

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies

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**REACTION OF THE WESTERN MASS MEDIA
TO THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR
(2014–2015)**

Kyiv
«Lesya Ltd.»
2017

УДК 94(477.6):94(470+571)
ББК 63.3(4УКР)64+63.3(0)4-68
К78

*Recommended for publication by the Academic Council
of the Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies
of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
(Protocol Nr 7, October 26, 2017)*

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К78 Reaction of the Western mass media to the Russian-Ukrainian War
(2014–2015). – Kyiv: «Lesia Ltd.», 2017. – 72 p.
ISBN 978-617-7530-18-2

The information and analytical brochure presents the reaction of the Western mass media to the events in Ukraine 2014–2015. In particular the coverage of the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of the Crimea by Russia, the armed conflict in the Donbass are studied, and the issues and dynamics of publications affecting these events, their positive ones and negative sides are defined. The brochure contains the results of research conducted under the grant support of the State Fund for Fundamental Research on the basis of the competitive project (F-72/21443) «Historical Prerequisites and Modern Social Consequences aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine».

ISBN 978-617-7530-18-2

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	p. 4–5
Chapter 1	
WEST MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN THE CRIMEA (FEBRUARY-MARCH, 2014).....	p. 6–25
Chapter 2	
RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR IN EASTERN UKRAINE IN THE WEST MAS-MEDIA DISCOURSE (2014-2015).....	p. 26–50
CONCLUSIONS.....	p. 51–60
REFERENS	p. 61–71

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of 21st century on the European continent there is a tense geopolitical rivalry between two important world political centers of influence – the EU and the Russian Federation, which consistently embody in principle different directions of integration in the interstate projects of the postcommunist countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. If the EU is pursuing a policy of expanding and raising a number of partner countries that would formulate their domestic and foreign policies on democratic principles, the Russian Federation seeks to turn these countries into their exclusive interests, exporting them to the Eurasian (authoritarian) state model with the so-called «Managed democracy» and the foundation, under its own care, of a strong, integrated formation that would operate in accordance with its principles and outlooks.

In particular, Russia's «share and rule» policy towards its neighbors was put to the test by Russia in 1992 when in Moldova, in the region Transnistria, it was created the so-called Transnistrian Moldavian Republic (TMR), and in the case of Georgia: in 1992–1993, by direct military assistance to the Abkhaz and South Ossetian separatists, and in August 2008, direct military aggression, which resulted that Russian troops occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia in full. Moreover, Russia recognized the «independent states» controlled by itself Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Due to the «multi-vector» of its foreign policy, Ukraine gradually became the center of a geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the EU. Russia tried to prevent the European integration of Ukraine and subordinate it to its own geopolitical goals. It should be noted that the Russian policy towards Ukraine has passed three stages of development: 1) a soft conviction in Eurasian integration under the protection of the Russian Federation; 2) harsh coercion (by using of political, diplomatic,

economic, energy, information levers of influence); 3) direct military aggression from 2014.

Following the victory in February 2014 of the Revolution of Dignity, the leadership of the Russian Federation openly embarked on the actual destruction of the independent Ukrainian state: by the Russian troops was occupied the Crimea, and after the so-called «people's referendum» that took place there on March 16, 2014 under the blows of Russian machine guns, after a few days the RF annexed the peninsula. On the part of the Donbass, with the direct participation of Russian military-political structures and various mercenaries, local pro-Russian collaborators announced on April 7, 2014, the so-called «Donetsk People's Republic» DPR and April 27, 2014 – «Luhansk People's Republic» LPR. All these are the consequences of the chauvinistic great-power policy of the ruling elite of Russia, which considered the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and Ukraine's independence as a «disappointment with a historical misunderstanding».

Chapter 1

WEST MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN THE CRIMEA (FEBRUARY-MARCH, 2014)

Despite the fact that the historic changes that took place in Ukraine under the influence of EuroMaydan (November 30, 2013 – February 23, 2014) and the Russian aggression 2014-2016 years requires some time for their comprehension, yet we will try to follow the transformation of world public opinion about these events.

The Russian-Ukrainian War in the south and east of Ukraine, which has been going on for more than 3 years, was preceded by the Revolution of Dignity (December 2013 – February 2014). It was the foreign media of the beginning of 2014 that devoted considerable attention to the publication of a photo from the Maidan in Ukraine, various informational and analytical articles that highlighted the course of the confrontation and expressed hopes for change, reflection on values, calls for sanctions and the overthrow of the then President Viktor Yanukovych, fears of the civil war and the Yugoslav scenario.

A special resonance («concern») was caused by the attempts of bloody overthrow of the Maidan and mass executions on February 18-19, 2014, «The Most Bloodshed during Ukraine's Independence», «The Last Ukrainian Front», «Plunge into a Confusion» – Such words described events of February 18-21, 2014 in the world of mass media. In particular, the German magazine *Frankfurter Allgemeine* on February 18 urged the western community to try to prevent further bloodshed in Ukraine and noted that «in Kyiv today it is about the country's future and about many more». «Ukraine has reached a point at which the risk of a civil war is incredibly great. The blame lies in the regime of President Yanukovych, because he sabotaged the possibility of a political solution», – noted in the newspaper [13].

The German newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* on February 19 published an article «Kyiv in the Fire – Understanding of Negotiations wasn't reached», in which it reported the tragic events the killed, wounded as a result of night clashes on Maidan. On February 20, *Der Spiegel* Online International, the *Daily Mail*, («Reflected the Evil Empire and the Nation at the Civil War») spoke about the importance of confrontation in Ukraine on a global scale, warned about the possibility of deploying a civil war in the country. In these publications, the blame for the exacerbation of the situation in the center of Kiev was relied on the president of Russia Vladimir Putin, who wants to restore the Soviet Union and is forcing Ukrainians to join the alliance with Moscow [6].

However, not all media were unequivocal in their position regarding Vladimir Putin and Viktor Yanukovych and their role in the bloodshed in late February. So, on the German *TV channel ARD* appeared transmission-investigation of the crime, which stated that not the former President Viktor Yanukovych and his special-appointed guilty of assassinations, but the protesters themselves. However, such programs did not appear on the main German channels later [13].

«The image of bodies punctured by bullets and molded among the semi-elaborate fractures of destruction, as well as medical workers who screw casualties and wounded the emergency services, some of which are located in the lobby of the hotel, shocked the country and the world» – such a picture of the events in Kyiv was depicted by the American newspaper *The New York Times* to its readers on February 21 [6].

Welcoming the signing of the crisis resolution agreement on February 21, 2014, the German mass media expressed grave concern about Ukraine's political uncertainty and called on the Ukrainian political elite not to repeat the mistakes made after the Orange Revolution of 2004 [37].

At that time, the Germans were not very sympathetic to George Soros's idea of the new Marshall Plan for Ukraine, since they were unhappy with the financing of the German taxpayers of the eurozone crisis countries and did not want to find additional funds for the Marshall new plan [38].

German editions (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*), having paid considerable attention to political changes in Ukraine and the future of Ukraine, urged it, after normalization of the situation, to return to the course on European integration, from which Viktor Yanukovych descend drew attention [5].

Die Welt newspaper in the article «Ukraine in the EU? A good illusion» is responding to the prospect of a possible membership of Kiev: «Changes in Ukraine were so insulting that the power of the Maidan seemed to some to the infinite. Y. Tymoshenko says that her country can become a member of the EU in a short time» [5].

«Ukraine is a European country, historically and today. However, euphoria is a bad advisor. The European Union should help Ukraine quickly. However, he should not be confused with the pathos of freedom and breakthrough in Ukraine. ... The EU needs to protect Ukrainians from disappointment and therefore to allow convergence today, but to say no to the prospect of accession. ... The lesson of the expansion stages is: membership at a time when countries are ripe – and not long before hoping that this will happen», – writes Florian Eder in the pages of this newspaper [5].

The newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in the article «Ukrainian scenarios» analyzes the challenges that the possible development of the situation in Ukraine puts before the North Atlantic Alliance. «NATO has not yet had a thorough discussion of the scenarios and probabilities that may take place in Ukraine in the coming days and weeks. The first exchange of views is scheduled for dinner, which was invited

by defense ministers during their meeting in Brussels. According to diplomats, it is obvious that the situation in the country after the overthrow of Viktor Yanukovych has not stabilized. In their opinion, separation, civil war or military intervention of Russia is still possible. The most dangerous scenario would be the military intervention of Russia, for example, in order to «liberate» the Crimea. After experience with the Russian invasion of Georgia «for the protection of Russian citizens» in NATO, a priori do not exclude such actions», – notes the magazine [5].

The Austrian edition in his editorial *Die Presse* called: «It's time to drive Yanukovych!» [13].

Concerns of German society caused Russia's actions aimed at the annexation of Crimea. Such actions were seen as Putin's attempt to «nationalize» the Russian elite and continue to build a regime of authoritarian «sovereign democracy» [39].

Support on March 1, 2014 by both chambers of the State Duma of Russia, the treatment of the President of Russia V. Putin on the permission to use the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine was interpreted by the German press as a «controlled escalation» of events around the Crimea [39].

At the same time, the US media condemned violence on both sides and drew attention to the warnings of the administration of the US president regarding the introduction of a state of emergency in Ukraine. This, in particular, was mentioned in the article «The Ukrainian leader is grasping for power against the background of the spread of chaos» (*The New York Times*) with reference to the words of the representative of the US Department of State. In addition, the publication noted that the country is immersed in «an even greater mess» [6].

One of the major topics in the American press was the political divisions of Ukrainian society. Time magazines, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and others. wrote about Ukraine

as a divided country standing between the past and the future, and pointed to a different attitude toward then-President V. Yanukovych (hostile – in the west, favored in the east of Ukraine). Describing those violent events as the most brutal in the history of independent Ukraine, they noted that Kyiv is on the verge of a «turning point». According to John Will, a political columnist for the Washington Post, the situation in Ukraine is likely to be «the final episode of the Cold War». «The agony of Ukraine is an echo of the process of stripping after a» prolonged «experiment», he wrote, referring to the «experiment» of the existence of the Soviet Union [6].

After the escape of Viktor Yanukovych, the top theme of the Ukrainian issue in the western mass media was the occupation, and then the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation.

Since the beginning of March 2014, the *Washington Post* magazine published dozens of articles devoted to this issue. In particular, «Crimea sets referendum on joining Russia», «Crimea's parliament votes to join Russia», «U.S. warns Russia against annexing Crimea», «Crimeans vote to break away from Ukraine, join Russia», «Russia recognizes Crimea's independence, defying new US and EU sanctions», «The dubious Crimean referendum on annexation by Russia», «Kremlin says Crimea is now officially part of Russia after treaty signing, Putin's speech», «What is motivating Putin?», «The downsides of Crimea for Russia», «Building a federal Ukraine?», «Russia celebrates Crimea annexation while Ukraine looks to West for support», «US warns Russia against annexing Crimea», etc.

We consider it necessary to dwell briefly on the main historical moments of occupation and annexation of the Crimean peninsula in February-March 2014 and to show the reaction to these events of the western mass media. Initially, on February 23, a 20 thousandth rally took place in Sevastopol,

where it was decided not to transfer taxes to Kyiv and the citizen of Russia O. Chalyi was proclaimed as a mayor. On February 27, 2014, unidentified «green men» (Russian militants, special forces) in a military uniform without identification marks, with the participation of local pro-Russian militants, seized the buildings of the parliament and the Crimean government. Meanwhile, deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea sought to implement their ideas on separation from Ukraine and accession to Russia as soon as possible (which President Obama, the new government in Kyiv and European leaders considered provocative and illegal). So they gathered for an extraordinary session and decided to hold a referendum on the future of the Crimea on March 16, 2014 to confirm this decision [23] (originally scheduled for May 25, then later on March 30). In particular, the Crimeans should answer the question of the restoration of the Crimean Constitution in 1992 and the entry of the Crimea into Russia.

The announcement of the referendum took place contrary to the Ukrainian legislation, which does not provide for local referendums; and the question of changing the borders of Ukraine should be made exclusively on an all-Ukrainian referendum. Despite the decree of the then acting president of Ukraine O. Turchinov about the suspension of the decision of the Crimean parliament, the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, which recognized the announcement of a referendum in Crimea in a manner that was not in line with the Constitution of Ukraine, as well as the position of the UN Security Council, the pseudo-referendum was held. The so-called «international observers», whom the Russian Federation and the Crimean separatists allowed to work on the «referendum» on the peninsula, were representatives of ultra-right, neo-Nazi and communist European parties and persons with Nazi and pro-communist views.

During two weeks, pro-Russian forces held large rallies in Crimea, while pro-Ukrainian rallies were smaller and more sporadic. The Crimean government stopped airing Ukrainian television programs and substituted them with programs from Moscow. Pro-Ukrainian activists and journalists were detained as the regional government warned that provocateurs might cause problems, and some complained of being beaten by vigilantes, – the American *The Washington Post* wrote on March 17 [26].

She also noted that in the conditions of boycotting the referendum by the Crimean Tatar people, the presence of a large number of armed Russian servicemen, as well as falsifications, according to the report of the Crimean electoral spokesman M. Malyshev, 127,4096 Crimeans (83.1% of the total number of voters voted in the referendum in the ARC)), of which 1023 002 (96,77%) «for the reunification with the Russian Federation» and 31997 (2,51%) «against», 9097 ballots were invalid [24; 26].

Most Crimean Tatars, the Muslim minority, did not vote. At some polling stations, according to officials, no Tatar was registered during the day [26]. «This is is totally illegitimate, and I can can't bear to think about how things will be afterward», said T. Zhytov, 40, said. «I am Russian, and my husband is a Tatar. We never had any problems. Life in Ukraine is not perfect, but it was peaceful. Now Russia is trying to divide us», wrote the publication [26].

The correspondent of *The Washington Post*, Ilya Somin, in his article «The dubious Crimean referendum on annexation by Russia», noted that «the referendum result was “achieved” by fraud and/or intimidation – tactics which the Putin regime had previously resorted to in Russia itself. The likelihood of fraud is also suggested by the fact that even some Russian journalists were forcibly prevented from observing the vote count and had their camera smashed by officials» [28].

One of the facts of pressure on journalists is the American *USA Today*. According to an independent reporter from Cyprus Tatyana Tkachenko, she was questioned until 4 o'clock in the morning in a cold room under the blow of an automaton and threatened to be put in prison for espionage, but subsequently released [63].

In the opinion of the American journalist, television presenter, blogger B. Friedman, «the reality that the really intimidating aspect of the situation for potential opponents of annexation is that Crimea is now under the control of a regime with an extensive record of persecuting political dissenters. The possibility of persecution or harrassment after the fact is in itself intimidating, regardless of whether troops directly intimidated people at polling places or not» [28].

Speaking in those days several times with Putin, Obama stated said that the referendum «would never be recognized by the United States and the international community» and that «we are prepared to impose additional costs on Russia for its actions» [25]. US President Obama reiterated «that a diplomatic resolution cannot be achieved while Russian military forces continue their incursions into Ukrainian territory and that the large-scale Russian military exercises on Ukraine's borders only exacerbate the tension» [25].

In a telephone conversation with US Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that «the results should be a starting point in determining the future of the peninsula». ... In turn, John Kerry confirmed that the US government did not recognize the results of the referendum and expressed serious concerns about Russian military activities near the Crimean border and the continuation of provocations in eastern cities of Ukraine [24; 25].

Shortly after of this the call, the Foreign Ministry of Russia noted with cautious optimism that both sides «agreed to continue working toward a solution to the crisis through an

earliest possible launch of constitutional reform in Ukraine» [25].

The results of the «referendum on self-determination» of Crimea, which took place on March 16, 2014, did not become a sensation for the Germans who denied any analogy with the Kosovo problem. It was explained by the fact that the European course of Serbia has some contradictions. On the one hand, Serbia seeks to ensure that Kosovo's independence is not tied to its accession to the EU, but on the other hand it tries to use the EU to put pressure on Kosovo. In fact, the financial and economic dependence of Kosovo remains a major factor in the weakness of its independence. Therefore, Kosovo balances on the verge of separating the states «that have taken place» from states that are recognized as «problematic» [7, p. 172].

March 18, 2014 *The Washington Post* published a thorough analysis of Putin's speech in the Kremlin on the signing of the «Treaty on the Adoption of Crimea in Russia». Although in his speech, Putin compared the accession of the Crimea to the Russian Federation with the independence of Kosovo in 2008 and the reunification of Germany in 1990, but in reality, this is the first time that one European nation has seized territory from another since the end of World War II, – the newspaper wrote [30].

In March 2014, the Canadian daily *The Globe and Mail* published a statement by the then prime minister of Canada Stephen Joseph Harper's statement that V. Putin has violated the 1994 Budapest Memorandum where Ukraine relinquished its share of the Soviet arsenal of nuclear weapons «on the basis of an explicit Russian guarantee of its territorial integrity». J. Harper also announced he would restart free-trade talks with Ukraine, a show of support for the country's new leadership [66].

Correspondents from *The Globe and Mail* from the very beginning of the crisis in Ukraine traced events on the spot.

Senior international correspondent Mark MacKinnon, European bureau chief (now Editor of Report on Business) Paul Waldie and international affairs columnist Doug Saunders were there as protests swelled in the snowy Maidan in Kiev in November and when protesters were killed in the streets in February before the sudden ouster of President V. Yanukovych. They reported on the rise of right-wing nationalists in the capital and the growing separatist sentiment in Russian-speaking regions that saw Russia's shock annexation of Crimea in March, the massing of Russian troops on the Ukraine border and separatist in eastern Ukraine. «Crimea vote will deepen chasm between Moscow and West», «Diplomats running out of ways to stop slide toward war in Eastern Europe», – reported the publication [35].

The Russian government has banned entry to 13 Canadian senior civil servants and politicians in retaliation for punitive actions that Ottawa levied on Moscow elite over the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Ukraine.

But «Canadian officials named today by Russia aren't oligarchs; they aren't people threatening to annex peaceful neighbours by military force», – told reporters Foreign Affairs Minister Canada John Baird [54].

In those boisterous days, the German edition of *Bild* argued that Russia planned an annexation of the Crimea long before the events of 2014. Referring to the Lithuanian border guards, the article describes the case of two people who were detained during a trip from Kaliningrad to Russia through Lithuania. In 1992 and 1994, the detainees seized passports, where Odesa and Crimea were designated as the birthplace, marked as territories of the Russian Federation. The authors of the publication note that one of the confiscated documents was issued on December 24, 2013, the other one – «could have been in effect since 2011» [14].

«This document is a blatant proof of Russia's official position regarding the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the illegal

annexation of the Crimean peninsula», *Bild* writes, specifying that citizens of Russia with such passports banned travel through Lithuania. In addition, the article publishes samples of the documents [14].

The annexation of the Crimea in the German media was called the price for non-alignment of Ukraine with the Customs Union. Among the top ranking politicians in Germany, only the finance minister, the Christian democrat Wolfgang Schöubbe, was publicly comparing Putin's actions in the Crimea with Hitler's actions against the Sudeten Germans [7, p. 172].

In an interview with the German press, former head of the former Russian oil company Yukos, M. Khodorkovsky predicted that Western sanctions would push the elite out of Putin, and Russia's aggression against Ukraine would provoke a civil war in Russia. Before the acting president of Ukraine O. Tymoshenko called for consent for a referendum on federalization Ukraine, seeing in the rejection of this «propaganda» of the Ukrainian-Russian war. In an attempt to prevent such a scenario, German Chancellor Merkel offered to host round tables in Ukraine on national reconciliation between East and West without discussing the status of the Russian language and the non-aligned status of Ukraine [7, p. 172].

Along with the German, the Polish weekly *Rzeczpospolita* paid much attention to the problems of Ukrainian-Russian relations, which at that time intensified due to the annexation of Crimea and manifestations of separatism in the east of Ukraine. In it 28 articles were published on this subject. The magazine is actively opposed to Moscow's proposal to lift the restrictions that were previously imposed on Ukrainian producers in exchange for the refusal of Kiev from the Association Agreement with the EU (R. Sovsun, «Russian» carrot «for Ukraine»). The authors of the articles, for the most part, condemn the annexation of the Crimea and the violation of Ukrainian borders (V. Guretsky, «Under the example of the

Crimea, Putin can annex a part of Kazakhstan»). Journalists of the journal indicate a real threat of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine and express support for the Ukrainian people in connection with pro-Russian separatist operations in the east of Ukraine (M. Michalak, «Ukraine: Passport Control at the Donbass Border»). In general, this section is devoted to 21% of publications, of which positive – 16%, negative – 5% [10, p. 68].

According to U. Peresotskaya's, the main themes of the March 2014 publications of the two commercial and most replicated Polish weekly papers *Polityka* and *Newsweek Polska*, which form the outlook of the Poles, are: the capture of the Crimean parliament by unknown armed people (February 27), staying «Green men» (February to March), holding a referendum (March 16) and signing in the Kremlin the document «The Treaty on the Adoption of the Crimea in Russia» (March 18) [9, p. 32]

The main trend in these Polish weekly papers is the coverage of the confrontation Simferopol – Kyiv, Ukraine – Russia, Crimea – Ukraine, Crimean self-defense – Ukrainian military, pro-Russian residents – Crimean Tatars, Kremlin propaganda – foreign media. In some analytical critical materials there is an image of a Ukrainian and the author's own opinion, a clear pro-Ukrainian position, and also contains an analytical material on the information war of Russia against Ukraine in Europe («Szósta kolumna Putina», «Druga wojna krymska») [9, p. 36].

According to the journalist *Polityka*, «the black script, which is gaining popularity among some Polish politicians, suggests that Crimea is only the beginning of a great division of Ukraine, which can lose even a third of its territory in the east» [9, p. 37].

After the so-called «Crimean referendum» in the world mass-media appeared publications about the need for immediate

introduction of financial sanctions against Russian and Ukrainian civil servants involved in supporting the Crimean referendum and the annexation of the Crimea.

Even then, *The Washington Post*, in its editorial, noted that Russia's most powerful non-military tool is the Russian exclusion from its banking system. The United States of America and most Western countries said they did not recognize the results of the referendum, referring to the Russian military occupation that had started then, and the crisis conditions under which «voting» was conducted [24; 13].

But until Russia ends its «provocative» troop movements, pulls its troops in Crimea back to their barracks and stops its partisans from agitating within Ukrainian cities, the official said, political overtures cannot be taken seriously [25].

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) said on *Fox News Sunday*: «Putin has started a game of Russian roulette, and I think that the United States and the West have to be very clear in their response, because he will calculate about how far he can go. So that means having very robust sanctions ready to go, starting with the Crimea vote and moving onward» [25]. He added: «I think the question will be, what does Russia do in response? And having those sanctions ready – whether it be against the defense minister, the federal security service, the secretary of their security council, possibly the executives of Gazprom and Rosneft, which are their oil and gas companies»... [25].

The U.S. sanctions include asset freezes and travel bans on some of Putin's closest aides. The European Union separately announced sanctions on 21 individuals, including several Russian military commanders. The European list did not include Kremlin aides [27].

Under the sanctions, one U.S. official said, «all assets are frozen; no U.S. person can do business with them. ... If they want to transact in dollars, for example, they will be unable to do so.

They will be unable to send any money through the United States» [27]. «More broadly», this official said, «the people we designate will tend to find great difficulty in accessing financial services elsewhere in the world, particularly in Europe and the Gulf» [27].

And while in Moscow politicians joked about sanctions, measures began to demonstrate effectiveness, and several hundreds of thousands of Russians felt their influence. Master Card and Visa suspended operations with the bank «Russia», «SMP Bank» and other small banks [34].

Another senior U.S. official emphasized that the measures were designed to block the «personal assets and wealth» of Putin «cronies» [27].

Some Republican lawmakers criticized the administration's measures as insufficient. Sen. John McCain (Ariz.) called for «a far more significant response», saying that sanctioning only seven Russians «is wholly inadequate at this stage». Sen. Ted Cruz (Tex.) described U.S. policy toward Russia as «appeasement» and called for an expanded American military presence in Eastern Europe [27].

Together with the US economic sanctions against Russia joined Germany. But these days, the vice-chancellor, Social Democrat Z. Gabriel, negotiated in Moscow to minimize the damage to the German business from sanctions [40]. It was heard in the German press and reservations from conducting direct historical parallels: «Putin is not Hitler, Crimea is not Sudeti, 2014 is not 1938» [41].

Interestingly, in our opinion, there is an analysis on Vladimir Putin's statement of journalist Joshua Tucker on *The Washington Post* that it intends to make the Crimea a part of the Russian Federation and that the Russian Federation does not pretend outside the Crimea another territories of Ukraine. He tried to explain the motivation for action Russian President, their consequences and identified 4 main statements and argued them:

1) the importance of the Crimea for Russian security; 2) the «greater Russia» plan; 3) Crimea – Putin’s post-2011 new domestic constituency; 4) the Euromaidan example as a threat to the Russian political regime. «These four explanations are, of course, not exclusive of all the arguments out there – and there are points of overlap between them – but I believe they encompass many of them, and I hope they will be helpful for people trying to organize their thoughts about Russia, Ukraine and Crimea», – he remarked [31].

Timothy Fry, a political scientist at Columbia University, described the referendum in Crimea as a «joke wrapped in a farce within the tragedy», in the article «The downsides of Crimea for Russia». Voting among armed soldiers with counterfeit ballots and little time for public debate is unlikely to be the best practice» [32]. Focusing on the economic and political situation in Russia, the scientist asks whether the anticipation of a slowing economy and lower personal popularity in the future will make Russia more likely to repeat a Crimean scenario in Eastern Ukraine, Transdnistr, Kazakhstan or the Baltics as a way to divert attention from deeper problems or whether these negative trends would moderate Russian foreign policy? And it concludes «events in Crimea will likely divert Russia from addressing its most important problems. The annexation of Crimea – perhaps only the second such redistribution of territory between countries in post-war Europe – will prove a great boon to the Kremlin, but there are real downsides here for Moscow as well» [32].

«Insatiable» the influential British magazine *The Economist* came out with such an article and cover after the Russian annexation of Crimea expanded its aggression to eastern Ukraine [13]. «First, Vladimir Putin mauled Georgia, but the world forgave him—because Russia was too important to be cut adrift. Then he gobbled up Crimea, but the world accepted it – because Crimea should have been Russian all along. Now he has

infiltrated eastern Ukraine, but the world is hesitating – because infiltration is not quite invasion. But if the West does not face up to Mr Putin now, it may find him at its door», – warned *The Economist* [13].

Political scientists of Oxford University G. Saxe and London University of Economics J. Hughes in his discourse, «Building a federal Ukraine?» ponder on the positive and negative moments of the federal system, including its prospects for Ukraine, and two scenarios for future development. They believed that, **firstly**, «there could be an asymmetric decentralization (that is, different agreements with different regions of the country). The new government in Kiev could engage in bilateral negotiations with individual regions in the south-east. Such a process would inevitably be largely non-transparent. This asymmetric federal approach, as with Russian President Boris Yeltsin's approach to ethnic republics in Russia in the mid-1990s, might generate some short-term stability but it would also antagonize other regions and would be vulnerable to unraveling» [33].

Secondly, there could be a state-wide of constitutional reform may go through for the purpose of comprehensive federalization or decentralization, greater powers for all regions, the provision of self-governing powers in the cultural sphere (including language and education), economic governance, taxation and police activity. The election (and not the appointment of the president) of the regional governors is an important aspect of the reforms. This reform process could be achieved by either a constitutional convention, or a constitutional committee in parliament, followed by a state-wide referendum. These steps would generate a democratic process of debate, dialogue and engagement, and hopefully reunite Ukrainian society. There would almost certainly be international monitoring and advice, – observing scientists [33].

Regarding the federalization of Ukraine, we note that along with some of its positive aspects (increasing the powers of territorial communities in relations with the center and mutual control of the two branches of power, the choice of ways and mechanisms for the development of specific regions, redistribution of financial flows, reducing the level of contradictions in society, etc.), given the current situation in the country, there are many and negative sides. **First**, federalization will lead to an even greater split within Ukraine, in particular, according to the language criterion in the Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking regions, which will further lead to conflict situations. **Secondly**, federalization is dangerous because of the different economic potential of the regions of Ukraine (west – agrarian, east – industrial). Unitary form of the state more or less allows to equalize the pace of development; in the federal state, the differences in the economic development of the regions will be aggravated. **Thirdly**, even if federalisation eliminates cultural contradictions between the regions, although there is no guarantee that this will be the case, it will not be able to assist in foreign policy, in particular, in terms of joining NATO, the EU, or even the Customs Union, and the common It will be very difficult to reach an opinion, if at all possible.

Thus, in our opinion, the unitary state is characterized by greater unity, from the unity of state authorities, armed forces, the tax system, etc., to the unity of interests of citizens and territory, and only the unitary state can preserve the integrity of Ukraine today.

The American non-state analytical center «Stratfor» was speculating on trying to conceal the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, when he annexed the Crimea in 2014. It was noted that the price of annexation of the peninsula was actually too high for Moscow – Russian aggression forced NATO members to «strengthen their military presence in Eastern Europe», while Western countries – to impose numerous sanctions on Russia's

energy, finance and defense spheres. According to Andriy Illarionov, a former economic adviser to Putin, «Russia's intervention in Ukraine cost Moscow at least \$ 94 billion a year. It should also be remembered about the fall in oil prices and the economic crisis in which Russia was the result of aggression against Ukraine. All this became the high price that Russia had to pay for the annexation of the Crimea» [64].

Western politicians have long been trying to understand why Russia has gone to such costs: someone was analyzing Putin's actions as an attempt to return the former USSR territories; some thought that the annexation of the Crimea was a response to NATO's continued expansion, but only a few drew attention to the internal causes of the Kremlin's foreign aggression.

The cost of the Olympics in Sochi, which took place on the eve of the annexation of the Crimea, caused the indignation of the Russian people – it was the most expensive Winter Olympic Games in history, costing about \$ 50 billion. Some experts believe that part of the reason for the annexation could be a distraction from the Kremlin's crazy costs for the Olympics and related corruption, as it pointed to even more serious problems within Russia. However, «interference in other countries is an expensive means to disguise contradictions within the country» [64].

The influential British financial newspaper *Financial Times* writes that the real battle for the future of Ukraine is currently under way in the economic sphere of the state. According to the author, the most important task of Ukraine is «the restoration of stability and economic prosperity, even if its territorial integrity is subjected to brutal pressure» [64].

The author believes that the Russian aggression was intended not to capture Ukrainian lands, but to destabilize the Ukrainian economy in order to weaken Ukraine as a state as much as possible. At the beginning of the conflict, the Kremlin managed

to achieve its intended goal – as a result of Russian aggression, the hryvnia lost 70% of its value relative to the dollar, inflation began, and the economy of Ukraine suffered a significant decline. [64]. Three years later, the author sees a slightly different picture: macroeconomic stability has been achieved, and Ukraine has been on the path of economic recovery, the Ukrainian economy has achieved positive results. A Free Trade Agreement with the EU «creates an opportunity for Ukraine to become an integral part of the continental supply chain» [64]. Kyiv should do everything necessary for a successful onereforming its economy. Particular attention needs to be paid to combating corruption, which is a major challenge for the development of a stable country.

Summing up, the journalist notes that reforms, and not military capabilities, will help Ukraine achieve economic independence, noting that «reforms are and always were its most powerful weapon» [64].

The American newspaper *The Washington Times* reflects on the global ambitions of Putin. The author believes that the Russian president wants to return to Moscow its Soviet glory, transforming Russia into a full-fledged competitor of the United States. In order to achieve this, Putin must have control over Eastern and Central Europe, even if it leads to a serious deterioration of relations with the West, – the author notes [64].

The Kremlin's encroachment on the status of a superpower is evident, the article says. The Russian military power was in bad shape after the collapse of the USSR, but now the Kremlin is rebuilding and modernizing its military potential. We must also remember the author observes that Russia still has a rather powerful nuclear arsenal that could seriously threaten the world, which the Russian leader very much likes to remind. [64].

The journalist notes that «Western agreements with corrupt Russian financial institutions and oligarchs are often closely linked to V. Putin's own, whose personal wealth is considered to

be larger than that of White Gates and Jeff Bezos, the richest people in the world» [64].

One of the prophets, in our opinion, can be considered an article. «Insatiable. The cost of stopping the Russian bear now is high—but it will only get higher if the West does nothing» (*The Economist*, April 19, 2014). It says that in 2008 Putin invaded Georgia, then annexed the Crimea, and the West was only watching because Russia «was too important to go against it.» But now, «That is why the West needs to show Mr. Putin that further action will be costly. So far, its rhetoric has marched far ahead of its willingness to act—only adding to the aura of weakness. Not enough is at stake in Ukraine to risk war with a nuclear-armed Russia», – the magazine writes [3].

Chapter 2

RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR IN EASTERN UKRAINE IN THE WEST MAS-MEDIA DISCOURSE (2014-2015)

In the West, it seems, for a long time could not believe in a phenomenon like «green men,» pseudo-referendums in the style of Stalin / Hitler possible in the 21st century. Along with the occupation, publications on the «Yugoslav script» for Ukraine began to be published more often.

In April 2014, the second phase of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine began, when armed groups controlled, managed and funded by Russian special services announced the creation of a so-called DPR (April 7) and LPR (April 27). Then Professor of Donetsk University I. Todorov on pages of the British *The Guardian* expressed his opinion on two scenarios of the future development of events in the east of Ukraine. **Firstly**, «Russia would annex the east of Ukraine, as it did last month with Crimea». **Second**, «Moscow would install a puppet regime analogous to the one in Trans-Dniester, the breakaway Moldovan region next to western Ukraine», – he said. And added that «there was a growing feeling that Ukraine would be better off dumping its troublesome eastern provinces and creating a modern European country without them» [43].

The same edition noted that the separatists did not hide their desire to join Moscow. In enthusiastic buildings were posted large maps of Donbass, on which he was part of Russia. This was one of the proofs for the USA, the EU and Kyiv that the Kremlin is coordinating the armed uprising using undercover soldiers and FSB agents. Moscow denies this [43].

On the same days, *The Guardian* informed that «there is overwhelming support in eastern Ukraine for greater autonomy from Kiev, as well as for Russian to be given the status of an official state language. According to an opinion poll in February, though, the separatists are in the minority – with only 26% in the east supporting union with Russia» [43].

According to the Interfax-Ukraine news agency, UK foreign minister William Hague said on April 14 that behind the scenes of events in eastern Ukraine is Russia, which wants to destabilize the country and disrupt the presidential election. In particular, he remarked: «There can be no doubt that it was planned by Russia: the forces involved in it, well-armed, well-prepared, well-equipped and coordinated, behave in the same way as the Russian military behaved in the Crimea» [8]. According to William Hague, «there are all signs of further growing deliberate violation of Ukraine's independence and sovereignty, and it is also very dangerous. ... Part of what we see in Russia's behavior is deliberate destabilization of Ukraine and a threat to (presidential) elections. Therefore, there must be a clear international response ... It is very important to react to what Russia has done», – said the Foreign Minister of Great Britain [8].

Achieving consensus among the 28 EU member states is a complex process. In discussing the issue of extending sanctions against Russia, not to mention the introduction of new restrictive measures, serious differences persist between the 28 member states of the EU and there are ongoing discussions on this issue. Among the EU countries, on the one hand, there are «hawks» that call for a tough confrontation with Russia, strengthening economic sanctions and providing more active support to Ukraine. Some even assume the possibility of supplying weapons to Ukraine for protection. From the beginning, such a hard line was chosen by Poland, the Baltic States, and to a lesser extent Romania. For each of these countries, there are their own motifs, which are connected, first of all, with recent history. The United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries are also attracted to this group [15].

At the same time, some EU countries took a mixed stand against Ukraine and Russia in the current wars. They are conventionally called «Russia's understanders» («those who understand Russia»). France, the southern member states of the

Union (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, countries of Southeastern Europe) are in no hurry to confront Russia through Ukraine. It is possible that some EU countries may continue to veto new sanctions against Russia or block their continuation. Such intentions have repeatedly been voiced in government circles in Italy, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Greece and Hungary. Separate reservations at different times were put forward by representatives of the power structures of the Czech Republic, Austria and France [15].

Despite the fact that the position of Poland and the Baltic states that have long pointed to the threat from Russia has for some time been a minority position, and these countries have been called panickers, with the increase in aggressive behavior of Russia and the intensification of hostilities in eastern Ukraine, it has gradually become the position of the majority [15]. The largest role in this process was played by the Federal Republic of Germany, in particular its Chancellor A. Merkel, who discovered Russia's unexpected unwavering solidarity and firmness over Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine. This one Kremlin's steadfastness was all the more unexpected, since Russia consistently tried to turn Germany into its center of influence in Western Europe, giving preferences to German business and drawing German politicians into their own projects. Despite all of Germany, it took the initiative of the head of the West European countries to stop Russian aggression. The result of this initiative was the implementation of a single EU policy in the area of diplomatic and economic pressure on Moscow and overcoming the resistance of a number of EU-oriented countries [15].

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Poland D. Tusk, commenting on the start of the ATO in eastern Ukraine, said that «Ukrainians have acted rationally today, refraining from a sharp reaction to the actions of separatists. But the moment has come when the Ukrainian state must begin to act decisively». He also stressed that «he agrees with the position of the Ukrainian

authorities regarding the perception of separatists in eastern Ukraine as terrorists. Putin will be delayed where Ukraine will allow. Therefore, Kyiv must take its own hands and decide itself when it will fight for the territorial integrity of the country and what means it will use» [17]. According to the head of the Polish government, no third party will be more involved in the defense of Ukraine than the Ukrainians themselves [17].

On April 15, 2014, before the EU Council meeting at the level of defense ministers of the 28 EU member states in Luxembourg, NATO Secretary General, A. F. Rasmussen, in turn, accused Russia of involvement in separatist unrest in eastern Ukraine. In particular, he stated that «Russia's behavior and local events speak for themselves. We fundamentally do not comment on intelligence, but it is obvious that Russia's hands are actively involved in this» [2].

Thus, the seizure of pro-Russian militants, Russian saboteurs and mercenaries of administrative buildings on the Donbass in the spring of 2014 led to the so-called the Crimean scenario of an anti-constitutional referendum (nobody recognized the «popular will») regarding the independence of the DPR and LPR, which took place on May 11, 2014.

The militants, with active assistance from the local authorities, simply captured the boxes for voting with the Ukrainian emblem, voter lists, formed «commissions» and sent to the addresses a few days later, and then printed on the xerox «ballots», which had one question: «Do you support the act of state independence of the DPR (LPR)?».

Most people who went to this «referendum» did not realize its illegality, and someone went «dreaming» about Russian pensions and salaries, and so on. In order to create the visibility of mass voting, terrorists resorted to intimidation, promises of paradise life «both in Russia and the Crimea» and simply opened a small number of polling stations in order to have queues there. As a result, Russian TV channels got the right picture – the

people of Donbass mass referendum. According to the initiators of the referendum, the turnout of voters in the Donetsk region amounted to 74.87%. «For» voted 89,07 percent, «against» – 10,19 percent, and 0,74 percent of the ballots were spoiled [76]. After announcing the results of the «referendum» the next day – May 12, a statement was made on the appeal of the DPR to consider the issue of its membership in the Russian Federation, as well as announced the prospects of association with the Luhansk People's Republic to the «state» «Novorossia» [77].

During May 2014, their self-nomadic leaders (among which there were many Russian citizens), held unofficially fictitious referendums on the separation of these illegitimate entities from Ukraine. At that time, under the pretext of those «referenda» and in support of illegal territorial formations, intelligence and sabotage groups headed by personnel of the GRU of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, paramilitary formations of the Russian Cossacks, staffed by Chechens – citizens of the Russian Federation, the infamous battalion «Vostok» and also involved such armed groups of mercenaries as the «Russian sector» and «Oplot». By Their involvement involved the seizure of administrative buildings in many settlements of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, attacks on Ukrainian ground forces and airplanes of the Air Forces of Ukraine. Controlled, guided and funded by the Russian armed forces involved in an aggressive war against Ukraine, they were regularly fed up with Russian mercenaries from among the Russian Armed Forces released to the reserve and supplies of weapons and military equipment, including tanks, artillery systems, anti-tank fighting and modern anti-aircraft missile systems.

When military actions began and the first victims appeared, some journalists, such as the correspondent of *The Economist*, T. Judah, compared the causes of this war with the causes of Yugoslav conflict. In April 2014, in the article «Ukraine: A Fake War?» The *New York Review of Books* website, he wrote:

«Ukraine is not like Yugoslavia, although the atmosphere in the east is very similar to a combination of insults and despair» [36]. While in the eastern Ukraine in April 2014, T. Judah described in detail the events of that time. While communicating with people in those days, he noted that some of them supported the federalization of Ukraine, others wanted the Donbass to become a part of Russia. As an example, he gives an appearance before the layout depicting the Russian border of a young girl Y. Yefanova, who told she wanted Donbas to unite with Russia because links between them were very close and much of her family was in Russia. From others it was possible to hear: «It is impossible to be friends with Europe and with Russia», «If Russia was here, it would put everything in order. It would fight corruption» etc. [36].

Among the stereotypes of the inhabitants of Donbass was the fact that they «hardworking people of Donbass» subsidized lazy people in the center and west of Ukrain. Repeating what they hear from Russian media, they claimed the government in Kiev was a «fascist junta». One woman said: «Only Russia can save us from a power that is not democratic, by which she meant the new government in Kiev», – wrote T. Judah [36].

Reflecting on the nature of hatred among many people in eastern Ukraine, he relates it to a large extent with Russian television, which looks there, and compares it to what the Serbian and other former Yugoslavian media did when Yugoslavia disappeared. Then the Serbs imposed on endless documentary films about the Croatian fascists, which, as they said, are returning. Russian media now say that the Ukrainian fascists are returning [13].

The fact that the riots in the east of Ukraine «bears tell-tale signs of Moscow's involvement» In April 2014, US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, S. Power, also stated [62].

Along with the above objective assessment of the events in eastern Ukraine in April-May 2014, some journalists, experts and

political scientists in the western media – knowingly or not – manipulate facts about Ukraine. In particular, in the article «Disorganization on the ground» on tyzhden.ua a number of publications of the British and German mass media were analyzed, in which, according to the authors, Ukraine is a territory, and not a sovereign state having its national interests and the right to defend them. In particular, Ruth Deyermond on the pages of *The Guardian* insisted that «those who think that it is a question of neo-imperialist seizure of land are mistaken. But Russia still wants to maintain its status as a great power. ... Russia's actions in Ukraine were and are an attempt to save her position. The intensification of the crisis is something that should be avoided for success, and therefore, the Russian Federation remains open to a negotiations» [71]. In her opinion, the Ukrainian crisis is primarily internal, and its decision will depend on Ukrainians. But Russia's role is also the key to crisis management [71]. And the German edition of *Spiegel Online* wrote that the road to peace in Ukraine starts with confidence. The West will not lose anything if it clearly makes it clear that Ukraine will not become a member of NATO or the EU in the near future. Such a promise could have appeased Russia's fears that the two [western] unions would become closer to Russia's territory and stabilize the sense of security [in Russia] [71].

Ethnic clashes and the struggle for independence – that's normal, you do not have to worry about, and Britain and Europe have nothing to threaten, says Tony Barber on the pages of the British *The Financial Times*. The author actively uses the terms of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Balkan style and the desire of pro-Russian citizens to unite with their mother country as an effective factor. conflicts in the east and south of Ukraine. Like, ethnic groups again divide the territory [71].

A. Liven, a British political scientist, journalist and professor at Cambridge University, in his blog for *The New York Review of Books*, calls on the «unelected interim» government in Kiev to

adopt the idea of federalization, to stop the ATO against separatist centers in the east, and to hold national and regional elections in accordance with the new Constitution, agreed by all parties (in particular Russia, the USA and Ukraine) [71].

In May 2014, the German leftist newspaper *Der Freitag* published an article devoted to the pro-Ukrainian rally on the Pottshammer-Platz in the German capital on May 10. The article, entitled «The Demonstration of the Ukrainian Neo-Nazis in Berlin» by Klaus Ehrlich, stated that «the Ukrainian extreme right was intensified in the country» (Germany) and described a peaceful rally where there was no nationalist or fascist slogan as a «neo-Nazi demonstration» [71].

Thus, the main leitmotif of these «pro-Russian» publications is that Ukraine is in the orbit of the natural geopolitical interests of Russia and the West should not be attacked by them. Indeed, it seems to us, such manipulation is dangerous. After all, a Western reader who does not know much about Ukraine, its history, can believe it.

Next we consider it necessary to at least retrospectively dwell on the course of events in the east of Ukraine spring-summer of 2014.

The fighting on the Donbass began on April 12, 2014, with the capture of Russian troops led by Russian intelligence officers, Slavyansky, Kramatorsk, Druzhkovka, Mariupol, and Yenakievo, where the Russian saboteurs seized the arms of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with armor of the local collaborators and took them to their ranks. In the conditions of non-opposition of local power structures of Ukraine, and sometimes also open cooperation, small assault squads of Russian saboteurs in the following days took control of Gorlivka and other cities of Donetsk region and Luganshchyna. April 13, 2014, in response to the invasion of sabotage troops and to stop terrorists and separatists, acting President of Ukraine O. Turchinov announced the launch of a large-scale anti-terrorist operation (hereinafter –

ATO) with the involvement of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (hereinafter – the Armed Forces) and set a deadline for evacuation in the morning [62].

In Slovyansk and Kramatorsk, special forces subjected to the SBU and the Armed Forces adopted the first battle in the morning of April 13 in Semenivka, the suburbs of Slovyansk, in the ambush of pro-Russian militants, which killed the captain of the SBU Alpha units. And already on May 5, a battle took place near here, which entered a bright page in the newest history of the National Guard of Ukraine. In a fierce battle clash, in which the terrorists used hard weapons for the first time since the start of the ATO, Ukrainian troops gained a brilliant victory over the enemy, showing the highest combat training and courage.

At this time, the ATO leadership decided to gradually surround Slavyansk, cutting off the garrison of pro-Russian militants from the supply of weapons from Russia. On May 11, 2014, the «pro-Russian» referenda were held on the territory of some districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, which raised the question of maintaining the sovereign statehood and sovereign DPR and LPR proclaimed in April. According to the organizers of the «referendums», the issue was supported by voters, and according to independent witnesses, «referendums» had all signs of fictitiousness.

On June 1, 2014, pro-Russian militants launched a several-day assault on the border guard in Luhansk, which ended June 4 with the exit of the Ukrainian garrison from the border guard. On June 2, 2014, near the headquarters of pro-Russian militants stationed in Lugansk Oblast State Administration, there was a series of bombings that killed civilians. June 12 began the delivery of heavy armored vehicles from Russia: to the snowfall came a column of tanks, and through Lugansk went through a column of volley fire systems «Grad», which was first used the next day in the war on the Donbass – June 13, Russian militants fired a Ukrainian checkpoint under Dobropillym.

At that time (in the spring-summer of 2014) the newly elected Ukrainian authorities and power structures were not prepared for such developments in the east of Ukraine. Unfortunately, they did not always react and act accordingly, which did not contribute to the worthy defeat of the enemy.

It is difficult not to agree with the above-mentioned T. Judah, who expressed his misunderstanding why the «government in Kiev was not reacting as large parts of eastern Ukraine fell to the rebels. Looking at the map, one could see that all the towns where there had been serious trouble lay at strategic rail junctions or on the main road from Belgorod in Russia, where a large part of a potential invasion force of some 35,000 troops is stationed. The road runs south to Kharkiv, where there have been clashes between pro- and anti-government crowds, all the way down to Mariupol on the Black Sea» [36]. Several buildings of the SBU and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were captured in the cities on this road. «Police forces either surrendered or defected or became neutral», – he wrote [36].

On June 20, 2014, during a trip to the Donbass, President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko announced a ten-day unilateral ceasefire, called on illegal armed groups to hand over weapons and stressed that the fighting would have only the nature of the response, that is, in the event of an attack by separatists on Ukrainian security forces.

Also, P. Poroshenko presented his peace plan on the situation in the east of the country on Donbass, which included 15 items. The plan provided for security guarantees for all participants in the negotiations, the release from criminal liability of persons who made weapons and did not commit serious crimes, the release of hostages, etc. However, the proposed conditions of P. Poroshenko were not perceived by separatists, they did not stop the fire and refused to hand over weapons.

After 10 days of unilateral cease-fire, the Ukrainian forces completed the surroundings of the Slovyansk, forcing the group

of Russian militants to retreat to Donetsk on July 5, 2014. The ATO headquarters began a large-scale operation to establish control over the Russian-Ukrainian border, creating, through the forces of several brigades, a 15-kilometer zone along the border controlled by the Armed Forces and battalions of territorial defense. At the same time, the Ukrainian forces began an operation on the decommissioning of the LAP and the Luhansk region.

July 11, 2014, against the background of the threat of full blocking of the border by Ukrainian forces, Russian regular troops began participating in the war, inflicting a devastating missile strike on Ukrainian formation under Zelenopillya, a village several kilometers from the Russian-Ukrainian border, from its territory. Since then, the entire line of Ukrainian formations near the border – from Luhansk region to the Azov Sea coast – during July-August 2014 was under systematic artillery shelling from the territory of the Russian Federation, to which Ukrainian formations did not answer. The shelling led to the cutting of supply lines of the Ukrainian group, was in the area of Izvarin, and significant Ukrainian forces were surrounded for weeks. The operation on their de-blockade was held on August 6-7, 2014, after which the depleted units were withdrawn from the combat zone, thus finally losing control of 140 km of state border.

Therefore, in the summer of 2014, most of the publications in the world's mass media were devoted to the above-mentioned events in eastern Ukraine, the ATO's course, the temporary cease-fire that did not de facto exist, presidential elections, hopes for change and reforms.

However, the top theme of the summer and the results of many world media and one of the decisive themes of 2014 was the aviation catastrophe July 17, 2014. Malaysia Airlines Flight Passenger Boeing 777, which killed all passengers and crew (a total of 298 people).

«Vladimir Putin can stop this war. The lost Malaysian plane is an appeal to end the conflict in Ukraine», – with this heading the editorial article of one of the most important editions has been published of *The New York Times*. At that time, the Russian media provided snapshots from which it was apparent that the plane was shot down by a Ukrainian military fighter aircraft with an air-to-air missile. At the same time, an investigation into the Bellingcat journalistic organization found that the RF Ministry of Defense provided false satellite imagery to accuse Ukraine of this catastrophe [12].

The US Department of State called those pictures meaningless, saying that in this way, Moscow is trying to avoid responsibility for the aircraft shot down [48]. Instead, on October 18, 2014, *Deutsche Welle*, referring to *Der Spiegel*, reported that according to a German intelligence report, a Malaysian plane Boeing-777 flight MH-17 in the sky over Eastern Ukraine caused pro-Russian separatists. This is what Gerhard Schindler, President of the Federal Intelligence Service of Germany, told the members of the parliamentary control body of the German Bundestag, Germany, on October 8, presenting solid evidence, – informed the magazine [61].

Experts from Warsaw, London, and Munich, investigating fragments of a plane shot down, found that the MH-17 was shot down by Buk, issued from the territory of Russia [42]. The fragments of the missile system of the Buc was found in wreckage of the Malaysian aircraft, – the Dutch edition *RTL Nieuws* writes with reference to the experts' conclusions [4]. This information was confirmed by the *American CNN channel*, which referred to its own sources at the Pentagon [16]. Direct evidence of Russia's involvement in a plane crash was also reported by the *Wall Street Journal*, referring to US intelligence officials [42].

Four months after the fall of the Boeing 777, under the supervision of Dutch investigators and officials from the OSCE,

work was begun on cleaning up the wreckage of Boeing 777. The fragments were delivered to Kharkiv, where, as in the Netherlands, an investigation into the causes of the crash was conducted, informing *The Epoch Times* and noted that the fragments of the aircraft were in the territory controlled by the ins rebels and scattered within a radius of 20 square kilometers [47]. After the crash, Boeing 777 is the Ukrainian top theme in the world's media was the events in eastern Ukraine, in particular the fierce battles near the town of Ilovajsk, Donetsk region. in August 2014 Two storming of this city took place on August 6 and 10. At the same time, along with the battle of Ilovajsk, fights continued for Savur-Mohyla and Krasny Luch, located near the city. The militants managed to push the Ukrainian military from there and thus create the preconditions for the boiler. The third assault on Ilovaysk was held on August 18. Then the Donbas, Dnipro-1 battalions entered the city with the support of the Armed Forces. They were able to take control of part of the city.

The operation was carried out by significantly lesser forces than was anticipated under the plan. As a result of the sudden invasion of August 24-25, 2014 by regular units of the Russian Armed Forces and their march towards the city of Ilovajsk, a large part of the fighters from the volunteer battalions (Dnipro-1, Peacemaker, Svityaz, Kherson, Ivano-Frankivsk», National Guard «Donbas» and forces of the sector «B») got into the surround. **One** of the reasons for this was the retreat of military formations from Novoazovsk, which allowed the militants of the DPR and Russian soldiers to surround the territorial defense fighters. They were assisted by the Brigade of the National Guard, however, without reaching their destination, they received an order to turn the command back. **The second** is the desertion of certain Ukrainian units.

Lieutenant general R. Khomchak, who at that time held the post of the commanding sector «B» of the ATO and led the operation on the capture of Ilovaysk, remarked «It was

completely unexpected. The Russian forces simply marched in, It was hardly a -coincidence the Russian advance came to its climax on the 23rd anniversary of Ukraine's declaration of independence. The Russians wanted to show us that our – independence doesn't mean anything to them» [51].

Journalist L. Kim – one of those who tried to understand what happened under Ilovajsky. «That night (August 29), R. Khomchak's command post in Mnohopillya, situated 6km south town of Ilovaisk, came under Russian mortar fire for four hours. The assault left 10 Ukrainian soldiers dead and the woods around flattened. R. Khomchak understood that his invisible foe was cutting off his only escape route, but he couldn't obtain permission from the military commanders in Kiev to make an orderly withdrawal...», – wrote an American weekly *Newsweek* [51]. Numerous reports by L. Kim about the events in Ukraine published an online edition *Slate*, *Buzzfeed*, *Zeit Online*, *Deutsche Welle* and other. In them, the author also emphasizes the fact that in the armed conflict involved exactly the regular army of Russia and cites figures for the dead, which Russia denies [3].

On August 29 at night, Putin appealed to fighters to open a humanitarian corridor for the Ukrainian military who were surrounded [11]. On the same day at 6 o'clock. In the morning, a Russian officer arrived in Militopol'ya and informed the Ukrainian side that an exit should take place without weapons. At 8 hours 15 min. Ukrainian military armed columns began to move from the city for pre-agreed with the Russian side routes. Unfortunately, despite all the arrangements, the columns were shot on the marching. Fights near Ilovajsk became one of the turning points of the war in eastern Ukraine: the Armed Forces lost their initiative in the Donbass and switched from attack to defense.

The *German Deutsche Welle* published on October 20 the information of the Interim Investigative Commission of the Verkhovna Rada, according to which the total number of deaths,

wounded and soldiers who died from wounds in the battles near Ilovaysk, is up to a thousand people, including more than 300 dead [45]. The Ukrainian leadership urged heavy losses before the Minsk Armistice was concluded within the contact group Ukraine-Russia-OSCE with the involvement of representatives of Russian militants.

According to the official website of the Pentagon, in November 2014, the United States provided Ukraine with weapons for combating mortar fire, in particular, they supplied Ukraine with radar systems designed to combat the mortar calculations of the enemy, allowing the use of this weapon in the ATO zone [70].

At present, the US military has set up three lightweight munitions fire suppression systems. This is the first batch of 20 such systems to be provided to Ukraine, «said the spokesman of the Pentagon, Colonel Stephen Warren. Delivery of others will be done over the next few weeks [70].

«The radar system identifies your shotgun, and calculates the coordinates from where the enemy shot the shot, giving the opportunity to respond (defeat the enemy)», – said the Pentagon official spokesman [70]. «The Ukrainian armed forces will determine how, where and when they will employ the systems. Ukrainian military can connect radar systems with artillery fire systems, or they can react (on mortar shots) with ground forces», – said the spokesman of the Pentagon [70].

On November 2, 2014, on the majority of the territory controlled by the DPR, the so-called «Election» to the People's Council of the DPR and the election of the head of the DPR. For the People's Council of the DPR under the proportional electoral system, 100 deputies have been elected for a term of 4 years. The majority (68 mandates) got the DPR, the Prime Minister of the self-proclaimed state became O. Zakharchenko, who, after the pseudo-election to the «parliament» of the DPR, appointed a new government.

The Guardian then published a message to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the main election observation body in Europe, that this has nothing to do with the election [44]. «Despite the surreal nature of the vote, there is no doubt that, among the older generation at least, there was great enthusiasm for it, perhaps less as an endorsement of the Donetsk republic and more as a message to Kiev that the region would never again be part of Ukraine. ... According to the Minsk agreement, Ukraine has given the regions special increased autonomy for a three-year period, but in practice, president Petro Poroshenko appears to have given up on the regions, unable to win a military victory against superior Russian firepower», – noticed the publication [44].

The special attention of the world media in the fall-winter of 2014 was focused on events around the Donetsk airport, which lasted 242 days (May 2014 - January 2015) and became one of the heroic pages of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation of recent years. It all started about 3 hours on the night of May 26, 2014, when a group of Russian special forces, mercenaries and pro-Russian militants took part of the airport buildings and issued an ultimatum to the Ukrainian military who at that time guarded the internal perimeter of the DAP, to make up weapons and surrender. The government, on the other hand, put forward its ultimatum on weapons and the liberation of administrative structures by separatists. Requirements of both sides remained without reaction, the battle began, and the airport almost immediately became the «hottest» point on the ATO map.

On May 26, units of the Army Special Forces with the support of combat aircraft struck terrorists who were trying to take control of the Donetsk International Airport. Attack and Army aircraft were involved, landing landing was conducted. The Ukrainian units acted swiftly and effectively – about 45 insurgents were killed, several dozen wounded. One third of the «East» battalion was destroyed by ATO forces. In the ranks of

militants panic began, some terrorist leaders hurriedly left the city. The Ukrainian units are locked up in the airport area, – said in the press center of the National Security and Defense Council.

Attempts to assault the Donetsk airport by terrorists have since been regular, but the Ukrainian military successfully repelled them. Then a legend was born about «cyborgs» [1]. The first Ukrainian fighters so began to call the fighters for superhuman resistance in defense. On October 28, 2014, on the first page of the American *Los Angeles Times*, published an article «Ukraine fighters, surrounded at wrecked airport, refuse to give up» with the photographs of the only foreign correspondent S. Loiko, who spent several days in a neighborhood surrounded by Russian militants of the Donetsk airport. He was impressed by the bravery of Ukrainian defenders and published fragments of interviews with them [3]].

Serious assault on the airport began after the conclusion of the Minsk Agreements in September 2014. These agreements, in particular, envisaged a «stop of units and military formations of the parties on the line of their collision as of September 19, 2014» and the withdrawal of heavy weapons 15 kilometers from this line. The real fulfillment of these conditions would mean that separatists should liberate a significant part of Donetsk from armed forces.

According to the military, the separatists carried out constant attacks on the airport in order to gain an advantage in determining the distribution line near Donetsk. «Donetsk airport, along with the adjacent heights under the control of the Ukrainian forces, is the base for further offensive from the separatist side ... When creating a buffer zone, separatists will actually have to depart for the other outskirts of Donetsk», – said on January 16 the spokesman of the DUK «The Right Sector» A. Sharaskin [22]. Later, the authorities of the self-proclaimed DPR and the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that «the airport of Donetsk according to Minsk agreements should be transferred to the

control of the militias» However, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied it. «There are no words about the Donetsk airport in the Minsk agreements», said the spokesman of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yevhen Perebyinis [22].

In the assault of the airport were involved not only «moneyers», but also personnel n military, in particular, specially appointed GRU. From the Ukrainian side, the 95th and 79th airborne brigades, the 3rd special-purpose regiment and a number of volunteer battalions were involved at various times in the defense of the airport. Military tasks for the defense of the nearby settlement of Sashki and the airport were carried out by infantrymen, gunners and tankers of the 93rd mechanized brigade, tankers of the 1st Panzer Brigade and subdivisions of the Battalion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs «Dnipro-1», and others.

This strategically important object (the Donetsk airport) for the separatists was an irritant that had to be eliminated. As S. Semenchenko, the commander of the Donbass battalion noted, «he also became a matter of principle for the separatists. As for us, he is a symbol of heroism, and in the eyes of the separatists he received a fundamental value» [22]. Although attempts to take the airport by the DPR did not stop all the fall and December 2014, especially the brutal battles began after the New Year. On January 13, 2015, after the massive artillery and tank bombardments by terrorists, the control tower of the airport collapsed, where the major was the Ukrainian flag and which became a symbol of its defense to the people. On the same day, the militants pushed the «cyborgs» an ultimatum – either to leave the airport, or to perish. The military chose a fight, and since then, collisions at the airport have not longer subsided.

At that time, the DPR stated that the Ukrainian forces were firing residential areas of Donetsk from the airport and Pisky. Separatists even said that they were ready to guarantee the safety

of «cyborgs» who would agree peacefully to leave the airport. However, the defenders objected to such allegations and disagreed with the proposals and ultimatums of the opponents. The Ukrainian army reacted strongly to the attempted assault, and managed to win part of the territory. It was the panic of the separatists that the Ukrainian side explained the blast of the Putilivsky Bridge near Donetsk airport. According to representatives of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the fighters of the DPR sought to secure themselves from the entry of the ATO forces in Donetsk from the side of the airport. Separatists also said that the bridge was destroyed during a breakthrough by the Ukrainian military.

On January 19, 2015, militants blew up the second floor of the new airport terminal. However, on January 20 and 21, reports of killed and captured cyborgs began to appear. Russian mass-media appeared plots about the captured Ukrainian fighters [22]. Several days earlier, the leaders of the DPR repeatedly stated that they were completely seized by the airport, which, however, was not true at that time. The Ministry of Defense then stated: «Yesterday, 20 Armed Forces of Ukraine soldiers came out with fights from the territory of the terminals, because their positions were destroyed and fired fusillade by direct guidance. 16 soldiers were wounded during the battle and were captured by terrorists. For the past 24 hours, 6 Ukrainian servicemen were killed in the battles for the airport» [22]. Eventually, on the night of January 22, using the short truce to export the dead and wounded, the militants replaced the building and completely destroyed it. Only a frame remained of it, so there was nothing more to defend. Only then Ukrainian troops departed to other airport buildings and surrounding settlements [1].

Thus, the defense of Donetsk airport became a glorious page of Ukrainian military history, and its «cyborgs» now and forever have become a symbol of the invincibility of the spirit of the defenders of Ukraine. The memory of this feat will last for

centuries in the hearts of Ukrainians and will bring up the generation of defenders of Ukraine.

Representatives of Russia (Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Ukraine M. Zurabov), Ukraine (second President of Ukraine L. Kuchma) and OSCE at the summit in Minsk on February 11-12, 2015, after the agreement of the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia in the format of the «Norman Four» (Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini) and self-proclaimed republics (O. Zakharchenko, I. Plotnitsky) signed an agreement («peaceful settlement plan»), which consisted of 13 items for the purpose of deescalating armed conflict in the east of Ukraine, which included: an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine and its strict implementation starting at 00:00 on February 15, 2015; the removal of all heavy weapons by both sides at a distance; providing for pardon and amnesty, the release and exchange of all hostages and illegally detained persons; restoration of full control over the state border by the Government of Ukraine throughout the conflict zone; the withdrawal of all foreign armed groups, military equipment, and also mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under the supervision of the OSCE; holding constitutional reform in Ukraine, holding local elections in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, etc. [55]. Neither of these items were fulfilled, and in Moscow and Kiev for more than two years it has been arguing over how to treat the documents signed in Minsk.

A concluded treaty on Ukraine raises the risk of undermining peace in Europe, according to V. Sokor, an article in *The Wall Street Journal*. In his opinion, the Minsk agreements of February 12 authorize both Kremlin-controlled «people's republics» to take part in negotiations on reforming the constitution and legislation of Ukraine. In this way, the European course of Ukraine can be blocked. «The conditions also allow Russia and separatist» republics «to keep their troops in the east of Ukraine and place

their own forces along the territory that is legally Ukrainian», – wrote the author [19, p. 5].

Unfortunately, as *The Washington time* wrote on April 9, 2015, NATO and the United States were compelled to admit that Russia was not following the Minsk treaties, as evidenced by the facts of further arming of Russian insurgents in eastern Ukraine. In addition, there are ongoing military training of Russian military personnel on the border with Ukraine. Such an increase in the military power of the Russian Federation in the Donbass suggests that it wants to seize even more Ukrainian territory [56].

January and February 2015 marked the last fights for the Donetsk airport (as discussed above) and storming the city of Debaltsevo.

In mid-February 2015 в *The New York Times* a series of publications came out Andrew E. Kramerfeb («Despite Ukraine Truce, a Battle That Continues», «With Ukrainian Troops Trapped, a Cease-Fire Grows More Fragile», «Ukrainian Soldiers' Retreat From Eastern Town Raises Doubt for Truce», «Despite Truce, Shelling Continues in Parts of Ukraine», «Ukraine Cease-Fire Goes Into Effect, but Rebel Leader in Key Town Repudiates Accord»), in which it's about the aggravation of the situation in the east of Ukraine, in particular the intense battles in the area of Debaltsevo city. «As many as 8,000 Ukrainian soldiers are holed up in the city, a rail hub connecting the capitals of the two rebel regions, Donetsk and Luhansk. Rebels have february 15 sent text messages to phones in the town, telling the soldiers that they have been abandoned and should surrender.

The Ukrainian government maintains that the town was not surrounded before the cease-fire took effect, and that European monitors should insist that the separatist forces halt their offensive and open a corridor to evacuate the wounded. ... Ukrainian officials and the United States say the Russian Army is directly engaged in the battle, while the Russian authorities

deny any role in the fighting in eastern Ukraine», – noted the author [73],

As evidence, US ambassador to Ukraine Jeffrey R. Pyatt posted satellite images on his Twitter account, confirming the use of Russian artillery to help separatists surround Debaltsevo.

One image seemed to show four gun lines of towed artillery and one of self-propelled artillery northeast of Debaltsevo.

Another showed what R. Pyatt said were air-defense systems, and the third showed the black, streaky exhaust plumes of what was labeled a «Russian multiple rocket launcher deployment» [74].

On February 17, Ukrainian journalist A. Tsaplienko said that Debaltsevo militants seized the police station and the railway station. The information was partially confirmed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Donetsk region – regarding the destruction of the police department building. However, the Interior Ministry noted that however, law enforcement officers are still in the city to assist the remaining residents. And on the morning of February 18, there was information about the withdrawal of the Armed Forces of Ukraine from Debaltsevo. This was reported by the Donbass campaign commissar S. Semenchenko on the Facebook page, a little later the information was confirmed by journalists.

Later in the afternoon, speaking at the Boryspil airport before departure to the ATO zone, President Poroshenko confirmed the information about the withdrawal of Ukrainian parts. He stated that all the forces, except for one company, planned to leave the Debaltsevsky bridgehead with equipment and weapons.

In the spring of 2015, EU leaders were debating whether to keep sanctions by the end of this year, or to postpone this decision by June. German Chancellor A. Merkel and the President of the European Council, D. Tusk, like most of Russia's European neighbors, supported the rigid option. The leaders of Hungary, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Spain and Slovakia are more

«peaceful». In their opinion, if the extension of sanctions is announced now, the peace deal will be undermined, because Moscow will see that its attempt to compromise does not meet reciprocity, – explained the columnist Bloomberg 9 View L. Bershidsky [53]. As a result, EU leaders at the Brussels summit on March 19-20, 2015 agreed to keep sanctions against Russia in effect until all conditions of the peace accords in Ukraine are fully implemented.

On March 11, 2015, the US Department of the Treasury imposed a new sanctions package against the 14 people that Washington considered responsible for the conflict in Ukraine. To this day, sanctions were introduced either against high-ranking Russian politicians, or against those who were in the immediate surroundings of President V. Putin. The new list was mainly made by the leaders of the separatists from the Donbass. It also includes people who did not belong to the ruling circles of Russia and which are connected with the Ukrainian conflict only by ideology [18, p. 10]

After a month of relative calm, the struggle in eastern Ukraine has intensified again, while diplomats gathered for a meeting in Berlin to discuss the situation in Ukraine. Observers from the OSCE claimed intense collisions on the front line using heavy artillery, – wrote *The Epoch Times* on April 13, 2015 [57]. According to the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine E. Perebinis, since the beginning of the armistice, announced on February 15, 65 Ukrainian soldiers were killed in the Donbass, while another 243 were injured. According to him, members of anti-government armed units, despite the signing of the Minsk Agreements, have not complied with the cease-fire regime for a single day [19, p. 4].

On March 23, 2015, *The Epoch Times* reported on the unsustainable gunfire in Shirokine between the Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian separatists, despite a truce. The city itself is not strategic for the military, but it has provided access for separatists

to the port city of Mariupol, which the Ukrainian military tried to protect at any price. For separatists, Mariupol is important in terms of building a land bridge from Russia to the occupied Crimea, – the newspaper wrote [18, p. 4; 52].

At the end of May 2015, the fighting zone in the Donbass has expanded, – said the speaker of the administration of the President of Ukraine on special operations O. Motuzianik. He noted that the epicenter of the confrontation between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and anti-government armed formations was still two settlements of the Donetsk region – Donetsk and Horlivka. Aggravation of fighting was also observed in the village Shirokino, located on the approaches to the city-port of Mariupol [20, p. 4]. The fighting, which in recent months has been reduced to local clashes at specific points, has intensified strongly in Marinka and Krasnogorivka, not far from Donetsk, – the Spanish *El Mundo* reported in June 2015. Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian separatists encountered there in the most intense battle in recent months. Kiev claims that the first militia attacked their positions. But the leaders of the so-called DPR insist that this was not an offensive, but an attempt to curb the bombings carried out by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, – noted the newspaper [58]. The situation remained fragile and very disturbing. The struggle continues, albeit with less intensity than a few months ago. But separatist forces with the support of Russia continue to destabilize part of Eastern Ukraine, – wrote *El Mundo* on June 17 [60]. To stop the offensive, the SCU, having warned its international partners, returned to combat positions heavy weapons that were previously taken out of the line of collision in accordance with the Minsk agreements.

As reported by the French *Le Figaro*, at the G7 summit (G7) in early summer 2015, statements were made that three months had passed since the signing of other Minsk agreements, but the situation is still unstable, and the cease-fire is under constant a threat [59]. The leaders of the G7 confirmed their non-

recognition of the annexation of the Crimea of the Russian Federation and led to the lifting of sanctions against the RF as soon as possible implementation of the Minsk agreements. In addition, Russia has demanded respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and cease «cross-border support of separatist forces». A. Merkel, while pointing out that violations existed on both sides – both by the separatists and by the government [59].

CONCLUSIONS

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict develops under conditions of systematic negation by the Russian Federation of its participation in armed conflict, which greatly complicates the clear unquestioning legal definition of the nature of the armed conflict and results in the absence of clear estimates of the conflict between Ukrainian society, the international community and the western media. As an example, the conflict has received ambiguous assessments even among the national-patriotic circles of Ukraine, where the war is estimated in the spectrum from the Third Liberation, the War of Independence and the domestic war to Russia's pragmatic attempt to keep Ukraine in the orbit of its influence.

In 2014, NATO described the Russo-Ukrainian conflict as a «hybrid war» [67; 68].

In August 2017, the Foreign Minister of Poland, in an interview with the Russian newspaper, stressed that there is no such thing as a «crisis in Ukraine», but there is a Russian-Ukrainian conflict initiated by Russia [69].

As reported by the British *The Guardian* on November 20, 2014, according to the UN since the signing of the ceasefire agreement (July 2014), about 13 people die every day in Ukraine as a result of hostilities. Also, the report of the UN refers to the large number of internally displaced people, by the end of the fall of 2014 this figure was 466829 people [46]. About the 4317 dead, 9921 wounded and 46,630,030 displaced by the war in eastern Ukraine were filed by American *The Washington Post*, *The Deseret News*, *The Wall Street Journal*, (WSJ), and others. [49].

Almost a year later (December 9, 2015) *The Guardian* published UN information that 9098 people were killed during the 21 month of armed conflict in eastern Ukraine (April 2014 - December 2015) and more than 20,000 were injured. The report also states that since August 2014, as a result of the cease-fire

and the withdrawal of heavy weapons losses considerably decreased.

In September 2014, according to Western media, politicians and experts, the situation in the east of Ukraine changed a little, as Kiev gradually lost control of the vast territories in the east, which took pro-Russian militants. From now on, the Russian Federation is clearly perceived in the West as a direct initiator and a participant in the conflict, which has a decisive influence on its course. At the same time, there is growing awareness that it was precisely for this development that the refusal of the United States and NATO to provide military assistance to Ukraine contributed to. Currently, there is no expectation of rapid de-escalation in eastern Ukraine. There is a widespread view that Moscow is conducting a course to freeze the conflict in the Transnistrian scenario.

An analysis of the US information space shows a marked increase in internal pressure on the White House administration, in particular, on the part of Congress, on the issue of providing armed assistance to Ukraine. The probability that such an aid will still be provided in the event of further Russian aggression in Ukraine and a critical deterioration of the situation is one of the factors restraining Russia's actions in Ukraine.

The American press continues to criticize the «inert» and anticipated US position on the use of more stringent sanctions against the RF due to its violation of international law and the creation of threats to both Ukraine and international order. In the context of the commencement of a new round of EU-US sanctions of September 12, 2014 against Moscow, it was noted that, in the case of Russia's real promotion of a cessation of the conflict in Ukraine, sanctions will be lifted.

A splash of attention to the Ukrainian issue was observed in the UK media ahead of and during the NATO Summit in Wales on September 4-5, 2014. British journalists advocated a rigorous response to threats to security by the Allies coming from Russia

as part of the Alliance, and also providing effective assistance to Ukraine, including armed. In a number of reports have been criticized by Obama because of insufficiently rigid policies regarding Russia, as well as NATO, due to the inability of the organization to deter aggression Russia.

During the active phase of the ATO, the European media (Belgium, Luxembourg, Bulgarian, Italian, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Polish, Hungarian, French, Czech, German, Polish) provided mainly information in the light of the official policy of their states and the EU, mainly in positive or in a neutral key. In particular, their mass media paid special attention to Ukraine's support in confronting Russia, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, the negotiation process on the ceasefire in the Donbass, the need to provide Ukraine with military-technical (including weapons), financial and humanitarian assistance. In their opinion, the settlement of the conflict in the Donbass lies in the political and diplomatic plane. In particular, at the end of summer and autumn 2014, a number of publications were devoted to attempts to find an understanding within the framework of the Minsk accords and the parliamentary elections [21].

The effectiveness of the Minsk format was of interest to most international observers, as the EU hoped for this, and the Ukrainian president also declared such a vision [13].

On November 22, 2014, the *New York Times* published an article by E. Cremer, «With Borscht and Rifle Scopes, Volunteers Power Ukraine Forces». «As long as the Ukrainian authorities say that it is ready for any type of attack, cooking is kept secret, which makes many fear that it is a cover for weakness. Most of the open fortifications are made by volunteers who provide not only moral and physical support, but at least a glimpse of hope that Ukrainian troops will be able to stand up for themselves», the author wrote. The article gives comments by representatives of volunteer organizations, describes the types of

their activities - providing the army with food, clothing, night vision devices. In general, the *New York Times* from the beginning of the protests in Ukraine and throughout the year elaborated in detail the events, with its own correspondents here. Most of the materials are reports from the Donbass, where journalists communicated with local residents, including separatists, as well as with Ukrainian soldiers [3].

At the beginning of December 2014, M. Dejevsky, on the pages of the British newspaper *The Independent*, remarked that there was a so-called «frozen conflict» in Ukraine, which according to some experts would be included and excluded from Moscow's will, thus making East Ukraine unmanaged for Kyiv, and this is the best option for the Kremlin. Others insisted that Russia did not need it at all, because it has neither money nor desire for it. And if the official authority in Kyiv really wants to keep the country together, then it should give the eastern regions even greater autonomy. Ukraine and Russia should reach consensus in order to avoid a humanitarian or military catastrophe in eastern Ukraine [50].

Senior Director for Human Rights and Democracy at the McCain Institute, D. Cremer, in his post, «There will be no 'win-win' deal with Putin» (*Washington Post*, December 11, 2014) denied the positions of his colleagues - American experts J Shapiro and M. O'Genlon, who advise NATO countries to start cooperation with Putin and together establish a new security order in Europe. «How can we build a new European security structure with a man who perceives everything that symbolizes the West, a huge threat to himself?», – remarks D. Crémer. For the West there is only one way today - it is to restrain Putin, and not to compromise with him [3].

In the beginning of 2015, Swedish writer and historian P. Jonsson, who has lived in Warsaw for more than three decades, writes about the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Belarus and Ukraine), in particular for the Swedish

newspaper *Goteborgs-Posten*, the Finnish Swedish-language television and radio channel *YLE*, for The scientific journal *Baltic Worlds*, in a discussion with S. Buk in Lviv, asked how he evaluated the information Western media provided about events in Ukraine, he replied that he read several European, American, Scandinavian newspapers. They are interested in Ukraine, but correspondents in Moscow have a different view of the events in Ukraine than the correspondents who are on the spot or those who come. I think that much has changed in the last two years, more than after 2004. Western media no longer have any illusions about Putin, «said Peter Johnson [72]. He also noticed that he conducted such a study, which confirmed that German newspapers are the most critical in Europe. In his opinion, this is true. She reads *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Welt*. The latest edition is supported by Chancellor A. Merkel's party, but they have no illusions about Putin at all and even criticize Mrs Merkel for her indecisiveness. The same thing is observed in *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*. «They have their correspondents in eastern Ukraine, who make reports and analytics. This is a huge progress. Ukraine, perhaps for the first time because of this tragedy, the war is differently interpreted by the Western media», noted P. Jonsson [72].

Asked how Western politicians assess the situation in Ukraine, he said that they now tend to Ukraine as a country that has the right to choose, which should be respected. and keep up. And he added that the European Union and the United States did good deal with those sanctions, and worked together. But he believes that in this final phase, however, they did not have a common, meaningful concept and were a little naive. In his opinion, this was a mistake. P. Jonsson sees progress, in particular, when A. Merkel said that Putin is not in our world. «The only reason is fear of a great war. Unfortunately, such a fear exists and he is real», said Peter [72].

In his opinion, the best solution, besides further sanctions, is economic assistance for Ukraine, which is absolutely needed. «We can give Ukraine a weapon, but the best support will be if the European countries (those who signed the Budapest memorandum) will be able to locate foreign troops on the territory of the conflict in Ukraine in order to control» [72].

Calb Marvin, a political scientist and television journalist at American news agencies *CBS* and *NBC News* (USA), in his article «Putin won his war in Ukraine» (*The Washington Post*, September 7, 2015) draws attention to the fact that the war in Ukraine has ceased to be on the front lines of Western media. Following the annexation by the Russian Federation of Crimea and the organization of a pro-Russian uprising in the Donbass, Ukraine was at the center of world news. Nowadays, Ukraine, as a European crisis, has lost its relevance, as there were other global and less-massive news [75].

«Putin has, slowly but surely, “frozen” the conflict, much as he did in 2008 in the of Georgia. Far more than Western leaders, Putin can now influence and, when necessary, control the flow of economic, political and diplomatic developments in Ukraine. For this “victory,” Putin has had to pay a heavy price. His economy has floundered, his reputation has suffered and Russia has experienced a return to domestic disorder and discontent that is real, even spreading». And adds: «Putin can tolerate an independent Ukraine so long as it is “friendly” to Russian national interests, he trusts only himself to define this friendship» [75].

In publications of the German media on economic topics, the number of publications that denied the negative effect of Western sanctions on the Russian economy, or emphasized the benefits of Russia's inclusion in the global economy, increased. At the same time, journalists analyzed the possibility of strengthening sanctions against the Russian Federation in the financial sphere. According to German financial market participants, further

measures will be counterproductive as they can cause global economic upheaval.

The Germans mostly have a positive attitude towards Ukraine. According to a poll by the German television channel *ARD*, more than 55% of respondents believe NATO should increase support for Ukraine in confrontation with the Russian Federation. 82% of those polled are convinced that Russia's actions in the east of Ukraine are threatening international security; 61% support EU pressure on the Russian Federation. A significant proportion of supporters of the strengthening of Germany's role in resolving the situation in Ukraine (56%) [21].

There were positive changes in the public opinion of the Czech Republic regarding Ukraine. Whereas the Czechs previously perceived Ukraine as a corrupt country with cheap labor (almost 100,000 Ukrainian labor migrants in the Czech Republic), in the 2014-2015 period, sympathies grew, and in some places, and the enthusiasm of Ukrainians who defended the territorial integrity of their state and were ready to put for her life. According to the Czech Center for Public Opinion Research at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in 2014, 78% of Czechs surveyed negatively reacted to Russia's actions against Ukraine [21].

Belgian and Luxembourg journalists, positively evaluating the cease-fire on September 5, 2014, expressed the opinion that the armistice was a success primarily by the separatists and Russia, since it consolidated the loss of several eastern cities in Kyiv. They noted that deescalation of the situation in the Donbass would be accompanied by the creation of a «frozen conflict», which would make it impossible for Ukraine to join NATO. [21]

The Dutch journalists, highlighting the progress of the MN17 aircraft crash investigation, emphasized the need to return the experts of the international mission to the scene of a disaster to restore the remains of the dead. Ukraine's appeal to Western

countries to provide military-technical assistance has caused an ambiguous reaction of the media. The inability of the Netherlands to provide such support to Ukraine was explained by the unwillingness to provoke Russia to further escalate the situation and invade the Russian troops into the territory of Ukraine [21].

In French magazines, in a constructive way, the adoption of amnesty laws and special local self-government regulations in some regions of eastern Ukraine were considered, but some reservations were expressed about the risks which the Ukrainian authorities took upon themselves, as well as the very procedure of voting in Ukraine [21].

The main source of anti-Ukrainian content in the Bulgarian mass media was the Russian-funded *Alfa channel* of the nationalist Ataka party. In addition, the parties «BSP» and «The Coat of Arms» tried to play on the pro-Russian field, trying to attract the support of pro-Russian voters, calling for a reduction in the level of sanctions of the EU against the Russian Federation [21].

In Italy, publications of anti-Ukrainian content were related to anti-Ukrainian activities of Russia, which attracted influential representatives of business circles in Italy, popular Russian artists who expressed support for the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine and called for the abolition of EU sanctions against Russia [21].

A marked increase in anti-Ukrainian sentiment was recorded in September 2014, Hungary's media space, although most of the publications and reports about Ukraine were positive or neutral.

Hungarian experts believed that neither NATO, nor the United Nations, nor the EU was able to stop Russia, which was a high probability of Russia's attempts to «tear» away from Ukraine, along with Luhansk and Donetsk, several more southeastern regions. The opinion was expressed on the expediency of federalization of Ukraine as a way of resolving the conflict and its preservation as a sovereign state, which pursued a

number of goals – from the use of the Hungarian factor to strengthen separatist sentiment in Transcarpathia until the disruption of mobilization in Ukraine and the prevention of ratification of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU by the State Assembly Hungary of Ukraine [21].

The main source of anti-Ukrainian messages was the traditional «holes of Russian propaganda» – the online edition of «Kurutz» and «Guidpho». Local media spread typical Russian propaganda of anti-Americanism in Ukraine [21].

For the anti-Ukrainian campaign in the Czech Republic, the Russian side attracted compatriots who speak in TV broadcasts, as well as local political forces (the Communist Party of the Czech Republic and Moravia, the Czech Social-Democratic Party), the V. Klaus Institute, which was created incl. on funds of «Lukoil» [21].

Often, attention was drawn to foreign media and to the social and humanitarian problems faced by the population living in the Donbass. In particular, life in bomb shelters and reports of starvation. Pseudo-humanitarian convoy V. Putin also did not remain unnoticed [14]. It is important that publications also appeared about the origin of pseudo-republics in eastern Ukraine. In particular, the article by Konrad Schöller in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is important that Russia is openly financing the pseudo republics of the Donbass [14]. Most of the leading European media outlets sent their correspondents to the combat zone. Accordingly, their reports objectively reflected the situation in Ukraine. During the active phase of ATO, the Ukrainian theme was mainstream in TV broadcasts, newspapers and Internet editions.

So, analyzing the information about the Russian-Ukrainian war in the mass media of the United States and Europe for 2014-2015, we can draw the following conclusions:

– the next cycle of the confrontation between the West and the Russian Federation for the influence on Ukraine was

completed and the vector of its future development was recognized;

- western politicians were convinced that the conflict in eastern Ukraine could not be resolved by force, because Russia would not allow a military defeat of separatists;

- the parties to the conflict around Ukraine failed to achieve a decisive victory and the situation to a certain extent is pathetic;

- the application by the West of the principle of «balance of power» due to the economic relaxation of Russia does not allow the latter to achieve a decisive victory in Ukraine;

- the West's goal is to prevent the Russian-Ukrainian «hot» war, as well as to engage in a military confrontation with Russia;

- for the West, the earliest deescalation of the situation in Ukraine remains to be prioritized, the territorial integrity preserved (the Crimea remains open, however), avoiding such changes in the territorial structure of Ukraine that will make it impossible to apply the Association Agreement.

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Scientific publication

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**REACTION OF THE WESTERN MASS MEDIA
TO THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR (2014–2015)**

The information and analytical brochure

Translation from Ukrainian: Alexander Kislyuk
Original layout: Vlad Chalchinsky
Cover design: Vlad Chalchinsky

Headset Times. Format 60x90/16. Edition 100. Paper offset
Conditional printed sheets 4, 3.

Printed in «Lesya Ltd.»
Certificate of inclusion in the State Register
publishing business series DK No 892 from 08.04.2002.

«Lesya Ltd.»
03148, Kyiv, s/b 115.
Тел./факс: +38 044 469 7485, 407 6197
E-mail: lesya300@ukr.net