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МІСЦЕ КРИМУ В НЕОІМПЕРСЬКІЙ ПОЛІТИЦІ РОСІЇ (1991-2020 рр.)

Дослідження присвячене складній актуальній проблемі, котра виникла в україно-російських міждержавних відносинах після розпаду СРСР. Саме встановлення контролю над Кримським півостровом стало пріоритетним завданням Російської Федерації, яка неодноразово робила спроби його захоплення впродовж 1990-2000 рр. Проте добре скоординовані дії української влади й силових структур дозволили відбити найбільш небезпечні атаки у 1993-1994 рр., 2003 р.

Нове загострення на півострові та у російсько-українських відносинах загалом припало на 2005-2009 рр. Його основною причиною стала зміна зовнішньополітичного курсу України (поглиблення співпраці з Європейським Союзом, НАТО), а також посилення зв'язків між офіційним Києвом і Автономною Республікою Крим. Результатом такої політики мало стати поступове зменшення військової присутності у регіоні й остаточне виведення Чорноморського флоту РФ з військово-морських баз на півострові після 2017 р.

Для агресивної загалом зовнішньої політики РФ втрата військово-морських баз у Криму призвела б до суттєвих обмежень у можливості використання військових у Чорноморському регіоні. Адже в останні десятиріччя кораблі ЧФ РФ були задіяні у російсько-грузинській війні, для забезпечення російської військової присутності в Сирії тощо. Допустити остаточної втрати контролю над Кримом російське керівництво не могло. Відтак «Харківські угоди» 2010 р. стали поворотним пунктом у російсько-українських відносинах і, навпаки, дозволили РФ зміцнити свій вплив на півострові.

Перебування військово-морських сил ЧФ РФ в Україні посилювало дезінтеграційні тенденції в Криму та геополітичну роль Росії в Чорноморському регіоні. Збереження російського військового контингенту на півострові сприяло анексії Криму, підготовка до якої розпочалася 2013 р. Постмайданне реформатування влади в столиці України (президент і міністр оборони втекли) ускладнило протидію агресії РФ у Криму. Попри тиск міжнародних організацій та зарубіжних політиків, В. Путін завершив розпочату справу.

Анексія території Автономної республіки Крим Росією має негативні політичні, економічні, соціальні, культурні, екологічні наслідки для півострова та України. А також несе нові геополітичні виклики і загрози для держав усього Чорноморського регіону.

Ключові слова: україно-російські відносини, анексія, Кримський півострів, Чорноморський флот.

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THE PLACE OF CRIMEA IN THE NEO-EMPEROR POLICY OF RUSSIA (1991–2020)

Abstract. The study focuses on a complex burning issue that arose in Ukrainian-Russian interstate relations after the downfall of the USSR. The establishment of control over the Crimean peninsula became

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a priority task of the Russian Federation, which repeatedly made attempts to capture it during 1990-2000. However, the well coordinated actions of the Ukrainian authorities and law enforcement structures allowed repelling the most dangerous attacks in 1993-1994, 2003. New aggravation on the peninsula and in Russian-Ukrainian relations generally occurred in 2005-2009.

The deployment of the naval forces of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine exacerbated the disintegration tendencies in Crimea and Russia's geopolitical role in the Black Sea region. The preservation of the Russian military contingent on the peninsula contributed to the annexation of Crimea, the preparation for which began in 2013.

The annexation of the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by Russia has negative political, economic, social, cultural, ecological consequences for the peninsula and Ukraine. It also brings new geopolitical challenges and threats to the states of the entire Black Sea region.

Keywords: *Ukrainian-Russian relations, annexation, Crimean peninsula, Black Sea Fleet.*

Formulation of scientific problem and its significance. With the downfall of the USSR, a new period began in relations between Ukraine and Russia. During 1991-2020, both countries repeatedly found themselves on the verge of major conflicts, which risked going (and once have passed) into prolonged military confrontation. Despite the complexity of the causes of misunderstandings that had diverse origins, one thing stands out – the desire of the Russian Federation to regain control over the Crimean peninsula.

Analysis of recent research. During the past 30 years, «Crimean issues» in the context of Ukrainian-Russian relations have repeatedly become a subject of study for scientists. In particular, O. Zadorozhnyi¹, S. Adamovych², A. Malgin³, O. Volianiuk, H. Dobrovolska, M. Maiorov⁴, and others explored this topic in their works. However, there is a lot of new evidence from participants in those processes (especially about the 2014 events) that are not fully taken into account by scientists. **The aim of our work** is an attempt to summarize previous materials, taking into consideration the latest available data, to determine the place of Crimea in neo-imperial policy of the Russian Federation in 1991-2020.

Presenting main material. Serious contradictions between Ukraine and Russia over Crimea began in early 1992, when President L. Kravchuk announced the beginning of construction of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. On January 5, 1992, the Ukrainian government started to swear in allegiance the troops, which stationed in Crimea⁵. On the same day, Russian President B. Yeltsin signed an oath of allegiance to Russia for troops stationed in Ukraine. Having been in the Volga region, he stated: «The Black Sea Fleet was, is and will be Russian ... no one will take it away from Russia, including Kravchuk». However, on January 28, 1992, in Novorossiysk, B. Yeltsin expressed another opinion: «There will be the negotiations on military issues with Ukraine; it has the right to have its own fleet. But we are against the division of the Black Sea Fleet; it must be the only one to ensure the security of the CIS borders»⁶. Despite B. Yeltsin's different statements, one thing is clearly understood of them: Russia did not want to give the Navy to Ukraine. Its military men began to impede actively the process of the Black Sea Fleet's transition under the Ukrainian control, using both counterintelligence (communications interference, radio interception) and even local force measures. However, a part of the BSF never the less moved to the side of Ukraine.

The most painful for Russia was the acceptance of the Ukrainian oath by military commanders of the Sevastopol garrison, which took place on July 9, 1992. This provoked Russia to take appropriate actions: the next day the commandants' office was seized by a Russian landing assault group. The status of Sevastopol and everything related to the city was a specific problem for Ukraine in the Crimea, because the issue of the BSF's share was not so much the ships as the fleet's infrastructure and, accordingly, Sevastopol itself⁷.

In September 1993, another incident occurred – Ukrainian infantrymen collided with the Russian Coast Guard, injuring three Russians. Accusing Ukraine of trying to appropriate the BSF, Russia has launched a process of separating Crimea from Ukraine, handing out Russian passports to employees of BSF objects and conducting anti-Ukrainian information campaign throughout the peninsula.

As a result of the economic downturn in 1993, among the Crimeans, the frustration with the idea of independence of Ukraine increased, which resulted in the victory in the 1994 elections to the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous bloc «Russia» and the election of the pro-Russian disposed Y. Meshkov as a «President» of Crimea. The latter tried to separate the authorities of autonomy from the Ukrainian state structures and hoped for Russian support. He urged Russia to include Crimea in its structure.

According to the ex-People's Deputy M. Porovskiy, the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the

General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces at this time launched a large-scale intelligence campaign in Crimea, relying on the intelligence structures of the BSF. In particular, during the intensification of Y. Meshkov's confrontation actions, the GRU organized a total surveillance of all objects of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Guard of Ukraine on the peninsula⁸. By that time, the BSF by the Secret Service Forces of the RBSF had already organized a prototype of the «Crimean army» – the detachment «Scorpion» in Simferopol. In addition, the preparation work started for the seizure of key objects of Ukrainian troops in Sevastopol. In the end, the situation on the peninsula was stabilized by the deployment to Crimea of nearly 60,000 border guards and the National Guard of Ukraine⁹. In its turn, the RF on the wave of separatist movements within its own country and economic crisis distanced itself from the official support of Y. Meshkov¹⁰.

With the end of the fighting in Chechnya in 1996, the problem of Crimea, Sevastopol and the fleet again became relevant for Russia. During the visit of the Ukrainian President L. Kuchma to Moscow in late October 1996, the State Duma of RF accepted an appeal, which Kyiv regarded as territorial claims against Ukraine. In addition, the State Duma voted for a law on banning the division of the BSF (not ratified by the Federation Council)¹¹.

On December 5, 1996, the Federation Council of the RF qualified Sevastopol as a part of Russian territory and requested President B. Yeltsin to declare a moratorium on the signing by the state authorities of any international acts concerning the BSF, the status of Crimea, and the city of Sevastopol before the end of the work of the special commission of the Federation Council¹².

However, with the approach of NATO to Russia's borders, Russian politicians, according to A. Malgin, began to search for reliable allies, and political confrontation with Ukraine became unconstructive. On May 28, 1997, Prime Minister of the RF V. Chernomyrdin signed in Kyiv three documents on the BSF: «On Mutual Settlements, Related to the Division of the Black Sea Fleet and the Stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the Territory of Ukraine», «On the Status and Conditions of Stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the Territory of Ukraine», «On the Parameters of the Division of the Black Sea Fleet»¹³.

However, despite these basic agreements with Ukraine, Moscow continued to declare its rights to Crimea and Sevastopol. On September 30, 2003, a conflict broke out between Ukraine and the RF, the reason of which was the erection of a levee by Russia in the Kerch Strait; it had to connect the station Taman (Krasnodar Krai, the RF) with the island of Tuzla, which since January 1941 is administratively a part of Crimea. Thus, Russia intended to extend its sovereignty to the island of Tuzla, by having violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine. In November 2003, the conflict was resolved, though both sides have already begun to prepare for an armed confrontation¹⁴.

The 2004 Orange Revolution radicalized political relations on the peninsula, but the Crimean elite refused to initiate disintegration ideas because of the negative experience of the early 1990s. In 2005–2009 the socio-political situation in the region was exacerbated by the approach of the lease term end of Ukrainian territories by the RF for the BSF and the conflict situations over the Crimean Tatar issue.

After the Orange Revolution, Foreign Minister of Ukraine B. Tarasiuk stated that the Russian side violations of the BSF agreements were «systemic» because of the unauthorized use of the territory of Sevastopol, the subletting of fleet premises, the work of the prosecutor's office and courts of the neighboring state, the use of navigation equipment and radiofrequencies of Ukraine¹⁵. In April 2005, Deputy Head of the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine D. Svystkov even stated that Ukraine allows for the early withdrawal of the RBSF from the Crimea, but at the initiative of the Russian side. The diplomat said that «the establishment of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Crimea after 2017 ... we are not talking about»¹⁶.

At the same time, the youth of Sevastopol continued to be educated on Russian history and patriotism. The activity of the RBSF played an important role in this process, performing functions that went beyond the responsibilities of the military structure. Thus, the RBSF often interfered with the activities of schools and higher education institutions in Crimea, imposing on them their educational programs; Ukrainian youth was recruited to the Black Sea Branch of Moscow University¹⁷.

In 2006, in violation of the agreements, Russia established control over the objects of the navigation and hydrographic support system of seafaring in Ukrainian territorial waters. In particular, when on January 13, 2006, representatives of the state enterprise «State Hydrography» took control of the lighthouse of the Yalta port, which was occupied before by the RBSF, then the command of the Russian fleet went on

escalation of the conflict and decided to strengthen the protection of 35 objects of navigation and hydro-graphic purpose in Crimea¹⁸.

On May 20, 2008, the President of Ukraine V. Yushchenko signed a decree «On Measures to Ensure the Development of Ukraine as a Maritime State». In this document, the Head of State instructed the Cabinet of Ministers to prepare a bill on the termination since 2017 of international treaties on temporary stay on the territory of Ukraine of the RBSF. Afterwards, Russian diplomats first publicly stated that Russia's continued goal is to extend the RBSF's stay in Ukraine. Russian politicians, exerting pressure on Ukraine, stated that in case of Ukraine's adoption of the law on termination of the basic treaties on the RBSF since 2017, Russia has the right to raise the issue of Crimea's affiliation and the status of Sevastopol¹⁹.

The Ukrainian side also made radical statements. The first commander of the Navy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Vice Admiral B. Kozhyn said that in case of non-compliance the terms of the agreement by the RF, Ukraine may confiscate Russian military equipment after 2017²⁰.

A new exacerbation of the situation around the RBSF occurred after the beginning of the Russo-Georgian war on August 8, 2008. The impetus to complicate relations was the withdrawal of Russian warships from Sevastopol without warning the Ukrainian authorities and their involvement in the armed conflict. In response, on August 13, 2008, V. Yushchenko signed decrees that changed the procedure for crossing the border of Ukraine by military personnel and warships from reporting to a permissible. The servicemen were pledged to fill in the migration cards and report about the cargo²¹.

In late 2008, V. Yushchenko signed a decree «On Additional Measures for Socio-Economic Development of the City of Sevastopol». The document instructed the task for a work group to develop bills on attraction of investments for development of the economy in Sevastopol and to prepare proposals for the use, after 2017, of Sevastopol Bay infrastructure for non-military purposes, the redevelopment and modernization of port infrastructure.

According to the survey, 70% of Sevastopol citizens advocated for the implementation of the project, which would improve their living standards and minimize the loss of the city after a decrease in naval presence. On what the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RF A. Denisov stated that the publication of the decree – «is a line of psychological pressure on the Russian Federation ... the line of displacement of our Black Sea Fleet from Sevastopol»²².

On April 21, 2010 in Kharkiv V. Yanukovych and the Russian President D. Medvedev signed the «Agreement Between Ukraine and the Russian Federation on the Stay of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the Territory of Ukraine», according to which the stay of the RBSF in Sevastopol was extended since 2017 to 2042 with the possibility of automatic extension for 5 years. However, according to V. Skibitskyi, «even if in 2010 Yanukovych did not sign «Kharkiv Agreements» with Russia ... the Russians would certainly take steps to continue the Russian Black Sea Fleet's stay in Crimea»²³.

According to a representative of the Ukrainian special services, published in 2017, the information which is available for them, confirms that «the peninsula is needed for Russia only as a powerful military base. They are building up troops in Crimea, using it as an advanced base to secure Russian military presence in Syria, primarily at the expense of the RBSF. Another factor: according to the basic agreements on the temporary stay of the RBSF on the territory of Ukraine, Russia was not entitled to re-equip and modernize the fleet independently without agreement with Ukraine. Now, Russia is delivering modern weapons into Crimea»²⁴.

Comprehensive preparations of Moscow concerning the annexation of Crimea Russia began in 2013, when the RF, in its Foreign Policy Concept, determined the preservation of its influence on Ukraine. With the beginning of the Dignity Revolution, Russia, in the guise of conducting training and securing the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi (January-February 2014), formed a powerful grouping of troops near the eastern borders of Ukraine, with a total number of 37,000 servicemen, which was then used to invade Crimea and conducting a military operation in the southeastern regions of Ukraine.

Since February 22, 2014, there has been an increase in Russian forces in the south of the RF and in Crimea. They began to transfer secretly troops to the peninsula by large landing ships from the territory of the RF in the violation of the Russian-Ukrainian agreements²⁵.

The Ukrainian Intelligence recorded the movement of the military, an increase of patrols, and the RBSF headquarters switched to round-the-clock duty. These are all intelligence signs of preparations. At

that moment, Ukraine had a very difficult situation. The president left the country, the Minister of Defense fled, the reformation of power was continuing and stabilization processes in Kyiv did not end. It was difficult to make a decision, but in many cases almost impossible. In turn, V. Putin's actions were swift and coordinated.

«The Military Intelligence recorded how in the last week of February there was a transfer of units of airborne troops from different regions of Russia by air to Anapa. It was until February 27. Large amphibious ships carried the transfer of Marines from Novorossiysk to Sevastopol»²⁶. About the military units of the RF, which were involved in the seizure of the peninsula comprehensive information was provided by O. Volianiuk, H. Dobrovolska, and M. Maiorov in their work²⁷.

According to V. Skibitskyi, the capture of the Crimean Verkhovna Rada became the second phase of the operation. «Even though we had information that Russian troops were pushed forward to the building, there was no one to defend them. The MIA and SSU divisions in the majority moved to the side of the enemy»²⁸.

Moscow was preparing for that we should carry out the operation to liberate Crimea. Russia has transferred the entire Crimean group to a higher level of combat readiness. All warships went out on an external raid in Sevastopol, further – blocking of all Ukrainian military units. Assault and reconnaissance aircraft were prepared for immediate combat use. Divisions of the coastal troops of the RBSF moved to the cover areas of the land border of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Crimean isthmuses was blocked and the equipment of company support posts was carried out in the areas of Perekop, Armiansk and Chongar.

The third phase is the deployment of additional troops and the completion of a unified grouping of Russian troops in Crimea. Its number increased and in March 2014 amounted to about 30,000 servicemen. The third stage included and the disarmament of Ukrainian troops²⁹.

Formally, the annexation of Crimea ended on March 18, 2014. And already on March 27, the United Nations General Assembly supported a resolution, which recognizes the inviolability of Ukraine's territorial integrity. 100 UN member states voted in favour of the resolution³⁰. This session of the UN General Assembly was convened specially to consider the issue of Russia's armed occupation of Ukraine's, namely the Crimean peninsula.

The occupation has serious economic consequences for Ukraine, Russia and Crimea itself. The most serious consequences for Crimea became the problems with water and electricity supply.

Since then, reports have come from Crimea about repressions against indigenous population, Crimean Tatars and intimidation of those who opposed against Russian annexation. Despite repeated calls from UN General Assembly, Russia refuses to allow international human rights missions to the peninsula.

On the basis of reports and monitoring of international organizations, the National Institute for Strategic Studies has prepared an analytical note «On the Respect for the Rights of the Crimean Tatar People in the Annexed Crimea». The experts pointed out that the violation of the rights of the Crimean Tatar people is revealed in: the persecution of the Crimean Tatars, the cases of violence and cruel treatment directed against the Crimean Tatars; the coercion to «voluntary» deportation; the restrictions on the rights to the freedom of religion; the destruction of collective forms of self-organization of the Crimean Tatars, the suppression of their political identity; the restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful meetings; the persecution of media and journalists; the compulsion to renounce the citizenship of Ukraine³¹.

The Crimean Tatar people have consistently argued for the preservation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and against the annexation of Crimea by Russia. In the areas of residence of the Crimean Tatars, the so-called referendum did not take place at all. The Crimean Tatar Diaspora as well as the Crimean Tatars has declared that the Russian occupation of Crimea is not recognized by them. In response, Russia banned the entry to Crimean Tatar leaders M. Dzhemilev and R. Chubarov.

Hundreds of activists are being prosecuted by the occupying authorities. To the most recent examples can be enlisted arrests on March 11 in the occupied Crimea. After seven searches in Bakhchysarai and Bakhchysarai district, four Crimean Tatars were detained: Amet Suleimanov, Seitumer Seitumerov, Osman Seitumerov and Rustem Seitmemetov, who are suspected allegedly by the Federal Security Service in the activity of organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is forbidden in Russia. Moreover, as the head and organizer of this non-existent cell «was appointed» the former activist of Crimean Solidarity Seitumer Seitumerov, who in 2018 left Crimea for Kyiv (nowadays he works as an announcer on the Crimean Tatar channel ATR). On March 12, as Crimean activist Server Bariev notified, Russian security officers had searched the home

of Crimean Tartar Zera Bezazieva in the village of Rozdolne, whose husband had been in a hospital for several months. At the same time, security officers claimed that they were looking for a weapon, but they did not find anything³².

According to M. Semena, the purpose of such actions is to intimidate the local population, to encourage more and more unreliable for Russia Crimeans, namely Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, to leave the peninsula. This is the latest form of ethnic cleansing of the population of the annexed territories. In the current political situation in the world, Russia can not resort to forced deportation of people, as it did in 1944, so to weaken the resistance and increase the number of loyal population, RF in Crimea triggered a hybrid deportation, during which it squeezes dissenters from the peninsula and instead brings inhabitants from continental part of the country³³.

In particular, according to various materials (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, public organizations), in the first months of occupation Crimea left from 20,000 to 78,000 people³⁴. According to unofficial data, which is operated by the Deputy Representative of the President of Ukraine in Crimea Tamila Tasheva, approximately 100,000 people together with the military have left for the mainland Ukraine since the beginning of the occupation. Instead, under various programs from Russia about 500,000 people have come to Crimea, without taking into account the number of military men, which is, of course, kept in secret, but according to unofficial estimates, they also make up about half a million people.

According to the Chairman of the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar People, R. Chubarov, to promote the colonization of the peninsula by RF, should also and V. Putin's decree on land ownership in the occupied Crimea: «They create for themselves an alleged legal mechanism, which in their view, should create conditions for the resettlement of Russian citizens to Crimea». Namely, «those against whom this decree is directed may include those people, who have been formally forced to obtain Russian passports. They can be declared at any time the citizens of Ukraine and from them will take away the land plots»³⁵.

Three languages (Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar) have been proclaimed officially in Crimea. Formal bans on the activities of the Ukrainian school or book publishing are one can not find, but the realities are quite opposite. In bookstores there are no editions in Ukrainian, Ukrainian theater studios are being closed, even radio stations refuse from high-quality Ukrainian music. Today, Russian officials report that there is only one school with Ukrainian language in the peninsula (school no. 20 in Feodosia), where 146 children study in 9 forms. There are 13 Ukrainian forms more in seven schools. In 2017/2018 academic year, 318 children (0.2% of the total number of pupils) studied in the Ukrainian language in Crimea, which is in 35 times less than before the occupation. However, this Russian statistics is also conditional, because remain questions about the quality of the Ukrainian-language educational process. It is known that parents are forced to reject from the Ukrainian language teaching of children at schools, and those who want are persecuted for disloyalty to the current authorities³⁶.

In fact, Ukrainian cultural centers, museums, libraries and educational organizations were liquidated in Crimea. There are facts that during searches were removed Ukrainian flags, portraits of Ukrainian figures of the past, books by contemporary Ukrainian authors (in particular, from the Ivan Franko Library in Simferopol).

In 2015 the Museum of Ukrainian Embroidery was closed. The Ukrainian Cultural Center is the only non-political organization openly engaged in preserving of the Ukrainian language and culture on the peninsula, joining to the history, traditions, and creativity of the Ukrainian people, publishes the newspaper Crimean Blackthorn. Today, the organization has only a few activists; they are systematically summoned for questioning, warned about the inadmissibility of extremism, threatened. This organization is forbidden to hold public events, and searches are carried out in the homes of activists, technical devices are confiscated, etc. Ukrainians are also persecuted in religious matters. For example, on January 28, 2019, the so-called «Arbitration Court of the Republic of Crimea» approved the removal in the Crimean Diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate the premises of St. Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral in Simferopol³⁷.

Experts say that the events that took place in the spring of 2014 in Crimea led to the polarization of society on the peninsula disturbed the balance in interfaith and inter-ethnic relations. Today there is a high probability of breaking out of a serious inter-ethnic conflict in Crimea³⁸.

Recently, more and more information is being circulated that a powerful military grouping has been formed on the Crimean territory, which allows the RF to conduct operations on the whole throughout the

Black Sea region. «It is also an air component that covers the entire Black Sea area, it is also a surface and submarine fleet, a land component that today has been strengthened by means of air defense, reaching ... almost to Kyiv. In addition, the coastal missile complexes are being expanded, which will allow destroying surface targets almost throughout the Black Sea. The disposal of weapons of other types including nuclear weapons is not excluded on the territory of occupied Crimea».

In addition, if we talk about the hybrid threats used by Russia, then we should also talk about challenges in the information field. Moscow is conducting a powerful information campaign. «We are now increasingly dealing with fake messages that are on the verge between breaking news and misinformation. Not only Russian civilian structures are engaged in such issues, but also the structures of the Ministry of Defense of RF. Directly in the Southern District of the Armed Forces of the RF a whole department was created, which works in this direction. The divisions of this department are entrusted with such tasks as information isolation of the occupied districts, conducting of active propaganda, other issues, which are controlled not only at the level of the Southern District, but also at the level of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the RF»³⁹.

Russia's occupation of Crimea was the first case of the force annexation in Europe and the first attempt to reshape forcefully European borders since 1945. According to B. Johnson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, have done so, Russia has breached so many international agreements that it is even difficult to list them. Here are some examples: V. Putin trampled on Article 2 of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the RF. He also violated Russia's commitment, which was taken in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, namely the promise to «respect Ukraine's borders» and «to refrain from threatening or using force against Ukraine's territorial integrity or political independence»⁴⁰.

According to the diplomat's words, it is important to observe the principle that states can not change the borders or to acquire territory by force. Whether the world adheres to this principle, the security of each nation will depend. That is why the fate of Crimea matters to us all. No country, no matter its size is, can not dismember its neighbour and violate international law without consequences for itself.

The hybrid aggression of the RF against Ukraine (the direct annexation of Crimea and a separate part of Donbas) has shown problems in the international security system. In particular, the violation of one of the basic points of the UN Charter that a state or a group of states has no right to intervene directly or indirectly in domestic affairs which are within the competence of another state. No state can not apply any act of military, political or other coercion to subjugate itself any other state. It is forbidden to organize or promote subversive, terrorist activity aimed at forcibly changing the structure of another state⁴¹.

The annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula testified that V. Putin is trying to expand the hybrid war and spread Russian influence in the countries of Central-Eastern and Western Europe. According to some researchers, the Russian side supports «frozen conflicts» such as in Transnistria, Abkhazia, etc., with the aim of informal pressure on the post-Soviet republics, as well as by the informal methods helps to spread separatist movements within the EU.

According to experts, the level of the Russian threat in the Black Sea area remains high. «This is the region with the highest density of protracted conflicts». Considering that in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and started the war in Donbas, it was already trying to get to the largest port city of Odesa, «a new separatist movement in Odessa can occur at any time»⁴².

It is also a threat of large-scale hostilities from the side of RF, which maintains a high level of formation of its troops near Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian intelligence, «for today, since 2015, the formation of three Russian divisions near our border is already completed – the 3rd, 144th and 150th rifle divisions. In addition, the formation of the 8th Army in the Southern Military District, which will directly act in our direction, continues. And according to the plans that exist in the RF, the main activities are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2019 – early 2020. In other words, these are the measures that will allow having combat connections capable of acting in our direction. The Caucasus 2020 training is planned ..., where plans for the use of new formations against our state will be practically trained at landfills, in training centers of the Southern military district, including on the territory of Crimea»⁴³.

In such circumstances, it is necessary to continue taking of all possible measures to stop the Russian aggression against Ukraine, in particular, not to cease the pressure on Russia's leadership, including continuing sanctions, as the most effective mechanism for forcing to renewal of peace and compliance of the

norms of the international law. And world politicians must define the priority of the Black Sea as the region of the security.

Conclusions. Thus, on the one hand, the Euromaidan and the Dignity Revolution in Ukraine have catalyzed positive changes in the country, and on the other, intensified Russia's imperial ambitions to spread influence and control on its territory. The failure of V. Yanukovich's regime coincided in time with the beginning of the annexation of the Crimean peninsula. And on February 20, 2014, the bloodiest day in the confrontation between protesters and "Berkut's" sub-units, was decisive for Crimea as well.

The Russian Federation has borne similar plans since the downfall of the USSR and has repeatedly attempted to capture Crimea during 1990-2000. However, the well coordinated actions of the Ukrainian authorities and law enforcement structures allowed repelling the most dangerous attacks in 1993-1994, 2003.

New aggravation on the peninsula and in Russian-Ukrainian relations generally occurred in 2005-2009. The main reason was the change in Ukraine's foreign policy (deepening cooperation with the European Union, NATO), as well as the strengthening of ties between the official Kyiv and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The result of this policy had to be the gradual reduce of the military presence in the region and the final withdrawal of the RBSF from the naval bases on the peninsula after 2017.

For an aggressive in general foreign policy of the RF, the loss of naval bases in Crimea would lead to significant restrictions in the possibility of the military using in the Black Sea region. After all, in recent decades, the ships of the RBSF have been involved in the Russo-Georgian war, to ensure Russian military presence in Syria. The Russian leadership could not allow the loss of Crimea. Thus, the 2010 Kharkiv Agreements became a turning point in Russian-Ukrainian relations and allowed the RF on the contrary to strengthen its influence on the peninsula.

The deployment of the naval forces of the RBSF in Ukraine exacerbated the disintegration tendencies in Crimea and Russia's geopolitical role in the Black Sea region. The preservation of the Russian military contingent on the peninsula contributed to the annexation of Crimea, the preparation for which began in 2013. The post-reformatting of the power in the capital of Ukraine (the President and the Minister of Defense fled) made it difficult to counteract the Russian aggression in Crimea. Despite the pressure from international organizations and foreign politicians, V. Putin has closed the started case.

The annexation of the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by Russia has negative political, economic, social, cultural, ecological consequences for the peninsula and Ukraine. It also brings new geopolitical challenges and threats to the states of the entire Black Sea region.

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