

GEOPOLITICS - ГЕОПОЛИТИКА

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FAKE GEOPOLITICS OF RUSSIA IN UKRAINE

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Introduction. The article examines the war of Russia in Ukraine as a complex, multifaceted and multifactorial phenomenon, analyzes the reasons why representatives of the Russian academic circles practically «did not notice» this war, which in fact became a resounding failure of the academic culture of Russian society. It is clear that the academic science of Russia has also joined the policy of great power, we are observing and encountering the absolute inhumanity of the country, which as its main «export product» has always represented «special spirituality» or «special culture». And this country demonstrated military and political inhumanity in Georgia, and now in Ukraine it represents its national essence, revealing virtually all forms of inhumanity that were overcome thousands of years ago.

The world community did not see the tragedy of the Georgian people in Abkhazia and in the North. Kartli (the so-called South Ossetia), this silence led to Bucha and other Ukrainian cities wiped off the face of the earth by the war, this is a crime against humanity, and silence is a form of solidarity with evil.

Keywords – *Ukraine, culture, international relations, Conflicts, NATO, European Union.*

The Russian war in Ukraine is the most explosive conflict in Europe since 1945. Many in the West believe that this is a “war of choice” started by Russian President Vladimir Putin, but he himself claims that NATO’s decision in 2008 on Ukraine’s future membership in the bloc created an existential threat on the Russian border. And some see the origins of this conflict in the events of the end of the Cold War and the West’s inability to adequately support Russia after the collapse of the USSR. How to determine the causes of this war, which may last for many years?

The First World War began more than a hundred years ago, but historians still write books arguing about its causes. Did it start because a Serbian terrorist assassinated an Austrian archduke in 1914, or did it have more to do with the rivalry between a rising Germany and Britain, or with the rise of nationalism across Europe? The answer is, “all of the above and more.” But war was not inevitable until it actually began in August 1914; and even then, the four years of carnage that followed were not inevitable.

To understand this better, it is useful to distinguish between deep, intermediate, and immediate causes. Think of a fire: laying down the wood is a deep cause; adding incendiary mixtures and paper is an intermediate cause; striking a match is an immediate cause. Even then, however, a blazing fire is not inevitable. A strong wind can blow out the match, or a sudden rainstorm can soak the wood. Historian Christopher Clark, in his book on the causes of World War I, *The Sleepwalkers*, notes that in 1914, “the future was still open—absolutely.” The main cause of this catastrophe was bad government decisions. There is no doubt that in the case of Ukraine, Putin lit the match when he ordered Russian soldiers to invade the country on February 24. Like the leaders of the great powers in 1914, he probably thought it would be a short, precision war with a quick victory, like the Soviet Union’s capture of Budapest in 1956 or Prague in 1968. Paratroopers would take the airport, and advancing tanks would occupy Kyiv, ousting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and installing a puppet government. Putin told the Russian people that he was conducting a “special military operation” to “denazify” Ukraine and prevent NATO from expanding to Russia’s borders. But since he was so wrong in his calculations, we must ask what he was really thinking. We know from Putin’s own writings, and from biographers like Philip Short,

that the intervening cause was a refusal to regard Ukraine as a legitimate state. Putin regrets the collapse of the USSR, which he served as a KGB officer, and considers Ukraine a fictitious state, in part because of the strong cultural affinity between Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine has also been “ungrateful”: it offended Russia with its 2014 Maidan uprising that toppled a pro-Russian government, and it has deepened trade relations with the European Union.

Putin wants to restore what he calls the “Russian World” and is thinking about his historical legacy as he approaches his 70th birthday. Previous leaders, such as Peter the Great, expanded Russia’s power. With Western sanctions weak after Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea in 2014, Putin clearly wondered: why not go even further?

The prospect of NATO expansion was a lesser interim reason. Although the West created the NATO-Russia Council, which allowed Russian military officers to attend some NATO meetings, Russia expected more from the relationship. In the early 1990s, US Secretary of State James Baker told his Russian counterpart that NATO would not expand, but historians have shown that Baker quickly retracted those verbal assurances, which were never backed up by a written agreement.

When US President Bill Clinton discussed the issue with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, there was grudging Russian agreement to some NATO expansion, but the two sides had different expectations. NATO’s decision at the 2008 Bucharest summit to include Ukraine (and Georgia) as potential future members only confirmed Putin’s worst fears about the West.

And yet, while NATO’s 2008 decision may have been wrong, it was preceded by a change in Putin’s own approach. He had been supportive of the US since the September 11, 2001, attacks, but, as his speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 shows, he had become increasingly hostile to the West even before the Bucharest summit. That is why the possibility of NATO expansion was only one of several interim reasons, and its importance was weakened after the Bucharest summit by the announcements of France and Germany that they would veto Ukraine’s membership in NATO. There were more distant or deeper reasons behind all this, which arose after

the end of the Cold War. Initially, there was much optimism, both in Russia and in the West, that the collapse of the USSR would allow democracy and a market economy to flourish in Russia. In the early years, Clinton and Yeltsin made serious efforts to develop good relations. But although the United States provided loans and economic aid to the government of Russian Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, Russians expected much more.

After seventy years of a planned economy, suddenly becoming a prosperous country with a market economy was impossible. Attempts to decisively implement such rapid changes could not help but lead to colossal irregularities, corruption and extreme inequality. Some oligarchs and politicians became incredibly rich thanks to the rapid privatization of state assets, but the standard of living for most Russians declined.

In February 1997, in Davos, Nizhny Novgorod Governor Boris Nemtsov said that in Russia no one pays taxes and the government delays the payment of salaries. The following September, liberal MP Grigory Yavlinsky told a Harvard Kennedy School dinner that “Russia is totally corrupt and Yeltsin has no ideas.” Yeltsin, in failing health, was unable to cope with the political consequences of the worsening economic situation; he turned to the then little-known Putin, a former KGB agent, to help him restore order.

None of this means that the Ukrainian war was inevitable. But it was becoming increasingly likely. On February 24, 2022, Putin miscalculated and lit the match that started the conflagration.

The war in Ukraine has been virtually “ignored” by Russian academics, a de facto resounding failure of the academic culture of Russian society. Even more tragic is that it does not even pretend to be of great public significance. Therefore, we believe that human dignity as understood in Russia is in strong contradiction with the way human dignity is understood by the patristic Christian tradition. In the ongoing attack on Ukraine, one can see historical parallels with the humanitarian catastrophes of the first half of the 20th century: forced deportation, filtration camps for Ukrainians, genocide, mass extermination of prisoners, “reforging of consciousness” by propaganda, and so on.

If history is cyclical, why is there no work on

historical mistakes? Why does culture not instill immunity against outbreaks of dehumanization, does not develop reliable mechanisms to prevent violence? How can we explain that some prominent intellectuals of the era again and again fail to notice obvious crimes against humanity and even try to justify their necessity? Why does the experience of war cause the experience of dumbness or a slide into obscene vocabulary. Is the experience of historical trauma accessible to a person who has not experienced it? Why is the creativity of witnesses necessary and how to correctly bear witness to war?

We are faced with the inhumanity of a country that has always presented a “special spirituality” as its main “export product”.

What is happening in Ukraine today is the final collapse of the Enlightenment project. After the Second World War, Postmodernism still retained the belief that culture is a supernatural environment that produces the human in man, and the humanity nurtured by it is transmitted by social experience. It still seemed that the more subtle, refined and large-scale the culture, the more moral a person it can educate.

And suddenly, in the 21st century, we are faced with the absolute inhumanity of a country that has always presented a “special spirituality” and a “special culture” as its main “export product.” This was the fuel for Russia’s conviction in its own exclusive historical “mission.” And now this country is demonstrating forms of inhumanity that were overcome thousands of years ago. It is precisely this collapsed dehumanization, which seemed to have been eradicated and buried in history, that leads to dumbness, since it does not find a language for its expression in our modern times.

It is necessary to “reinvent” a language adequate to describe the humanitarian catastrophe that has occurred. But for now, many, even fairly intelligent people, are retreating into the space of obscene vocabulary, since everyday, normal, literary, polite modern language seems insufficient to describe this archaic evil.

Disappointment in the idea of progress and the restraining capabilities of culture was already observed after the world wars. If in the First World War the civilian population made up only 5% of the dead, then in the Second World War

the figure increased to 65%, although it would seem that the shock of the first use of chemical weapons of mass destruction in Belgium in 1917 should have contributed to the development of cultural mechanisms to resist violence against civilians. But no, the same historical rake. Refined German artistic and philosophical culture did not save the Germans from creating concentration camps, implementing a policy of eugenics with its practices of forced sterilization of people with physical and mental disabilities or their destruction, and child euthanasia.

Why hasn’t contemporary culture learned this lesson again, developed defense mechanisms, and why has history rolled in with a new wave of Nazism, now Russian, in Ukraine?

After the world wars, writers of the «lost generation», dialogist philosophers, and filmmakers of Italian neorealism tried to solve the crisis of culture through culture. All of them sought to show the impotence of previous forms of culture in the face of dehumanization and were puzzled by the search for new forms of culture as an «inoculation» against it. Some turned to dialogism, some to a special sensitivity to otherness, some to the idea of ethical responsibility to the Other, even if he does not want to come out to meet me, «drives me away or plunges me into boredom.» Today the situation is changing, and after the tragedy of Bucha, Mariupol, Vinnitsa and others, there comes an understanding that culture is not patched up by culture, it is not enough to solve environmental problems by reforming it. We can no longer rely on culture.

- Yes, the mechanisms and narratives of German and current Russian propaganda are strikingly similar. Just as the symbols of the occupiers themselves were borrowed from the German Nazis. As V. Marayev and J. Guz note, Z is an ancient runic symbol («wolf’s hook»), at various times considered a symbol of Nazism and hatred, was part of the emblem of the 4th SS Police Panzergrenadier Division, the 2nd SS Panzer Division «Das Reich» and the 34th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division «Landstorm Nederland», known for their crimes against civilians. And the letter V is the distinctive sign of the oldest members of the SS, who joined the ranks of the Nazi Party before Hitler came to

power on January 30, 1933.

The deepest shock is that culture is not enough to inoculate against dehumanization. Culture does not transmit experience, which means that other mechanisms must be found. After all, the Russians have very strong Holocaust memorialization programs, even larger than the Ukrainian ones, with real and virtual museums. And what is amazing is that these programs are still working. But, unfortunately, the display of burnt children's shoes in museums does not prevent the Russians from today's mass murder of civilians or the burning of prisoners.

- Then why is «witness literature» important if the experience of trauma is not transmitted, is inaccessible to the perception of descendants?

- This is a question for all of us: why are we incorrectly using this most important and necessary evidence, why is the transmission of experience disrupted. Although, on the other hand, many note that the people committing these crimes on Ukrainian lands are not very familiar with culture: they make 10 mistakes in the simplest words, and toilets and blenders are a novelty for them, since they loot and steal. Maybe so. But still, the current invasion of Ukraine finds enormous support among the intelligentsia. For example, the interview of the Hermitage director M. Piotrovsky, which shocked many, in which he proudly speaks of a special Russian «historical mission», of all Russians as «militarists and imperialists», notes the alleged «cultural advantage» and the need for a Russian «cultural special operation» throughout Europe, so that «they envy us», and justifies colonialism, with which «not everything is so clear». This «cultural figure» justifies the war of conquest in Ukraine openly in the Nazi spirit: «On the one hand, war is blood and murder, and on the other - self-affirmation of people, self-affirmation of the nation». The case of the Hermitage director is striking in that what he is saying now does not look like intimidation, but seems to be a sincere position.

— It is similar to the final scene of the famous dystopian novel by George Orwell, when the main character, who had long resisted the dehumanizing regime, was finally broken by the system, and the sign of this ultimate brokenness was his sincere acceptance of it: “The fight is

over. He has conquered himself. He loves Big Brother.”

— Yes. Piotrovsky's example also resembles the story of one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, Martin Heidegger, who, despite all the insight of his mind, could not recognize the obvious inhumanity of the German Nazi regime and collaborated with it.

Only a Georgian can truly understand a Ukrainian now.

Today, influential modern thinkers Jordan Peterson, Noam Chomsky, and Jurgen Habermas show the same insensitivity to evil and lack of understanding of the very nature of the spontaneity of aggression, trying to present the attack on Ukrainians as justified.

The situation is similar with modern Russian cultural figures who supported the war. Along with Piotrovsky, a number of other representatives of Russian high culture also justify military aggression. Only a few of the intelligentsia were able to maintain the purity of their position, soul, views, and resist the war, like Olga Sedakova, although we don't know all of them, of course.

It is not only the support for the war among cultural figures within the country that is upsetting, but also the cowardice and lack of protest activity of Russian intellectuals-emigrants, who clearly understand that a crime is being committed by the Russian regime, but do nothing to stop it. It is no coincidence that they say that the Russian people have been taken prisoner. And this lack of freedom is difficult to overcome.

It is probably difficult for Ukrainians to appreciate the power of fear generated by terror. It was a tragedy for us that people who, as it seemed to us, admired us for their moral honesty, whom we internally looked up to, are now silent among others. Although it is surprising that those few who still find the strength to resist the war and condemn the war crimes of their country are not rebels or heroes by nature. These are ordinary people who have preserved their honor and dignity. They are called «good people.» And they often come from the same environment, and often even friends of those who remain silent.

That is, people can be brought up in the same cultural environment and support the same values, but they implement them differently.

Although now we are no longer offended

by the silence of the Russian or Western intelligentsia, I am not trying to tell or explain anything to anyone - it is a lost cause. There is Bucha and other Ukrainian cities crippled or even erased by the war, the attitude to the tragedy of which can only be unambiguous - as a crime against humanity. Silence is a form of solidarity with evil.

Ukraine has the right to win this war, and it needs the help of the world, first of all, the West. Western politicians and the population should consider this war more from a moral point of view. Killing a human being cannot be justified, especially if mass killings are carried out with the aim of restoring political influence or seizing the territory of another country.

The idea of avoiding war was the basis of the demilitarization process in the post-Soviet region after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the West pressured Ukraine to hand over its nuclear weapons to Russia in exchange for protection.

If the West could intervene then, it should take responsibility and help Ukraine now.

Right now, the future of Ukraine is being decided, and now, Russian imperialism can be stopped. If this is not done, Putin will probably continue to rebuild his empire outside Ukraine. Let us not forget that his beloved Soviet Union used to reach Berlin. Vladimir Putin. «Russia: the National Question»).

Conclusion. It is clear that there is a complex relationship between «Russian nationalism» and «Russian geopolitics». On the one hand, there is the experience of a «spatial curse» as an obstacle to finding one's national home. Of the notable figures, this experience is especially acute in Solzhenitsyn. "I see with alarm," he wrote in 1990, "that the awakening Russian national consciousness, to a large extent, cannot free itself from the spacious state thinking, from the imperial dope." And further: "We should not strive for the breadth of the State, but for the clarity of our spirit in its remnants." On the other hand, there are accusations of "the collapse of the country" with the threat of the death under the rubble of almost the Russian people themselves. In order not to go too far, I will refer to the already mentioned author: "Attempts to preach the ideas of building a Russian "national" ... state ... are

the shortest path to the destruction of the Russian people" (Vladimir Putin. "Russia: the National Question").

Nationalism's radical awareness of its historical agenda, the agenda of challenges and responses, leads to the conclusion that its implementation requires real sovereignty, which, in turn, is possible only in a fairly large geopolitical and geo-economic space. Radical awareness by the «imperial thought» of the historical situation in which the centuries-old Russian imperial project has found itself leads to a conclusion that recalls the words of the radical monarchist Donoso Cortes, spoken at the height of the century of revolutions: «Now there can be no monarch except by the will of the people.» So, from now on there can be no «Russian empire» except through the Russian national state. If we consider the imperative of this geopolitics to be the recreation of the former imperial area in the form of a predominant sphere of influence, then the most instructive is not the integration experience of the EU, with which the Russians constantly compare themselves, but the long path that post-imperial Turkey has taken. Turkey, out of nothing, left for itself that part of the territory that is today called Turkey, and it is difficult in this relationship with Russia, since if it gets rid of the national regions, little will remain of Russia. First – farewell to the ghosts of "imperial greatness" against the backdrop of the determination to "gnaw out" a strong ethnic core from the doomed imperial ecumene. An unconditional redefinition of the state as a national territory of the titular ethnic group. As a result, the core turns out to be quite large, since the ethnic group itself is large, and the idea of its national home gives it the strength to fight. Then – the growth of the national state: an increase in internal homogeneity, an increase in external gravity. The young predator stays in the orbit of the Western alliance, but at the same time does not stop hunting independently. The ease of parting with the past promised it a greater future. Turkey as the "Sick Man of Europe" underwent good therapy. In this regard, it is interesting – what awaits the "Sick Man of Eurasia"? Is he ready to learn from the successes of others? Or, out of old habit, will he prefer to teach others from his mistakes?

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ЭЛЬГУДЖА КАВТАРАДЗЕ

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ФАЛЬШИВАЯ ГЕОПОЛИТИКА РОССИИ В УКРАИНЕ

РЕЗЮМЕ

Ключевые слова – Украина, культура, международные отношения, Конфликты, НАТО, Европейский Союз

В статье рассматривается война России в Украине как сложное, многогранное и многофакторное явление, анализируются причины того, что представители российской академических кругов, практически «не замечали» эту войну что стало по факту оглушительным провалом академической культуры российского общества. Ясно, что к политике великодержавности присоединилась и академическая наука России, мы наблюдаем и сталкиваемся с абсолютной бесчеловечностью страны, которая в качестве своего основного «экспортного продукта» всегда представляла «особую духовность», или «особую культурность». И вот эта страна демонстрировала в Грузии военно-политическую бесчеловечность, а ныне в Украине представляет свою национальную сущность, выявляя фактически все формы бесчеловечности, которые были преодолены ещё тысячелетия назад.

Мировое сообщество не увидело трагедию грузинского народа в Абхазии и в Сев. Картли (т.н. Южная Осетия), это молчание привело к Буче и к другим стертых с лица земли войной украинские города, это преступление против человечности, а молчание это форма солидарности со злом.

Российская война в Украине – это самый взрывоопасный конфликт в Европе с 1945 года. Многие на Западе считают, что это «война по выбору», начатая президентом России Владимиром Путиным, но сам он утверждает, что принятое в 2008 году решение НАТО о будущем членстве Украины в блоке создало экзистенциальную угрозу на российской границе. А некоторые видят истоки этого конфликта в событиях времён окончания Холодной войны и в неспособности Запада адекватно поддержать Россию после развала СССР. Как определить причины этой войны, которая может длиться ещё много лет?

Украина имеет право выиграть эту войну, и ей нужна помощь мира, прежде всего, Западу. Западные политики и население должны рассматривать эту войну больше с нравственной точки зрения. Убийство человека не может быть оправдано, особенно если массовые убийства происходят с целью восстановления политического влияния или захвата территории другой страны.