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Olena BILICHAK
PhD hab. (Law), Associate Professor, Honored Lawyer of Ukraine, Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Tajikistan, 216/1 Navobod Street, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, postal code 734027 (academ2016@ukr.net)

ORCID: 0000-0002-2377-731X

Anatolii HUZ
PhD hab. (History), Full Professor, National Academy of the Security Service of Ukraine, 22 M. Maksymovycha Streer, Kyiv, Ukraine, postal code 03066 (363sens@gmail.com)

ORCID: 0000-0002-1531-5043

Олена БІЛІЧАК
докторка юридичних наук, доцентка, заслужена юристка України, посольство України в Республіці Таджикистан, вул. Навобод, 216/1, м. Душанбе, Таджикистан, індекс 734027 (academ2016@ukr.net)

Анатолій ГУЗ
доктор історичних наук, професор, Національна академія Служби безпеки України, вул. М. Максимовича, 22, м. Київ, Україна, індекс 03066 (363sens@gmail.com)

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HYBRID WAR AS AN TOOL OF FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: THE UKRAINIAN DIMENSION (1991 – 2023)

Abstract. The purpose of the research *is the need to clarify the hybrid aggression periodization of the Russian Federation (RF) against Ukraine and to substantiate the scientific hypothesis that the start of its implementation was directly linked to the change in the state-political course of the newly proclaimed Ukrainian state in 1991. The scientific research is also aimed at studying the system of means concerning the hybrid influence of the Russian Federation on the state and political life of Ukraine, to develop general recommendations regarding the choice of directions for organized countermeasures to this kind of aggression.* ***The Methodology of the Research.*** *In order to achieve the set goal, a complex of general scientific (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, modelling) and special (content analysis, historical genetic, historical legal, historical typological, historical systemic, retrospective) methods of cognition have been used.* ***The Scientific Novelty.*** *For the first time there have been presented the results of a comprehensive scientific study of the historical and political aspects of Russia's conduct of a hybrid war against Ukraine. The prerequisites, which contributed to the hybrid war deployment have been analysed, the means and methods of its conduct have been elucidated, and recommendations have been formulated for the development of a system of collective resistance to this kind of aggression. It has been proven that the first "attacks" of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine*

began after the declaration of Ukrainian independence. ***The Conclusion.*** *The hybrid war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine began from the time of its declaration of independence and the creation of a sovereign state, intensified after the Revolution of Dignity, as a result of the mass expression of the will of the people of Ukraine regarding the choice of the geopolitical path of the development of their country, and turned into an open war in 2022. Taking into account the events related to the Russian invasion of 2022, it can be argued that, in addition to Ukraine, victims of the hybrid influence of the Russian Federation are also other states of the post-Soviet camp, in particular Belarus, from whose territory the Russian troops entered the territory of Ukraine in 2022, and there was missile shelling and drone attacks. Moldova is also a victim of the hybrid war of the Russian Federation, within which the political situation is currently actively shaking up with the aim of removing the current political leaders from power and replacing them with the pro-Russian ones, simultaneously with threats about the participation of the Russian troops in the event of an escalation of the conflict with the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic. Mass protests in Georgia, which recently have taken place due to the adoption of the law on foreign agents by the Georgian parliament, against the background of a gradual change in the country's political course towards the collapse of democracy and rapprochement with Russia, are also a direct sign of the Russian hybrid influence. Finally, the results of the vote of the UN General Assembly on February 23, 2023 regarding the resolution calling on Russia to stop the hostilities and withdraw its troops from Ukraine, and among the countries that abstained were Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajykystan, and Uzbekystan, show that the front of the hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation is extremely broad. The results of Russia's hybrid influence on the state life and politics of individual countries pose a threat to international security and destroy the world legal order.*

Key words: *hybrid war, hybrid threats, Russian-Ukrainian war.*

ГІБРИДНА ВІЙНА ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ЗОВНІШНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ ФЕДЕРАЦІЇ: УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ВИМІР (1991 – 2023)

Анотація. Метою дослідження *стала необхідність уточнення періодизації гібридної агресії Російської Федерації (РФ) проти України, обґрунтування наукової гіпотези, що початок її здійснення безпосередньо пов'язаний зі зміною у 1991 році державно-політичного курсу новопроголошеної української держави. Наукове дослідження також мало на меті вивчення системи засобів гібридного впливу РФ на державно-політичне життя України, розробку загальних рекомендацій щодо вибору напрямів організованої протидії такого роду агресіям.* ***Методологія дослідження.*** *Для досягнення поставленої мети у процесі роботи використано комплекс загальнонаукових (аналіз, синтез, індукція, дедукція, моделювання) і спеціальних (контент-аналіз, історико-генетичний, історико-правовий, історико-типологічний, історико-системний, ретроперспективний) методів пізнання. Застосування їх у єдності та взаємозв'язку зумовило наукову об'єктивність, повноту й достовірність результатів дослідження, а також обґрунтованість, наукову новизну і коректність сформульованих висновків. Зокрема доведено, що гібридна війна Росії проти України розпочалася від часу проголошення нашою країною незалежності. У зв'язку із анексією Криму й початком бойових дій на Сході держави у 2014 року вона набула більш агресивної форми, а після 24 лютого 2023 року перетекла у широкомасштабне збройне протистояння внаслідок акту відкритої воєнної агресії Росії проти України.* ***Наукова новизна.*** *Пропонована стаття є одним із перших комплексних наукових досліджень історико-політичних аспектів ведення росією гібридної війни проти України, де у розрізі сучасної воєнно-політичної обстановки проаналізовано передумови, що сприяли її розгортанню, розкрито засоби й методи ведення та сформульовано рекомендації щодо розбудови системи колективної протидії такого роду агресіям.* ***Висновки.*** *Гібридна війна РФ проти України розпочалася від часу проголошення нею незалежності та створення суверенної держави, загострилася після Революції Гідності як результату масового волевиявлення народу України щодо вибору геополітичного шляху розвитку своєї країни, й переросла у відкриту війну у 2022 р. Ураховуючи події, пов'язані із російським вторгненням 2022 р., можна стверджувати, що, крім України, жертвами гібридного впливу РФ є також інші держави пострадянського табору, зокрема Білорусь, з території якої війська РФ заходили на територію України, звідки велися ракетні обстріли й атаки дронів. Жертвою гібридної війни РФ є також Молдова, всередині якої зараз*

активно розхитується політична ситуація на предмет усунення від влади політичних лідерів та заміну їх на проросійських, одночасно з погрозами про участь російських військ у випадку загострення конфлікту з Придністровською Молдавською Республікою. Масові протести у Грузії, які нещодавно прокотилися через прийняття парламентом країни закону про іноагентів, на фоні поступової зміни політичного курсу країни в бік згортання демократії та зближення з Росією, теж є прямою ознакою російського гібридного впливу. Врешті результати голосування Генасамблеї ООН від 23 лютого 2023 р. щодо резолюції із закликом до Росії зупинити бойові дії та вивести свої війська з України, де серед країн, які утримались – Вірменія, Казахстан, Киргизстан, Таджикистан, Узбекистан, свідчать, що фронт гібридної війни, яка ведеться РФ, надзвичайно широкий. Результати гібридного впливу Росії на державне життя і політику окремих країн становлять загрозу міжнародній безпеці та руйнують світовий правопорядок.

Ключові слова: *гібридна війна, гібридні загрози, російсько-українська війна.*

The Problem Statement. The full-scale Russian aggression that began on the morning of February 24, 2022 with a massive missile attack on the critical infrastructure of Ukraine and the invasion of its territory by the Russian troops is one of the bloodiest armed conflicts of our time, which is closely observed by the entire civilized world nowadays. The groundless Russian invasion received a strong condemnation by the international community. The world supports Ukraine, helps it with weapons, provides material and humanitarian aid, while at the same time trying to prevent the spread of the war to the European territories and to avoid a direct clash between the NATO troops and the forces of the Russian Federation (hereinafter – RF), which would mean the beginning of World War III, as one of the greatest threats to the mankind existence, along with ecological catastrophe and overpopulation crisis.

Numerous casualties and economies destruction of the warring parties during World War II proved ineffectiveness of the military method of resolving geopolitical conflicts. At the same time, during the second half of the 20th century the rapid scientific and technical progress led to the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction, the use of which in the hostilities can lead to a catastrophe of a planetary scale. However, the geopolitical conflict between the West and the USSR, which arose in the struggle for world leadership at that time, remained unresolved and turned into the Cold War, which in many respects was of a hybrid nature (Honchar & Chubyk, 2017, p. 8). The world politics established new rules of the political game, according to which the force methods of solving geopolitical conflicts began to play a secondary role and gave way to political, economic and information measures of influence due to several reasons: an increasing arms race, a surplus of the number of local military conflicts that broke out in different parts of the world, a constant threat of resumption of a full-scale war. Nowadays such phenomena and processes are covered by the concept of "hybrid war" or "hybrid confrontation" as a way of resolving interstate conflicts aggressively without the direct use of weapons or with their covert use, the purpose of which is to implement the geostrategic interests of individual international players in a certain territory.

Taking into consideration the content of the events that preceded the open Russian attack, numerous scholars and practitioners claim that the Russo-Ukrainian war has been going on since 2014, since the Crimea annexation and instigation of the hostilities, disguised as the Civil War, in the territories of Luhansk and Donetsk regions. This war, accordingly, has "hot" and "cold"phases, when the open hostilities against Ukraine were not conducted, but the means of a "hybrid" war were used, when the achievement of political goals was ensured by diplomatic, economic, informational and, in the vast majority, other non-military means the purpose of which was to weaken state sovereignty, undermine economic and political stability in Ukraine, and reduce its defense potential. At the same time, a retrospective analysis of the

history of the above-mentioned issue gives reason to assert that the hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine began from the time of its withdrawal from the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence, intensified after the annexation of the Crimea by Russia and the start of hostilities in Donbas, and in 2022 the hybrid aggression acquired the features of a conventional war. Taking into account the above-mentioned, the periodization issues of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine require the study and scientific justification.

There is no doubt that the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, even in the event of Ukraine's military victory, will not end with the complete capitulation of the Russian Federation and its transition to a foreign rule, but will only move from an open phase to a closed one. It should not be ruled out that the means and methods of waging hybrid wars, widely used by Russia in the confrontation with Ukraine, may be used by other states in solving similar geopolitical conflicts and contradictions. In this context, the **purpose of the research** is to study the historical experience of conducting a hybrid war against Ukraine by Russia in order to find the ways to counter hybrid attacks and minimize the subsequent risks of inspiring open armed conflicts, as well as to localize potential negative consequences of hybrid attacks.

The Review of Recent Researches and Publications. Numerous researches done by domestic and foreign scholars focused on the scientific and practical analysis of the issues on detecting and countering the hybrid encroachments, the researches in which there were studied various aspects of this issue (Levchenko, 2022; Haliv & Sviontyk, 2023). In particular, the analysis of the hybrid war phenomenon in the light of the Ukrainian experience was carried out in the collective monograph "World Hybrid War: Ukrainian Forefront" (Horbulin, 2016), collections of analytical materials "The Wars – XXI: Russia's Polyhybridization" (Honchar & Chubyk, 2017), "Hybrid Threats to Ukraine and Public Security" (Martyniuk, 2018), the publications by E. Mahda (Mahda, 2015), I. Rushchenko (Rushchenko, 2015; Rushchenko, 2020), Yu. Hajduk and T. Stępniewski (Hajduk & Stępniewski, 2016), O. Danyliuk (2021) and other scholars. The epistemological and philosophical aspects of a socio-political nature of the hybrid war are elaborated in the works by Z. Dubniak (Dubniak, 2023), M. Vardanian (Vardanian, 2023). We should also note the analytical reports of foreign experts and researchers: a senior researcher of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs A. Rácz (Rácz, 2015), the British analyst K. Giles (Giles, 2015), the German political scholar A. Umland (Umland, 2016), the American expert M. Clark (Clark, 2020). The nature of the Russo-Ukrainian war was studied by L. Zalizniak (Zalizniak, 2016), O. Lysenko (Lysenko, 2022), A. Kyrydon and S. Troian (Kyrydon & Troian, 2022), V. Smolii and O. Yas (Smolii & Yas, 2022), M. Haliv and V. Ilnytskyi (Haliv & Ilnytskyi, 2023), V. Telvak and V. Ilnytskyi (Telvak & Ilnytskyi, 2023), and the others. The ideological foundations of Russia's war against Ukraine were analysed by O. Sytnyk (Sytnyk, 2017), L. Yakubova (Yakubova, 2022), V. Ilnytskyi, V. Starka, M. Haliv (Ilnytskyi, Starka & Haliv, 2022), etc. Historical, legal and political analysis of the events that testified that Russia was waging a hybrid war against Ukraine was carried out in the works by both scholars and documentary journalists: V. Bilotserkivskyi (Bilotserkivskyi, 2017), M. Bushyn, O. Hurdzhii (Bushyn & Hurdzhii, 2016), O. Zavadska (Zavadska, 2016), L. Chekalenko, S. Feduniak (Chekalenko & Feduniak, 2010), V. Losiev (Losiev, 2001), B. Butkevych (Butkevych, 2015), S. Zhukov (Zhukov, 2019), D. Kazanskyi (Kazanskyi, 2014), M. Kryhel and R. Khalilov (Kryhel & Khalilov, 2023), O. Shevchenko and A. Dorohan (Shevchenko & Dorohan, 2019), etc. The studies of certain aspects of the Russo-Ukrainian confrontation since the full-scale invasion have been conducted by M. Lazarovych (Lazarovych, 2017), A. Kharuk (Kharuk, 2022), V. Hrytsiuk and O. Lysenko (Hrytsiuk

& Lysenko 2023). P. Fedorchenko-Kutuiev, I. Pyrholenko, A. Khom'iak studied the democratic development capabilities of the post-war Ukrainian society in the context of existing geopolitical realities (Fedorchenko-Kutuiev, Pyholenko & Khom'iak, 2023). However, in the context of the development dynamics of a modern global, domestic, military and political situation, a domestic historical experience of the hybrid war with the Russian Federation requires a deeper study, with the aim of systematizing it and finding the ways of a collective resistance to this kind of aggression.

The Results of the Research. In the 70s and 80s of the previous century degradation and collapse of the pro-Soviet political regimes in the countries of Eastern Europe proved the inability of communist ideology to provide the basis for building a democratic society and significantly complicated the Soviet Union's ability to advance its geopolitical interests in the West. There is no doubt, these processes accelerated the already inevitable collapse of the USSR. Mass discontent of the population happened due to a low standard of living and social injustice caused by the corruption and crimes of the communist regime, dealt a devastating blow to the Kremlin's imperial ambitions. Russia, as the main ideological heir of the Soviet Union, after its collapse tried to take on the mission of a geopolitical leader, which seeks to renew and strengthen its influence on as many European territories as possible. However, under the conditions of the changing world, the development of economies and a related increase in the standard of living of the population of the European democracies, it became increasingly difficult for the Russian Federation to maintain not only geopolitical influence, but also national statehood. Russia realized the falsity of its chosen strategy of economic development, which would inevitably lead to the collapse of the state, and in an effort to preserve itself for as long as possible, Russia declared a messianic path of foreign policy. The focus of this policy was to "protect" the countries that were once part of the USSR from political, economic, and military expansion of the West. The above-mentioned policy was also intended to protect the national interests in the security sphere. This policy reflected the reluctance of the Russians to put up with the collapse of the Soviet empire and the loss of the vast territories (Dubniak, 2023, p. 60). At the same time, the political leadership of the Russian Federation cherished the hope that the fulfillment of a noble historical mission would unite the Russian citizens, make them forget about their own difficulties and troubles for a certain time, and at least temporarily save the Russian state from an inevitable self-destruction.

The termination of the USSR existence plunged the Russian Federation into a new reality, and the primary goal of its foreign policy became the preservation of the status quo of the metropolis for the former Soviet republics, for which all available means were used, preventing the latter from finally rejecting the Russian Federation and following the path of self-sufficient political and economic development. To a large extent, a narrow specialization of production in the USSR with centrally planned integration into a single all-Union national economic complex contributed to the solution of such goals. Such circumstances made it possible to raise issues on the development of mutually beneficial economic cooperation, creation of various political and economic blocs that would strengthen ties among the post-Soviet republics.

Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the Belovezha Accords on December 7–8, 1991, which declared the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a regional intergovernmental organization led by Russia, designed to ensure a painless withdrawal of the republics from the USSR. It was assumed that the CIS would not perform state functions

and would not have supranational powers. However, in reality, the CIS began to be used by Russia as an integration platform to bring together the systems of state administration of the CIS countries, support existing and create a new military potential. In the context of the Warsaw Pact Organization existence termination, the Russian Federation showed a serious interest in creating an alternative organization of collective security, to some extent opposed to NATO. Hence, on May 15, 1992, the Agreement on Collective Security was concluded in Tashkent. At the initiative of the Russian Federation, various programmes were also implemented on the CIS platform to strengthen the economic dependence of the former union republics on the centre (the CIS Free Trade Zone, the Interstate Bank of the CIS). In general, Russia's aggressive policy towards its CIS partners limited their opportunities significantly to build their own national statehood and was aimed at the development of supranational bodies, which turned the CIS into a state of a confederal or even federal system (Bilotserkivskyi, 2017, p. 514)

In addition to the means of economic and political pressure, in order to implement the strategic goals of the Russian policy regarding the preservation of influence in the CIS countries, the special services of the Russian Federation carried out destructive work to incite inter-ethnic and inter-national enmity in those countries in order to inspire local conflicts and create zones of military and political instability in their territories. For the most part, such conflicts ended up with the loss of the part of the territories (the self-proclaimed Transnistrian-Moldavian Republic, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, the Republic of Abkhazia, the Republic of South Ossetia) with the subsequent involvement of the Russian Federation in peacekeeping activities up to the introduction of peacekeeping missions, in which the military presence contributed to the growth of a political influence. Later similar scenarios were later used to destabilize the situation in the south and east of Ukraine. In 2014, the Russian special services activated the "Novorossiia" project as a zone of wide instability under the patronage of the Russian Federation, which was supposed to cover fully or partially the territories of Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odesa regions. However, due to the previous experience, gained through the Crimea annexation enabled the political leadership of Ukraine to prevent such a development of events (Bushyn & Hurdzhii, 2016, pp. 572–573) An alternative military and political project of the Russian Federation implemented in the east of Ukraine was the "Malorosiia" project, the goal of which was the covert occupation of Donetsk and Luhansk regions within their administrative borders with the subsequent holding of a fake referendum and accession to the Russian Federation. The main bet in the implementation of this project was placed on the international enmity between the Russians and the Ukrainians, which was actually ignited and supported by the actions of the Russian special services. However, the Kremlin always denied its involvement in actions to destabilize the situation in Ukraine at the official level, which posed a direct threat to its territorial integrity and sovereignty and eventually led to an open war, the main goal of which was "the restoration of the former empire and subjugation of Ukraine" (Vardanian, 2023, p. 35).

Ukraine never became a signatory of the CIS Statute, which delegitimized its participation in the organization efficiently, after signing the agreement on its establishment. Contrary to this, Russia recognized Ukraine's membership in the CIS emphatically, even despite the fact that in 2014, after the annexation of the Crimea, a decision of the National Security Council was made, according to which Ukraine withdrew its membership officially. Later, on May 9, 2018, the President of Ukraine, P. Poroshenko, signed the Decree, which implemented the decision of the National Security Council on the final termination of Ukraine's participation

in the statutory bodies of the CIS. However, the Russian side ignored that fact, and on October 11, 2019, the Executive Committee of the CIS sent an invitation to President V. Zelensky for the CIS summit, but he did not attend it (Zhukov, 2019). Such intrigues of the Kremlin showed that the Soviet practice of conducting a subversive policy on an international scale was fully accepted by Russia in solving its own geopolitical goals.

The geographical location of Ukraine, in particular, access to the Black Sea basin and proximity to European countries, determined its stay in the Russian Federation zone of special interests. In this regard, the Russian Federation used various means of political and economic pressure, the goal of which was to weaken and destroy the economy of Ukraine, to make its political leadership dependent on the Russian Federation. Economic pressure with elements of fraud was applied to Ukraine immediately after leaving the USSR, when material assets abroad that were subject to distribution and were diverted by the Russian Federation to its own benefit. A similar situation occurred with the treasury of the CPSU and the assets of Oschadbank, funds from which were also appropriated by the Russian Federation (Chekalenko & Feduniak, 2010, pp. 152–153). In addition, there was always the opinion regarding the illegality of Ukraine's exit from the USSR in the highest political circles of Russia, therefore, from the first days of its independence, the state policy of the Russian Federation was aimed at weakening it, depriving it of economic independence, establishing a full political control over state life up to the annexation of certain territories. Immediately after the collapse of the USSR, the ruling circles of the Russian Federation declared territorial claims to the Crimea. In particular, as early as 1992, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 1954, according to which the Crimea was the part of the Ukrainian SSR, was recognized as illegal by Parliament of the Russian Federation (Losiev, 2001, p. 64). The fact of international recognition of Ukraine's borders did not affect Russia's intentions to reject it. Hence, the subsequent policy of the Russian Federation in relation to the Crimea was aimed at finding ways to annex it. The first attempts were made in 1992 – 1995, when Ukraine almost lost the Crimea due to the provocations of the pro-Kremlin Yu. Meshkov (Shevchenko & Dorohan, 2019). In 2003, another large-scale provocation occurred, when the Russian side began construction of a dam that was supposed to connect the coast of the Russian Federation with the Ukrainian island of Tuzla. Owing to a personal interference of the President of Ukraine, L. Kuchma, who interrupted a series of visits to Latin American countries, arrived at the scene of events and organized a demonstrative construction of defensive fortifications on the spit, the construction of the dam was stopped (Kryhel & Khalilov, 2023). However, at the official level, the Russian side never recognized the island of Tuzla as the Ukrainian territory, and Russia continued to try to separate the Crimea from Ukraine.

One of the objects of vulnerability, which enabled Russia to exert a continuous pressure on the economy and politics of Ukraine, was the shortage of energy resources. The vast majority of gas pipelines connecting Russia and Europe passed through the territory of Ukraine at the time of the collapse of the USSR. After the declaration of independence and separation from the USSR, Ukraine began to buy gas from Russia and take part in contracts for its supply to Europe. Given the growing shortage of fuel, the issue of gas procurement and transportation immediately became the subject of manipulation by the Russian Federation, a means of influencing not only the Ukrainian, but also European and international politics. Thus, back in 1993, under the conditions of hyperinflation of a payment system, the payments for gas in the US dollars, carried out at the request of the Russian side, led to a sharp increase in the debt of Ukraine under gas contracts and, as a result, a permanent economic weakening.

Taking advantage of these circumstances, the Russian Federation put forward a demand for the settlement of a part of the gas transportation system, which was unacceptable for Ukraine, because it put it even more economically and politically dependent on its partner. As repayment of the gas debt, Ukraine transferred to the Russian Federation eight TU-160 strategic bombers, three TU-95MS, six hundred Kh-22 cruise missiles, the corresponding strategic ground equipment, which significantly weakened its defense capability and military potential (Postanova Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrainy № 2032 vid 02.11.99 r.). In the future, Russia lobbied for the creation of the Unified Economic Space, which extended over the territory of the Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, (Угода про формування єдиного економічного простору від 19.09.2003 р.) and the joint use of the gas transportation system. Taking into account the existing political agreements, Ukraine paid for gas on the basis of barter, i.e. the payment was the transit of gas to Europe through the Ukrainian gas transport system. The existing agreements and "success" of the Ukrainian policy in the gas issue were largely determined by the loyalty of the Ukrainian authorities to the aggressive policy of the Kremlin, as well as, of course, a weak economic situation.

The significant success of the Russian Federation, which opened the possibility of waging a hybrid and later on the aggressive war against Ukraine, came during the term of office of the first President of Ukraine, L. Kravchuk. In 1993 the signing of the Massandriv agreements determined the future fate of the Black Sea Fleet and nuclear weapons stationed on the territory of Ukraine. In 1994 in Moscow, contrary to the one ratified by the Verkhovna Rada on November 18, 1993 of the START-1 Treaty, which provided for the gradual reduction of strategic nuclear weapons located on the territory of Ukraine, L. Kravchuk arbitrarily decided to sign the Tripartite Statement of the Presidents of Ukraine, the USA and Russia on the immediate export of all Ukrainian nuclear weapons to Russia (which ended on June 1, 1996), and without any specific security guarantees and documented financial compensations (Zavadska, 2016, p. 35). On December 5, 1994, with the accession of Ukraine to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the leaders of Ukraine, the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom signed the Memorandum on Security Guarantees, according to which these countries undertook not to use weapons against territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, widely known as the "Budapest Memorandum" (Chekalenko & Feduniak, 2010, pp. 138–142) However, this document did not go through the process of ratification in the Russian Parliament, which served as a basis for manipulations by the Russian Federation concerning recognition of its legal capacity. The unfair division of the Black Sea Fleet, the principle of which was established by the Agreement dated 04.15.94 between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the phased settlement of the problems of the Black Sea Fleet and the agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the parameters of the division of the Black Sea Fleet, ratified by the Law of Ukraine No. 547-XIV dated 03.24.99, created the basis for the annexation of the Crimea by Russia in 2014.

In the 1990s the main interest of the Russian elite was the preservation of Ukraine as a reliable neighbour and partner, therefore one of the tools of pressure on the Ukrainian politics, in addition to the price of gas and other natural resources, was efforts to establish control over the political life of the country, including over formation processes and activity of political parties, the course and results of elections to authorities at all levels, including the elections of the President of Ukraine. Such attempts became the most noticeable in 2004. After the "cassette scandal", when the President of Ukraine L. Kuchma was publicly accused of involvement in the murder of a journalist H. Gongadze, against the background

of large-scale public protests, his ratings began to drop sharply, which ultimately led to early presidential elections. In order to strengthen the influence on the Ukrainian politics during the 2004 presidential elections, Russia in the person of President Vladimir Putin supported the pro-Russian candidate of Ukraine V. Yanukovych publicly. However, during the election process, large-scale falsifications and the involvement of the Central Election Commission (CEC) headed by S. Kivalov were revealed, which did not publish the final voting results for ten days. It also turned out that the work of the CEC's computer network was subjected to external interference, that is why, the election results were called into question, as they were strikingly different from the exit polls, which confirmed the victory of the pro-European leader V. Yushchenko. The tampering and falsification of the results of the popular vote, especially in the East of the country, where the majority of the polling stations were controlled by the Party of Regions, which supported V. Yanukovych, pointed at the Russian trail. Outraged by this state of affairs, citizens of Ukraine went on a mass protest that lasted from November 21 to December 8, 2004, and given the symbols used by the participants, it was called the "Orange Revolution". In response, the supporters of V. Yanukovych took a course towards separatism and the division of the country. Held in Severodonetsk on the initiative of the leaders of Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions, the "Congress of Deputies of All Levels" called for the proclamation of the South-Eastern Autonomous Republic. At the same time, in the western and central regions of the country, local councils made decisions on recognizing V. Yushchenko as the President of Ukraine. The political crisis was resolved, V. Yushchenko was elected President of Ukraine following the results of the repeated second round (Bushyn & Hurdzhii, 2016, pp. 554–557). However, these events gave the start to Russia's shake-up of the political situation in the country, the result of which was the growth of separatist sentiments of the population in the south and east of the country.

After the shameful defeat in the presidential elections of the pro-Russian candidate V. Yanukovych and the coming to power of V. Yushchenko, one of the main means of the Russian influence on the Ukrainian politics, as before, remained the "gas issue". In 2005 gas contracts with the Russian Federation were renegotiated, but the price of rose to the European level – 250 dollars/1000m3. At the same time, the Russian Federation launched a powerful information campaign to discredit Ukraine as a transitor for gas supplies to Europe, creating a negative international image to it. The economically unjustified gas price, which acted as a means of pressure and manipulation on the part of the Russian Federation, forced Ukraine to search for alternative sources of gas supply. However, Russia did everything to hinder Ukraine. Thus, in February of 2006, the Russian Federation provoked the "Turkmen crisis", when Ukraine's attempts to conclude contracts for the supply of Turkmen gas were blocked. In 2008 – 2009 one more gas conflict took place, as a result of which the gas contracts with Russia were renegotiated on extortionate terms for Ukraine, which were based on the "take or pay" formula, and fines for undersupply of fuel reached up to 300% in winter and 150% in summer (Kushniruk, 2011).

The political forces that came to power in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution, led by President V. Yushchenko, announced a course for European integration and joining NATO. However, numerous scandals, the struggle for power within the "orange" team, including the open conflict between President V. Yushchenko and the Prime Minister of Ukraine Yu. Tymoshenko, led to the collapse of the coalition of democratic forces. The gas agreements, around which the main disputes were raging, had a significant impact on the destabilization of the situation in politics and the state. The increase in gas prices undermined the already very

shaky economy of the state and placed an inordinate burden on the shoulders of its population. Russia clearly stated its position on its reluctance to make concessions and agreements with the Ukrainian authorities, which tried to enter the European integration path of its development and, with the help of politicians oriented towards it, shook the situation from the inside, which ultimately resulted in the disillusionment of the Ukrainians with the post-Maidan leaders of the Orange Revolution and brought pro-Russian political forces to power.

In 2010, the next presidential elections in Ukraine were won by V. Yanukovych, whose candidacy, like many other top leaders of the state in the security and economic spheres, was supported by the Russian Federation. When he came to power, flexibility was demonstrated in the formulation of the gas price, however, exclusively on the terms of Russia. Therefore, on April 21, 2010 the Kharkiv Agreements were signed, ratified by the Verkhovna Rada and the State Duma of the Russian Federation on April 27, 2010, where in exchange for a 30% discount due to the cancellation of customs duties, it was agreed to extend the term of lease contracts for the base of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation in the city of Sevastopol until 2042. The presence of the Russian Navy on the territory of the Crimea created a foundation for the work of the special services of the Russian Federation to activate and increase the pro-Russian attitudes of the population, increasing the total number of supporters of the idea of the Crimea becoming part of Russia.

The change in the official course of the state from the European direction to the development of a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, announced by the government of V. Yanukovych, provoked opposition by the Ukrainian society and led to the Revolution of Dignity, during which peaceful protesters were shot in the centre of Kyiv, in which, according to the official version, there was also the Russian trace, which was openly stated by the head of the Security Service of Ukraine Valentyn Nalyvaichenko and the fifth President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko (Butkevych, 2015). In view of the uncontrolled and threatening development of the events, V. Yanukovych and his team hastily evacuated from Kyiv, later settling in uncontrolled Ukrainian territories and in Russia.

The Revolution of Dignity finally imprinted the path of historical development chosen by the people of Ukraine, which directly became oriented towards European integration and joining NATO, which was even included in the text of the Constitution, Part 2 of Art. 102 of which defined the President of Ukraine as the guarantor of the implementation of the state's strategic course towards a full membership of Ukraine in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, these events gave a start to spinning the flywheel of Russia's hybrid aggression against Ukraine, led to the annexation of the Crimea and inspired the conflict in Donbas.

In view of the further circumstances of the state and political life development of Ukraine, gas pressure on it from Russia began to grow. In 2014 on the initiative of the Russian side, Gazprom cancelled all obligations for 30% discounts, allegedly for non-fulfillment of the terms of the contract, which later became the subject of consideration by the Stockholm Arbitration, according to which in 2015 "Gazprom" had to pay compensation to the Ukrainian side. In 2016 – 2021 the construction of the "Nord Stream-2" and "Turk Stream" pipelines is underway, the hearings of cases in Stockholm arbitration continue, but already according to the "Gazprom's" lawsuits against "Naftogaz". At the end of 2021, attempts were made to resolve the issue of putting the "Nord Stream-2" gas pipeline into operation, which is accompanied by the use by the Russian Federation of all available levers of a political influence, including blackmail and destabilization of the situation in the countries of the

European Union due to the creation of an energy and migration crisis, pressure on the United States, where threats to use a force scenario in Ukraine became a bargaining chip.

Taking advantage of the situation of government instability in Ukraine after the Euromaidan, the Russian troops deployed at the end of February of 2014 to the Crimea and the Crimean bases of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation in military uniforms without any identification marks occupied the Crimean peninsula. Also, the armed formations of the Russian "cossacks", who called themselves "the Crimea self-defense", were created from among the pro-Russian population, misinformed about the events taking place in the country at the time. On March 16, 2014, a referendum on the status of the peninsula was held on the territory of the Crimea and the city of Sevastopol under the control of the Russian occupiers and local collaborators, as a result of which the Russian Federation included the Crimea in its composition. However, neither Ukraine, nor the EU, nor the USA recognized the results of the illegal vote, which started the long-term occupation of the Crimea by Russia.

Similar events also developed in Donbas at the time rapidly. Taking into consideration the existing realities, the territories of Luhansk and Donetsk regions were predominantly inhabited by the Russian-speaking population. The commonality of their borders with the Russian Federation and the absence of strict regime measures regarding their crossing both from one side and from the other side led to a significant labour migration, the widespread settlement of these territories by ethnic Russians, the expansion of close interpersonal ties, including family ones, between residents of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and citizens of the Russian Federation. Given these circumstances, the majority of the population of these regions were pro-Russian in terms of choosing the main directions of the state policy, which was confirmed by the results of local referendums held in Donetsk and Luhansk regions back in 1994. Four questions were submitted to the regional consultative survey: on the federalization of Ukraine, Russian as the second state language, on the status of the Russian language on an equal footing with Ukrainian in administration, education and science in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and on a deeper integration into the SND. About 80% of voters answered all these questions in the affirmative (Kazanskyi, 2014). Considering these circumstances, since Ukraine's declaration of independence, Russia has conducted an information policy regarding the population of the Ukrainian Donbas, aimed at strengthening ties with the population of this region. The loyalty of part of the population of the Ukrainian Donbas to Russia was always used by it as a means of influencing the Ukrainian politics, was a card in speculations and manipulations during the holding of various levels of elections, a kind of traffic that brought pro-Russian politicians to power. The coming to power of pro-European-oriented political forces, which was the result of the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, caused some concern among the population of these regions about the future prospects of the country's political life. Taking advantage of this situation, special information operations were systematically conducted by the special services of the Russian Federation through the mass media and influence agencies directed at the population of Donbas with the aim of intimidating them by the Ukrainian nationalists, who allegedly came to power in Kyiv as a result of a coup d'état, as they called the Revolution of Dignity there, and wanted to deal with the "Muscovites" who invaded the east of the Ukrainian state. In connection with this, the idea of creating a people's militia began to be promoted, stimulated by the impossibility of official employment of the civilian population and their legal monetary earnings (stopping of industrial production, flooding of mines, etc.). In general, the aggression of the Russian Federation took place in a disguised form – at the initial stage, the Russian servicemen acted

under the guise of "militias", "cossacks", "volunteers", later – as part of armed formations of puppet state entities, where, according to the legend of the Russian propaganda, local "tractor drivers", "miners", "farmers" obtained weapons and military equipment hidden in the mines and seized from the "Kyiv junta" (Martyniuk, 2018, p. 13).

Powerful disinformation campaigns, organizational and resource support in the creation of illegal armed formations by the special services of the Russian Federation, as well as participation in combat operations of regular units of the Russian armed forces under the banner of the Donbas militias made it possible to invade part of the Ukrainian territories, to create puppet quasi-state entities that were actually financially supported and under the external management of the Russian Federation (LPR, DPR), which resulted in a long-term military conflict in the East of the country. With the direct participation of the Russian Federation, not only measures were taken to simulate the events of the civil war in Donbas, but also attempts were made to legitimize the LPR and DPR as independent state entities, where one of the mechanisms was the creation of "representative centres" in foreign countries and the involvement of citizens of such countries in their activities, with for the purpose of promoting the Russian vision of the problems of the LPR/DPR functioning.

Diplomatic efforts of Ukraine aimed at settling the Ukrainian-Russian conflict were realized in the form of signing the Minsk Protocol following the results of the tripartite contact group meeting on September 5, 2014. ("Minsk-1"), the main achievement of which was the establishment of the demarcation line in the conflict area and the implementation of a ceasefire regime. However, the terms of this protocol were actually immediately violated by the opposite side, and the line of demarcation was broken during the Russian operation to invade Debaltsevo, which entailed a new round of escalation of the conflict, which was accompanied by numerous human losses on both sides. It is quite obvious that the Russian side's violation of the terms of "Minsk-1" was aimed at the subsequent negotiation of more favourable terms of the truce. As a result of these efforts, on January 12, 2015, a new agreement was concluded on the settlement of the conflict in Donbas and the de-occupation of Ukrainian territories, the main point of which is to grant the status of a broad autonomy to Luhansk and Donetsk regions, which actually provided for a change in the state and political system of Ukraine and required amendments to the Constitution. At the time, Donbas was used by the Kremlin as a "bargaining coin" in negotiations with international partners, primarily Germany and France, which participated in the settlement of the conflict. During the Minsk process, the Russian side advanced the ideas of federalization of Ukraine, which in practice meant the dismemberment of our state (Hrytsiuk & Lysenko, 2023, p. 16).

The leading condition of "Minsk-2" was the holding of local elections before the borders were closed and these territories came under the jurisdiction of Ukraine, as well as a full amnesty to members of armed military formations, regardless of whether they took part in the hostilities or whether they killed, and there were human casualties victims. Of course, the conditions of "Minsk-2" were humiliating and unacceptable for Ukraine as a subject of world and European politics, and also went against the provisions of national legislation, which provided for the inevitability of criminal punishment. In addition, the fulfillment of its conditions would create even greater opportunities for the Russian Federation to influence the foreign and domestic politics of Ukraine, since the political leadership of the Luhansk and Donetsk autonomies, formed under the conditions of Russian influence, would focus on the interests of its curators when making important state decisions. Under such conditions, the so-called DPR and LPR would remain the zone of a permanent conflict, which, according

to the decision of the Russian Federation, could turn into a zone of full-scale hostilities in a matter of hours.

Ukraine's non-fulfillment of the "Minsk-2" conditions was the formal basis for Russian President V. Putin's announcement of a "special military operation" and the start of the war against Ukraine, which has become the most aggressive armed conflict in Europe since World War II (Kharuk, 2022, p. 139) The open Russian aggression received a stiff resistance of the Ukrainian people and further consolidated the Ukrainian society in favour of choosing the European integration course of the state's development (Fedorchenko-Kutuiev, Pyholenko & Khom'iak, 2023, p. 156)

As the British general Adrian Bradshaw noted: "any aggression should not go unanswered, and the answer to "hybrid methods" should be "hybrid deterrence" (Beale, 2017). Considering the fact that the methods of conducting hybrid or "unconventional" warfare are covert, identifying the threats associated with them is quite problematic and requires the use of professional approaches based on the coordination of the activities of intelligence agencies, special services and bodies of state power and management within the country, a close cooperation with foreign partner and international structures, in order to create opportunities for the exchange of analytical information, detection and disclosure of the enemy's intentions, neutralization of a destructive influence of enemy's malicious activities. The aggressive policy of the Russian Federation has long been the object of concern of the countries of the European Union and the member states of NATO, which, taking into account the ineffectiveness of the political and economic deterrence measures applied to it, deployed their own collective security system to counter hybrid threats. In particular, on December 10, 2019, a resolution was adopted in Brussels that defined the main directions of countering hybrid threats and increasing the resilience of member states to such challenges, which is part of the EU Strategic Agenda for 2019 – 2024. In order to expand cooperation between the EU and NATO countries in the field of countering hybrid threats according to the memorandum concluded in 2017 between the USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania, the European Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats was established in Helsinki, with the aim the functioning of which became research work and information exchange regarding the existence of certain hybrid threats that pose a danger to participating countries, as well as studying and predicting new potential scenarios of hybrid warfare. The results of the conducted research, the information collected and processed by it are used by the partner countries in the development of their own strategies for detecting, preventing and overcoming hybrid threats.

Ukraine, as a victim of hybrid aggression, is directly interested in integration into the international infrastructure for countering hybrid threats. The idea of creating a national body that will be responsible for interdepartmental coordination to counter hybrid threats has already been discussed in publications (Danyliuk, 2021, pp. 42–43). High-level strategic advisers from the Defense Reform Advisory Board also supported the idea of creating a centre for countering hybrid threats in Ukraine, which should become a platform for international cooperation and exchange of experience and should be based on the government's active cooperation with NATO to build national resilience. However, despite the political statements, to date the Ukrainian side has not taken any measures aimed at creating such a structure that would ensure coordination and countermeasures against hybrid aggression of the Russian Federation both inside the country and outside, in cooperation with the partner countries, at the national level, which are part of the NATO bloc. Declaring a political course for

rapprochement with the European Union, applying for membership in NATO, Ukraine should at least now take real political steps that allow to clearly define its geopolitical orientation and the direction of the development course, because the inhibition of these processes leads to irreparable losses.

The Conclusions. The hybrid war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine began from the time of its declaration of independence and the creation of a sovereign state, intensified after the Revolution of Dignity, as a result of the mass expression of the will of the people of Ukraine regarding the choice of the geopolitical path of the development of their country, and turned into an open war in 2022.

Taking into account the events related to the Russian invasion of 2022, it can be argued that, in addition to Ukraine, victims of the hybrid influence of the Russian Federation are also other states of the post-Soviet camp, in particular Belarus, from whose territory the Russian troops entered the territory of Ukraine in 2022, and there was missile shelling and drone attacks. Moldova is also a victim of the hybrid war of the Russian Federation, within which the political situation is currently actively shaking up with the aim of removing the current political leaders from power and replacing them with the pro-Russian ones, simultaneously with threats about the participation of the Russian troops in the event of an escalation of the conflict with the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic. Mass protests in Georgia, which recently have taken place due to the adoption of the law on foreign agents by the Georgian parliament, against the background of a gradual change in the country's political course towards the collapse of democracy and rapprochement with Russia, are also a direct sign of the Russian hybrid influence. Finally, the results of the vote of the UN General Assembly on February 23, 2023 regarding the resolution calling on Russia to stop the hostilities and withdraw its troops from Ukraine, and among the countries that abstained were Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajykystan, and Uzbekystan, show that the front of the hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation is extremely broad. The results of Russia's hybrid influence on the state life and politics of individual countries pose a threat to international security and destroy the world legal order. Taking the above mentioned into account, the issues of the existing directions of deployment of hybrid war, the main objects of vulnerabilities of hybrid attacks, the system of markers that determine them, require ***further scientific research***, with the aim of designing and building a system of fuses that will allow to localize and minimize the destructive consequences of a hybrid influence in the near and distant future for both Ukraine and its partners.

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