ukrainian Donbas and the occupied Crimea, Syrian mercenaries and representatives of private military companies, including the Wagner Group, which hires even criminals, murderers, and recidivists from russian prisons for the war with Ukraine.

Conscription is much less common in russia's large, economically and socially developed cities, where the majority of the population is ethnic russians. It is not only because low-paid representatives of national minorities are more willing than others to participate in the war as a way to make better money than anywhere they could do it in their depressive regions, as opposed to the population in big industrial centres with the prevailing ethnic russian population. Another apparent reason is the conscription policy aimed at "washing out" the minorities. Thus, the war covertly serves to carry out ethnic segregation and genocide (effectively, elimination) of russia's ethnic minorities. The number of representatives of the poorest national minorities from remote regions of russia who were injured or killed during the war disproportionately exceeds the respective share of ethnic russians who suffered the same fate. What the russian authorities are doing falls under Art. II (c) of *the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: "Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part"* [19].

The opposition russian media outlet Mediazone published a report in midApril analysing the available data on the casualties of the russian military in Ukraine. Using open russian sources, which, however, are far from complete, the journalists found 1,744 reports of killed russian soldiers, which is much less than the official number of over 22,000 reported by the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine at the time. The figures provided by Mediazone are also significantly lower than

the statistics from independent Western sources — about 17,000 russians were killed at the time. It is emphasised that most of those KIA are military servants from poor regions. Dagestan and Buryatia suffered the greatest losses, being among the poorest regions in russia with national minorities of Buryats, Dagestanis, Tuvans, Khakass, and others. Meanwhile, there are almost no residents of Moscow and St Petersburg (with 12 percent of russia's population residing there) in the reports on soldiers killed in the war. By 18 May, Buryatia, second only to Dagestan in the number of russian troops killed since the russian invasion, had lost 117 soldiers, while Moscow, with a population about 15 times larger than Buryatia, had lost only three. Measuring by a percentage, the incidence of death at war among the population of Buryatia was the highest in russia. According to the later report of the Mediazona, there were at least 5,801 confirmed deaths of the russian military from 24 February to 24 August (meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine reported on 45,700 dead russian military). Most of those killed in action come from the so-called 'ethnic republics', with Dagestan and Buryatia leading the way. In Buryatia, the dead were buried almost every day.

Most reports about soldier deaths are coming from the poorer regions: the average wage there is lower than one in russia overall. Again, Moscow and Saint Petersburg are almost never mentioned in those reports.

If we check the lists of russian losses in this war, the prevalence of Muslim names is rather impressive, with soldiers primarily coming from units assembled in Dagestan and other republics of the North Caucasus. Citizens of russia (or mercenaries) of Central Asian ethnicities, most of them Tajiks, are also dying disproportionately. The russian army is unevenly composed of poor ethnic non-russians. In a country where the Slavic majority accounts for 80 percent of the population, the deep roots of ethnic russian cultural dominance and racism remain the norm. Even European non-Slavic minorities in russia, such as the Finno-Ugric Udmurt or Komi, complain that their cultures and languages are oppressed or marginalised. As russia's losses in Ukraine increase daily, such ethnic discrimination has become strikingly obvious [20].

The russian state, in the wake of its activities in Ukraine, has actually become the largest terrorist organisation in the world, overtaking Al-Qaeda for cynicism and wickedness. On 14 April 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine recognised russia as a terrorist state [21]. On 10 May, the Seimas of Lithuania approved a resolution with the recognition of russia's actions in Ukraine as genocide, and russia as a state that supports and carries out terrorism. On 24 June, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee endorsed a resolution calling on the State Department to recognise russia as a state sponsor of terrorism [22]. The final recognition of russia as a sponsor of terrorism will put it in line with the countries that are under the most severe sanctions (Syria, Iran, North Korea, and Sudan). Russia is a terrorist country that supports and sponsors it in every

possible way, destroying the foundations of the world security order. There is ample evidence that Russia meets the criteria for the status of a “state sponsor of terrorism”. Therefore, it is worth waiting for the final decision of the USA on its recognition. At the same time, NATO Strategic Concept, approved at the last Summit (Madrid, 29–30 June 2022) [23], also declares on Russian aggression against Ukraine: “We also face the persistent threat of terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations”.

III. The full-scale hot war versus “special military operation”. Even though unjustified, this war is a pivotal and crucial moment. “Russia’s future and its future place in the world are at stake,” as stated by Russian foreign intelligence chief S. Naryshkin [24]. After so much destruction and killings, *putin’s words on 24 February 2022, the day of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, sound so false and cynical*: “It is not our plan to occupy the Ukrainian territory. We do not intend to impose anything on anyone by force.” [25].

The purpose of the so-called *special military operation* was deceitfully declared “to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime... We will seek to demilitarise and *denazify* Ukraine and bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, as well as against citizens of the Russian Federation”.

Even more cynical and beyond outright mockery are the following words of the “zeroed” dictator of Russia addressing the citizens of Ukraine after the start of the invasion: “The current events have nothing to do with a desire to infringe on the interests of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people... I am asking you, however hard this may be, to understand this and to work together with us so as to turn this tragic page as soon as possible and to move forward together”.

Putin’s appeal to soldiers and officers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to stop resistance and lay down arms looks the most grotesque and ridiculous. It indicates that the tens of thousands of Putin’s lackeys lack a few sane people who would dare to tell the dictator the truth about the real attitude of people in Ukraine towards him. He is not able to obtain this information by himself since he failed to master the intricacies of the Internet and receives all his meagre bits of knowledge in folders promptly slipped to him by his retinue.

On the eve of the invasion, Putin made it clear that he believed Ukraine had no legal rights and a historical claim [26] to independent statehood and that modern Ukraine had been “entirely created by Russia” [27]. He has repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of former Soviet republics, claiming that V. Lenin planted a “time bomb” by allowing them self-determination in the early years of the Soviet Union.

The war stepped into its hot phase in the early hours of 24 February after Putin had announced the *special military operation*. He cynically referred to Article 51 of the UN Charter, the permissive sanction of the Federation Council

of the Federal Assembly of the rf and the so-called “treaties of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance” between russia and the puppet self-proclaimed “republics” in the east of Ukraine. Incidentally, those “treaties” were to “come into force” the day later, on 25 February, and thus had no legal value neither before nor at the time of the outbreak of hostilities.

IV. Is russian culture responsible for russia’s crimes in Ukraine? Political scientists and historians, specialising in research on russia and the USSR, are lively discussing today the following questions: *whether the current regime of political power in russia is Nazi, fascist, totalitarian? Whether the “great” russian culture is responsible for the acts of genocide and crimes against humanity that are still being committed by the russian military in Ukraine?* [e.g. 29–31].

Most researchers are inclined to answer in the affirmative to the first question. Indeed, the putin’s regime has all the hallmarks of Nazi, fascist, and totalitarian, pertinent to all other genocidal, chauvinistic, and dictatorial political regimes that had existed in world history. Minor differences are visible only in the individual terminology of some authors. However, as the famous saying goes: *“If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck”*.

Obviously, it is difficult to find exact repetitions and replicas of events and regimes that have existed throughout human history. However, if there are apparent parallels, coincidences, and similarities, why should not we use similar terminology for those events or regimes? In the case of the current fascist regime in russia, new terms – *Ruscism* (russian fascism) and *Putinism* – have emerged in the glossary of historical and political science literature.

The answer to the *second question* is more complicated. Some authors and public figures believe that the “great” russian culture cannot be held responsible for the genocide and crimes against humanity committed by russian troops in Ukraine. This answer is chiefly based on a postulate that the criminals are allegedly uneducated people from the depressive remote outskirts of russia and belong to the marginalised strata of the russian society and therefore, are in no way connected with the “great” russian culture. In our opinion, such an argument is not tenable.

Firstly, the russian army is composed of people from all walks of life, including a significant number of high school graduates who studied Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol, and Chekhov. Secondly, more than 80 percent of russians are known to support russia’s war in Ukraine and criminal actions by the russian military. These actions are even backed by many russians living in Western democracies and having got educated at Western universities. Is there any reason why this “great” culture did not have a positive effect on the totalitarian and chauvinistic worldview of these people? The answers to this question belong mainly in the field of psychology and deserve separate research and publications. From our side, we would like to remark here that without denying the literary and

intellectual skills of these most famous russian authors, one should not overestimate their moral virtues in all spheres of life as such. They should not be regarded as undisputed authorities in shaping the morals of the youth of the russian nation. Moreover, at least two of them (M. Gogol and A. Chekhov) were rather Ukrainian than russian writers by origin, although they wrote in russian, which was the only language allowed in the literature of the russian empire back then. F. Dostoevsky was known for his Great russian Chauvinism. L. Tolstoy, A. Pushkin, and M. Lermontov were vocally glorifying the empire with explicit imperial views. Much of their great literary success in russia was achieved due to the privileges and opportunities of the “great” imperial nation of the russian empire against the background of humiliation and oppression of the cultures of other peoples of the empire. Let us thus allow ourselves the conclusion that the “great” russian culture has made a certain contribution to the formation of fascist and chauvinistic views of modern russians, which led to the tragic events that are unfolding in Ukraine.

V. Postcolonial war for Ukrainian identity and country’s future [32]. *The russian-Ukrainian war is fundamentally a postcolonial war over Ukrainian identity* [33]. This war is the result of the inevitable **clash of two opposing incompatible historical paradigms over the further development of Ukraine and the entire post-Soviet space**. On the one hand, there is putin’s obsessive paradigm about the revival of the russian empire within the borders of the USSR; about the “non-statehood” of young nations formed as a result of the second stage of dissolution of the russian empire in 1991 (the first stage took place as a result of the World War I); about the inability and impossibility of their independent existence from russia. Firstly, this applies to Ukraine and Belarus. According to putin [11, 12], russians and Ukrainians are one people; Ukraine never truly existed as a sovereign entity until the Bolsheviks mistakenly brought it into existence, and the territories of Ukraine are fundamentally russian lands. *On the other hand*, it is modern Ukrainian political nationalism that has been existing for more than a hundred years and is still growing, which has undergone difficult tests of practical state-building, building a liberal democratic system of government, regularly changing elected bodies, powerful law enforcement agencies of state security and defence, etc. over the last 30 years.

As for the uniqueness of Ukrainian culture, the latter has existed in one form or another for a thousand years. In this clash of two historical paradigms, Ukraine’s stakes are much higher as it has an existential level whereas putin’s understanding of history denies the very right of existence of a Ukrainian nation separated from russia. There is a fundamental difference in the positions of russia and Ukraine. Russia turns to the past to justify expansion, aggression, and domination, to resurrect its former empire. Ukraine does it in self-defence and self-determination to preserve and further develop an independent republic. **Russia fights for the past. Ukraine fights for the future** [34].

The influence of the russian Orthodox Church on the formation of the russian fascism – *ruscism ideology* should not be underestimated. The Church was almost completely destroyed in the 1920s-1930s by the USSR totalitarianism and “revived” by Stalin in 1943 as an entity accountable to the NKVD/KGB to become a mouthpiece and a conductor of the kremlin’s policy for many years. Little has changed since the collapse of the USSR. The russian Orthodox Church today, headed by Patriarch Kirill Gundayev, is a faithful servant of the kremlin, supporting and blessing its aggressive policy towards Ukraine.

In the first days of the war, Kirill proclaimed his warmongering sermons in the recently built Cathedral of the Armed Forces, intended to glorify the russian military power rather than God [35]. In this regard, it is interesting to note the recent statement of Pope Francis, calling on Kirill not to be “Putin’s altar boy”.

It will also be instructive to analyse the views on this war of S. Karaganov, one of the *principal ideologists and theorists of the russian world and ruscism* [36]: “The war was inevitable. [...] We made the very hard decision to strike first, before the threat becomes deadlier. [...] Enlargement of the aggressive alliance. It’s a cancer and we wanted to stop this metastasis. We have to do it by a surgical operation. [...] we are fighting a war of survival. This is a war with the West and people are regrouping around their leader. This is an authoritarian country [...] I don’t see real signs of opposition. [...] We have our doubts about the effectiveness of democracy [...] ***Kremlin decided to strike first.*** This military operation will be used to restructure Russian elite and Russian society. It will become a more militant-based and national-based society, pushing out non-patriotic elements from the elite. [...] We are fighting an existential war. [...] The war will be victorious [...] Demilitarization will be achieved and there will be denazification, too. Like we did in Germany and in Chechnya. Ukrainians will become much more peaceful and friendly to us. [...] ***We know that article 5 of NATO, stating that an attack on a NATO member is an attack to all, doesn’t work. There is no automatic guarantee that NATO would come to the defense of a member under attack***”.

Due to the absence of any notable russia’s military successes after the seven months of the full-scale russian intervention and in anticipation of a general military defeat, the russian authorities demanded their media to change the propaganda rhetoric. Now, in order to neutralise the facts of the expected defeat from Ukraine and to downplay the shame, propaganda is being promulgated that the war is being waged not with Ukraine but the entire Western world, and, above all, with NATO.

VI. Peculiarities of the current russian-Ukrainian war.

1. While russian media and politicians call this full-scale post-colonial war a *special military operation*, Ukraine perceives it to be an existential war for its identity as a political and cultural entity, a continuation of the fight for independence. Russia considers Ukraine “an inalienable part of our own history,

culture, and spiritual space”, whose independence was not a result of self-determination but “a mistake. [...] It is a matter of life and death, a matter of Russia’s historical future as a nation.”

For Putin’s empire, Ukraine does not exist since the very fact of its independent existence destroys the imperial myths about the “great and indivisible”, “Russian civilisation”, and its “global mission”. As a strategic defeat of Russia in the war with Ukraine becomes increasingly obvious, a more promoted narrative is that Russia is a “force of good” fighting the “forces of world evil” in the guise of the entire collective West coalition. Moreover, Russia is allegedly defending the traditional universal Orthodox Christian values of the “Russian world” and “Russian civilisation” against a worldwide conspiracy.

2. This war covers the territory of entire Ukraine, therefore, becoming the largest in Europe since World War II. The front line of the war is about 1,300 km long; the daily casualties of full-scale military operations amount to hundreds of people involving all branches of the armed forces on both sides. While the anti-Hitler military and political coalition of the mid-1940s included 53 states, the anti-Putin alliance (Ukraine Defense Contact (Rammstein) Group), which is actively being forged today, has already included about 60 countries. It was evidenced by the summits of the Ministers of Defence of the countries concerned, who gathered for the first five meetings of the coalition on 26 April, 23 May, 16 June, 20 July, and 8 September 2022.

3. The Russian-Ukrainian war, being also a hybrid one, rages in many dimensions: military, political, ideological, informational, diplomatic, economic, environmental, etc. Along with the traditional elements of the fourth- (and even third-) generation warfare (aviation, tanks, and armoured vehicles), this war has significant elements of the sixth-generation warfare. It is distinguished by non-contact combat operations and non-linear frontal attacks, the use of space satellites and high-precision super-powerful weapons, duels of long-range artillery and missile systems, electronic warfare and cyber defence, reconnaissance and combat drones of various modifications. In a tactical sense, the Ukrainian side in the war uses NATO standards of the decentralisation of military decision-making, while the Russian army is still committed to the Soviet standards of centralised decision-making. On the Ukrainian side, in addition to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the forces of the Territorial Defence are widely used, which have proven themselves especially well at the first stage of the war, during the defence of the city of Sumy.

4. There is also a threat of the war spreading to the neighbouring countries, posed by the armed provocations in the *breakaway Transnistrian region in the Republic of Moldova*, where about 2,000 Russian troops are stationed. These numbers can be exceeded by about 2,000 people within the Russian-controlled regular troops of the so-called unrecognised Transnistrian Moldavian Republic and about 8,000 local reservists. In addition, there is some danger of the covert

deployment of forces of russian private military companies to the region. Thus, the Transnistrian region still poses a certain military threat to Ukraine in the context of russia's possible opening of another military front [37]. Such a development may require the transfer of part of the Ukrainian troops fighting with the russian occupiers in the eastern and southern directions.

Belarus is actually participating in the war on the side of russia. It provides territory for the deployment and logistics of russian troops and allows launching russian missiles from its territory at Ukraine. Experts are still expressing opinions about the possible direct participation of the Belarusian army in the hostilities against Ukraine. However, the author of this article does not consider such a scenario to be entirely probable.

5. Unlike all other previous wars in the history of humankind, this one has become a truly unique phenomenon in terms of the level and depth of live coverage of military operations on the TV, Internet, and other media. In fact, all the events of this war and evidence of russia's war crimes become known to the world and receive immediate condemnation by the international community. This level of media coverage and the latest electronic information warfare and high-level technical support ensure that all russian criminals, murderers, looters, as well as officers and generals, who give criminal orders, become infamous worldwide. These factors should contribute to carrying out thorough procedural investigations and reaching appropriate verdicts of the international criminal courts.

6. Another criminal feature of the ongoing russia-Ukraine war is concerning the russian methods of mobilisation and conscription of the population. The russian authorities carry out covert partial mobilisation mainly in the backward depressive regions densely populated by national minorities (Buryats, Dagestanis, Chechens, Tatars, etc). Military conscription is almost non-existent in large and more economically and socially developed cities of russia, where the majority of the population are ethnic russians. Thus, there are grounded reasons to conclude that besides the crime of genocide of the Ukrainian people [18, 20, 38], hidden ethnic segregation and ethnocide ("extermination") of national minorities in russia is actually carried out. Frequent cases of abduction of the Ukrainian population and Ukrainian orphans from the occupied regions to russia, forced resettlement of Ukrainian citizens from the South-East Ukraine to russia illegally work to artificially change the demographic composition of russia, as well as to actually "exterminate" russia's ethnic minorities (demographic engineering).

7. The Decree of the President of russia on "partial mobilisation" in the country dated 21 September does not change the established criminal practice of conscription but only adds other illegal elements to it. As before, mobilisation primarily includes not only the peripheral regions of russia but also the occupied regions of Ukraine (that is the fundamental violation of international humanitarian law), as well as prisoners of strict regime colonies throughout

the country, who join the ranks of the Wagner PMC (which destroys accepted international norms and internal Russian legislation). At the same time, Putin once again threatened to use nuclear weapons.

8. By unleashing an unprovoked war against Ukraine, Russia destroyed the global security order that emerged after the end of World War II and revealed the weakness and hopelessness of the main international organisations designed to guarantee peace and security on the planet. This requires new collective efforts of the world to create a new global security system, which is equivalent to the deep tectonic processes in geopolitics that took place in the mid-1940s, which led to the creation of the UN and formation of the Yalta/Potsdam global world order. Today, the UN, OSCE and other international security organisations require cardinal and fundamental changes and reforms.

9. A phenomenon unique in its danger to world peace and global consequences became the outright nuclear blackmail and sabre-rattling of weapons of mass destruction, which Russia and its dictator resorted to. The world can no longer tolerate the fact that a nuclear state, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, openly threatens to turn the planet into “nuclear ashes”. This nuclear blackmail, maintained by Russia since 2007, contravenes the norms of international law, primarily the NPT and its important addition – the UN Security Council Resolution of 19 June 1968, and a subsequent Statement of the three nuclear powers (USA, UK, and Russia) on issues of guarantees to non-nuclear participating-states of the NPT. The mere fact of such blackmail obliges the nuclear states (in this case the US and the UK) to “act immediately in accordance with their obligations under the UN Charter [...] provide immediate assistance [...] to any non-nuclear-weapon state” [39]. This Resolution recognised that ***aggression with nuclear weapons or the threat of such aggression against a non-nuclear-weapon state would create a situation in which the SC, and above all its nuclear-weapon state permanent members, have to act immediately.***

Thus, this war became the first war in the last 70 years (or ever), during which the politicians, the expert community, and the military seriously discuss the danger and likelihood of using weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear weapons, both tactical and strategic. The possibility of using such weapons completely eliminates the validity of the famous thesis of C. von Clausewitz that “***war is a continuation of politics by military means***” [2], which has been a postulate of political science for almost 200 years. Since nuclear war is fraught with the complete annihilation of its parties and probably the entire human race, it loses any sense whatsoever to talk about the rationality of such a policy.

10. The fundamental ideas of C. von Clausewitz are gaining new relevance in the context of this war, which in many respects has not only a traditional but also a hybrid character. It should be noted that in the modern programmes and guiding military documents of NATO, Ukraine, and the RF, the military

information and information sphere in general are actually defined as direct spheres of hostilities. In accordance with the collective decision of the leadership of Ukraine, information is not used as a weapon, although Ukrainian legislation allows censorship of enemy propaganda attempts.

11. The current war is also characterised by the simultaneous presence of elements of military confrontation of yesterday's third generation war and factors of the future new type of sixth generation war. The Armed Forces of Ukraine actively use both a wide range of weapons that correspond to the latest military technology and modern NATO standards, as well as modern tactical formations and methods of conducting military operations. Meanwhile, the russian Armed Forces continue to use mainly old Soviet weapons and the corresponding methods and tactics of warfare from World War II. According to information available in the media, some of the russian troops still use the Mosin-Nagant rifle, which was in service in 1891–1960, as well as the *Maxim machine gun* (invention of 1883). The MBTs T-62, produced in the 1960s, are also actively used in the AF of the rf. In the Western media, one can find increasing evidence of the technological backwardness of russian weapons compared to the weapons used by the AFs of Ukraine [e.g. 40 – 42]. One of the factors and purposes of this war for the russian side is the need for the combat “disposal” of the existing old weapons and the test of new weapons in combat in order to determine further opportunities for their improvement.

12. According to western sources, another strange feature of command of the russian army in Ukraine is that putin and his highest generals were involved in war “at level of colonel or brigadier” [43]. In comparison with Ukrainian and western armies, russia's military operates in a more top down fashion, with instructions typically sent to generals in the field. But moscow's faltering invasion has meant that it has been forced to send generals closer to the front line, where up to 15 of them have been killed, according to the Ukrainian armed forces. In the russian army, in contrast to NATO standards, which are followed today by the Ukrainian military, the management of troops is too centralised that junior and middle-ranking officers are hardly allowed to make decisions independently. Therefore, most generals seek to better understand the situation and to be able to better manage the troops, abuse their security and appear directly on the front line, where they become an easy target for Ukrainian snipers [44, 45]. The total casualties of the russian army as of 25 September 2022 are as follows: 56,700 people died, including more than 1,000 officers and about 100 colonels; almost 110,000 military are wounded.

13. One of the many failures of the russian invading forces in Ukraine is shortcomings in radio communications and coordination. There have been stories of troops resorting to commercial walkie-talkies and Ukrainians intercepting their frequencies. It explains why russian forces are poorly co-ordinated, falling victim to ambushes and lose so many troops and generals. Modern military-grade radios encrypt signals and change the frequency of operation many times a second, so

their transmissions are impossible to intercept. But many russian forces are communicating on unencrypted high-frequency channels that allow anyone with a ham radio to eavesdrop [46]. There was also information in the media that some russian pilots, not trusting the russian GLONASS navigation system, attached gadgets with the GPS system to the control panels of their aircraft with adhesive tape.

14. An important component of the military training of officers and generals, in which the russian army significantly lags behind NATO countries and Ukraine, is the lack of planning and understanding of the strategic level of warfare (the scale of large regions, armies and fronts), as well as the even more global – geopolitical level. According to several russian military experts, russia has actually failed at the geopolitical level even before the war began. Possible global consequences were not considered, so russia found itself without a single ally in the world in this war for the first time in history. Moreover, the anti-russian coalition of about 60 countries has already been formed. The strategic decisions are also taken incorrectly by the russian AF Command, which is fraught with their final defeat over time, despite individual operational and tactical successes.

15. One should consider the situation around the problem of the continued existence of russia itself to be a result of its expected military defeat in the war against Ukraine with the active assistance of the latter from the collective West. Russia presents an existential threat to Ukraine and the post-Soviet space in Central and Eastern Europe. While the *last NATO Summit (Madrid, 29–30 June 2022) identified russia as “the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area”* [23]. Should this war end with a simple truce, without cardinal consequences for russia and its complete reformatting, it can only lead to a postponed war in the next 15–20 years, when the aggressor may become even more bloodthirsty.

Since this war has all the features of a world war with the actual participation of the anti-russian coalition of about 60 allies, the international community of victors will have to provide for such a political solution regarding russia’s future political structure, which will guarantee the impossibility of a repeated aggression against its neighbours. Hardly is it possible without a certain de-imperialisation and demilitarisation / denuclearisation of russia.

This position is shared by two successive British Prime Ministers B. Johnson and L. Truss, as well as US Secretary of Defense L. Austin, who stated *that the United States want “to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can’t do the kind of things that it has done in invading Ukraine.”*

Current war requires the application of all the necessary political, economic, military, and intellectual efforts of the world community to resolve this global problem, to build a new, more secure world order that excludes future attempts at military aggression and nuclear or any other blackmail of the planet with weapons of mass destruction.

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