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## CHAPTER 1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Significance of the Research

Ukraine and Russia are neighboring countries and this fact cannot be changed. In the USSR, these two republics were one state under the principles of socialism, like many others. In 1991, new, independent and sovereign countries emerged: Ukraine and Russia were among them. But good neighborly relations could not last long, at first, these were regional events, in 2014 a part of Ukraine - Crimea was annexed, and the east of the country was artificially torn away. On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale war that affected the entire world community. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has ceased to be regional and has moved into a global stage. Today, the whole world has united against outright evil and only the future will tell how this story will end. The significance of this research stems from its impact on local, regional, and global affairs. For instance, while Ukrainians are fighting for their homeland, the war causes a food crisis in the world due to blockades of Ukraine's Black Sea ports by the Russian navy. Besides, Russia's invasion of Ukraine poses a great threat to the European security order. Therefore, studying Ukraine-Russia relations gains importance from a local perspective and regional and global perspectives.

#### 1.2 Literature Review

The topic of Ukrainian-Russian relations is one of the most discussed subjects today because it is a hot topic that more and more people want to know about. Many works have been written on this topic and more will be written, one of which you are reading right now.

One of the most well-known books about Ukraine-Russia relations is written by a former Ukrainian president, Leonid Kuchma. Kuchma's book is titled *Ukraine is not Russia*. [1] Despite its name, this is a book of reconciliation, a book of mutual understanding and friendship. Kuchma speaks respectfully of the USSR and with a great love of Ukraine and Russia. He fends off many disputes between peoples and is

looking for a recipe for the most beneficial development path for both sides, which would rely on mutual assistance and respect, leaving the historical, territory, and cultural disputes in the past. The author reasons that Ukrainian and Russian cultures are very different, that the 300-year common history of Ukraine and Russia gives Ukrainians fair grounds not to desire a common future with Russia in one state, that there was a Holodomor, that Crimea achieved its development thanks to Ukraine, and that the search for "historical rights" of states to certain territories is an evil that needs to be stopped. Kuchma addresses the Russians not with hostility, but with an objective request to treat Ukraine and its independence with respect and understanding. After all, only from this starting point can a new chapter in our joint history begin, where there will be no corruption and bloodshed.

But in the end, people did not like this work and did not learn an important lesson from it. This book will no longer be read because the happy future together that it promised did not come true.

Another study titled *The Donbas conflict as a form of hybrid warfare: a neoclassical realist analysis* was submitted to the graduate school of social sciences at Middle East Technical University by Ibrahim Muradov as a Ph.D. thesis. [2]

Muradov's work describes the political aspect of relations between Ukraine and Russia and analyzes in detail the conflict in the Donbas with the self-proclamation of the DPR and LPR, both military and non-military, with an analysis of the political consequences and the information war.

Another article has been written on Ukraine-Russian relations by Vitaly Chervonenko and Ilona Vinogradova. BBC Ukraine, BBC Russian Service

*25 years of relations between Ukraine and Russia: how friendship disappeared.* [3]

Starting with friendly relations, relations between Ukraine and Russia gradually turned, thanks to the common border, into ordinary neighbors, and then into full-fledged enemies. When both of these states were formed, there were many controversial and difficult issues to resolve, but initially, everything was decided based on bilateral agreements and agreements between the then close countries. The further time passed, the more negative accumulated the relationship between two states, this article

describes the events until 2017, but the vector of development in the negative direction remained, and in 2022 everything turned into a full-scale war.

Nikolai Doroshko wrote the book *Undeclared wars of Russia against Ukraine in the XX - early XXI century. Causes and consequences* where he claims that the Russian authorities started a war to destroy the Ukrainian state immediately after it declares independence on August 24, 1991. [4]

A book on the history of Russia's undeclared wars against Ukraine in the 20th - early 21st centuries. After analyzing the historical, political, geopolitical, and ideological prerequisites for the aggressive foreign policy of the Russian state formations - Muscovy, Russia, RSFSR, and the Russian Federation regarding Ukraine, its author, Professor of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Mykola Doroshko, argues that the Russian authorities launched a war of annihilation after proclaiming it independence on August 24, 1991. The author of the monograph warns all of us against repeating the tragic mistakes of many generations of Ukrainians who, by underestimating the predatory essence of Russian imperialism, paid with the loss of independent statehood.

Sergatskova E., Chapay A., and Maksakov V. me research just after the occupation in 2014 and published them in 2015 so that every person uninitiated in the situation could appreciate the full scale of events. *The book War in three letters. Between internal conflict and external interference. Chronicle of confrontation in reports and eyewitness accounts* [5]

This book publishes reports and collects eyewitness accounts of what happened in Ukraine between February 22, 2014, and the beginning of 2015: the annexation of Crimea, the subsequent anti-terrorist operation in the Donbas, the tragedy in Odesa that unfolded shortly after illegal referendums into a full-scale war, which was called three letters: ATO. The authors, who have directly visited the "hot spots" of Ukraine, have repeatedly crossed the borders of the territories under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian army, the "militias" of the DPR and LPR, and met with the military and ordinary people on both front lines, are trying to figure out what happens, how it is correct to call these

military actions: an anti-terrorist operation, a civil conflict, or a Russian-Ukrainian war that changed both Ukraine and the world around it.

Tired of hearing about Russian aggression while watching TV news? Do you want to finally understand the real sources of discord between Ukraine and Russia, which has already resulted in thousands of deaths of innocent citizens? You can read a book *Ukraine's discord with Russia: a strategy for overcoming the peak. Exit strategy. View from Europe* by Arzhakovsky Antoine [6] ruthlessly destroys myths and contains answers to all painful questions. We are talking about "Discord between Ukraine and Russia: a strategy for getting out of the peak" - a publication based on a deep analysis of our reality.

If you are interested in a detailed analysis of the annexation of the Crimean peninsula, then you can get acquainted with the work of Vlaschenko Natalia *Book Theft or the White Sun of Crimea* [7]

The book "Theft, or the White Sun of Crimea" by the famous Ukrainian journalist and TV presenter Natasha Vlashchenko is dedicated to one of the most tragic events in the history of modern Ukraine - the perfidious seizure of Crimea by the Russian Federation. People who were directly at the epicenter of the events of winter-spring 2014 tell about how it happened: A. V. Turchinov, A. V. Kikhtenko, A. B. Avakov, S. T. Poltarak, I. P. Smeshko, V. A. Nalivaichenko, Rifat Chubarov and many other representatives of all branches of government, as well as, of course, residents of Crimea. The journalist's story is accompanied by a photo chronicle of the Crimean events, which helps the reader to visualize how Russia was preparing for the annexation of Crimea, how "little green men" appeared on the peninsula, how the seizure of power took place and the so-called referendum on the annexation of Crimea to Russia was held. The appendix to the book contains the minutes of the meeting of the RNBO of Ukraine, dedicated to the events in Crimea; as well as an essay by the director of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Academician V.P. Gorbulin "Crimea. War: Rethink Russian Aggression. This book encourages a deep understanding of the Crimean events. Moreover, the question "what to do?", as Academician Gorbulin writes, is much more important than the question "who is to blame?".



Boris Lozhkin in his book the *Fourth Republic. Why Europe needs Ukraine, and Ukraine needs Europe* [8], described the possible reasons why Ukraine chose integration into Europe, gradually disintegrating from Russia, and why Europe needed Ukraine

Perhaps, in 20 years, the events experienced by Ukraine in 2014-2016 will be perceived not as a series of trials, but as the beginning of a new era. One of the key figures of this period, the head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine, Boris Lozhkin, tells in this book about how the new Ukrainian state was built, free from the legacy of Soviet power and the domination of the oligarchs. "The Fourth Republic" is a book about Ukraine's return to the European family of peoples, about what has already been done, and about what still needs to be done.

The book *President Kuchma: Ten years of systemic transformation* [9], by the former adviser to the President of Ukraine, director of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Professor Anatoly Galchinsky, is an attempt to generalize the logic of systemic transformations carried out based on the domestic and foreign policy of President L. Kuchma was in a particularly difficult period of the formation of the Ukrainian state - from 1994–to 2004. It focuses on the personal contribution of the second President of Ukraine in the implementation of reforms.

Due to the significance of the subject, Ukraine-Russia relations, as it is shown, continue to be one of the most critical cases for scholars. Despite the richness of the literature on the subject, there is still space for further research on Ukraine-Russia relations. It is needed to be studied because the subject is very dynamic and seems to be deciding factor not only at the local or regional level but also at the global level. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature on Ukraine-Russia relations from the 1990s to the present.

### **1.3 The subject of the Research**

The subject of this research is related to Ukraine-Russia relations from the 1990s to the present. By dividing the relations into two main periods, before and after 2014, the thesis evaluates the factors that shaped Ukraine-Russia relations.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

This dissertation is aimed at answering the question of how the relations between Ukraine and Russia have developed since the 1990s. It questions the main factors which formulated Ukraine-Russia relations before and after 2014. The research mainly seeks to answer the question of why Ukraine-Russia relations deteriorated and finally ceased to exist in a civilized sense.

#### **1.5 Main Argument**

After analyzing Ukraine-Russia relations before and after 2014, this thesis argues that the main reason behind the deterioration of the relations between these two countries is the difficulty of the latter one recognizing the sovereignty of the former one. In other words, the thesis claims that when Ukraine aims to pursue an independent foreign policy toward Europe, Moscow uses any tool including the military force to keep Kyiv in its sphere of influence. In this context, the research reveals that Russia interfered in the politics of Ukraine since the 1990s and tried to limit Kyiv's aspirations for integration with the Western world, which eventually led to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

#### **1.6 Methodology**

The main methodological way of studying information for this work was the system analysis method and the media. Focusing on different points of view, this work describes the situation from both sides, and because the research topic is relevant, there are a lot of media that covered the situation throughout the modern history of this conflict. Statistical method, inductive-deductive method, and descriptive method are additional methodology in this work. Works of recent years allow us to talk about main and other questions in a more detailed and justified form.

#### **1.7 Structure of the Study**

The diploma begins with an introduction, which consists of seven parts and explains the essence of the work, the literature review which was inspired by the author, the subject of the work, arguments, and main research questions.

Further, the author divided the periods of research before 2014 and after 2014. Before 2014, the development of a relationship between Ukraine and Russia could be described as relatively normal with a common history.

In the second chapter, the author describes the history of the relationship from the early 1990s and ends with the Revolution of Dignity in separate sections before and after.

The nearest to us history of the Ukraine-Russia relations is a topic for the third chapter. It describes the effects of the Revolution of Dignity, Crimea annexation, Poroshenko and Zelenskiy administration and also Russians full-scale war against Ukraine.

The fourth chapter is about conclusions that provide answers to all the questions posed at the beginning of the thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. UKRAINE - RUSSIA RELATIONS BEFORE 2014

#### 2.1 Ukraine – Russia Relations in the Early 1990s

On July 16, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR receive the "Declaration on the State Sovereignty of Ukraine". [10]

On August 24, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR declared the independence of Ukraine. [11]

The decision to declare the independence of Ukraine was also supported by the Ukrainian people. In the referendum on December 1, 1991, 90.32% of those voting were for the independence of Ukraine, in Crimea the votes were 54.19%. And Leonid Kravchuk became the first president of independent Ukraine, gaining 61.59% of the vote. [12]

From the very beginning of its foreign policy activity, Ukraine intended to act independently of other, post-Soviet states, and build relations only on a bilateral basis. At the same time, without Ukraine, the newly formed countries saw no point in the Union of Sovereign States and signed a new union treaty - the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was ratified by Ukraine with reservations. [13]

The difference between the two unions was that the CIS was not a confederation, but was an international organization that did not provide real power to the coordinating supranational bodies.

According to the Russian Federation, the assets of the former USSR were \$110.1 billion and liabilities \$93.7 billion. \$700 million were deposits. The CIS Agreement provided that all states of the former USSR are equally successors and receive a fair share of the property of the USSR. [14]

Later, the Russian Federation entered into agreements with all CIS members that it assumes the debt obligations of these states in exchange for receiving their share of the inheritance. Ukraine was the only state whose share in the legacy of the USSR was not exchanged for the payment of Russia's foreign debt.

One of the most controversial moments in Ukrainian-Russian relations was the position of the Black Sea Fleet. In October 1991, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and later Leonid Kvarchuk, it was decided to subordinate the Black Sea Fleet to Ukraine, since at the time of the collapse of the USSR, it had long been based in the Crimea, part of the Ukrainian SSR and later independent Ukraine. A little later, Boris Yeltsin signed the same decree, on the subordination of the Black Sea Fleet, but already to the Russian Federation. The contradictions had to be resolved personally at a special meeting based on the two countries' common interests. Later, on June 23, 1992, it was decided to create a unified command and a gradual separation over the next 3 years. Subsequently, an agreement was signed on the division of the Black Sea Fleet between Ukraine and Russia, 20% was to go to Ukraine. [15] As a result, Ukraine received 18.3% of the ships, mostly bad and old ones.

In 1997, the final version of the agreement was signed on the division and further basing of the Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine, according to which the Black Sea Fleet had the right to be in Crimea until 2017. [16]

And in 2010, as a result of the Kharkiv agreements, the term for basing the fleet was extended until 2042. [17]

### 2.1.1 Nuclear issue

As a result of the collapse of the USSR: Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia were added to the list of nuclear states. Specifically, Ukraine has acquired the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, which is 1,700 warheads. [18]

On October 24, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a norm on Ukraine as a non-nuclear state, and as a result of the adoption of the weapon signed on January 14, 1992, more than 3,000 tactical weapons were exported to Russia. [19]

On December 5, 1994, Russia, the United States, United Kingdom, France, China, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan

signed the Budapest Memorandum, which was supposed to serve as a guarantee of the security of sovereignty and the inviolability of the state borders of Ukraine for the obligation to transfer the entire nuclear stockpile in Russia. [20] After that, Ukraine acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. [21]

### 2.1.2 Crimea

In 1954 Crimea was transferred to the Ukrainian SSR. In August 1991, according to the results of the "Referendum on the state and legal status of Crimea", Ukraine was formed at the end of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. At the «All-Ukrainian referendum» of December 1, 1991, the votes supporting the «Act of Independence of Ukraine» amounted to 54% in the Crimean Peninsula and 57% in Sevastopol. [22]

On May 6, 1992, the Crimean constitution was adopted, which confirmed the territorial affiliation of Crimea to Ukraine. [23]

On May 21, 1992, the Russian Federation adopted a resolution recognizing the decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR of February 5, 1954 "On the transfer of the Crimean region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR" "having no legal force since its adoption" was adopted "in violation of the Constitution (Basic Law) of the RSFSR and the legislative procedure" [24]

However, in this decision, the Russian Federation does not claim its rights to the peninsula.

"Due to the constitution of this fact by the subsequent legislation of the RSFSR and the conclusion of a bilateral agreement between Ukraine and Russia on November 19, 1990, in which the parties renounce territorial claims, and enshrining this principle in treaties and agreements between the CIS states, it is necessary to settle negotiations between Russia and Ukraine with the participation of Crimea and based on the will of its population " [25]

Ukraine responded that this resolution does not change anything and has no legal significance, and Crimea, as part of Ukraine, cannot be the subject of interstate negotiations. [26]

On July 9, 1993, the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation adopted a resolution «On the status of the city of Sevastopol», confirming the «Russian federal status of the city of Sevastopol within the administrative-territorial boundaries of the city district as of December 1991.» Boris Yeltsin, who was president of Russia at the time, did not

support the actions of the Supreme Soviet, saying: “I am ashamed of the decision of parliament... Do not start a war with Ukraine.” [27]

In turn, Ukraine filed a complaint with the UN Security Council, and on July 20, 1993, the UN Security Council and a representative of the Russian Federation ruled that the actions of the Supreme Soviet violated the principles of sovereignty, independence, and inviolability of Ukraine's borders. [28]

Therefore, from 1994 to 1999, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mission worked to stabilize the situation on the Crimean peninsula. [29]

In September 1994, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine renamed the Republic of Crimea the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, later repealing the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Crimea and abolishing the presidency. [30]

## **2.2 Ukraine – Russia Relations under the Kuchma Administration**

By 1994, Ukraine was in the middle of an economic crisis, due to uncontrolled privatization and dubious government decisions. [31] It was clear that something had to change. Democracy, as a political regime, was not yet fully understood by Ukraine at that time, and based on the results of the three-year stay of Leonid Kravchuk, people only became convinced of the failure of this political system. The essence of the presidential election can be described as follows: «Ukrainians are trying to decide not who will be the best president, but who will be the least bad»: [32]

As a result, according to the results of the second round of the 1994 elections, Leonid Kuchma won 52.15% of the vote and became the second president of Ukraine. [33]

Leonid Kravchuk, became the second, with 45.06% of the votes, and did not dispute the result.

Under the Kuchma administration, the issues of the Black Sea Fleet and Crimea were partially or completely resolved. Leonid Kuchma and Boris Yeltsin built friendly relations and worked on constant communication between Ukraine and Russia.

So, in May 1997, the issue of the distribution of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet was finally resolved, which many Ukrainians perceived as the defeat of Ukraine and the victory of Russia. Several agreements have been signed: Agreement and division of the Black

Sea Fleet and [34] Agreement on the conditions of stay and status of the Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine. [35]

In turn, Russia undertook to allocate parts of the Black Sea Fleet to the territory of Ukraine and lease the territory until 2017 for the Black Sea Fleet to be based on it. [35]

### 2.2.1 Economy and gas

During the Soviet Union, all oil, gas, and exports passed through the territory of modern Ukraine, therefore, when the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine and Russia needed to agree on the conditions for the use of Ukrainian gas and oil pipelines. After the entry into force of these agreements, part of Ukraine's debt obligations was repaid through the transfer of nuclear weapons that had been in Ukraine since the Soviet Union. [36]

The share of Ukrainian exports to Russia was greatly reduced, from 26.2% in 1997 to 23% by 1998, but in general, almost half of Ukraine's total trade turnover passed through Russia, and dependence on energy resources reached 70-75% gas and 80% oil. Due to declining export deliveries to Russia, the production of industrial machines with digital control systems, televisions, tape recorders, excavators, cars and trucks has almost completely stopped. [37]

Ukraine was unable to pay for gas in a stable and timely manner, so Russia tried to come up with new levers of pressure on the Ukrainian side, but since there was no alternative way to transit energy resources to Europe, no significant solutions were invented. [38]

By 1993, it was seen the failure of states in market relations and it was decided that Ukraine would undertake to supply gas and oil through its gas and oil pipelines, and Russia, in turn, would supply gas to Ukraine, for the price of transit, which meant that Ukraine does not pay for gas, and Russia does not pay for transit. Such relations were far from market ones but suited both sides of the conflict. At the same time, Vladimir Putin, in 2000, said that Russia had been sponsoring Ukraine annually for 15 years at the expense of cheap energy, and Viktor Yushchenko said that Russia had been supplying Ukraine with gas since 1990 at prices higher than the average European ones. [39]



Later, Gazprom would claim the theft of gas from transit pipelines, and Leonid Kuchma would comment on this statement in an interview for Spiegel magazine in 2000: "Moscow annually pumps 130 billion cubic meters of gas through our country to the West. This is an insignificant fraction of a billion cubic meters are pumped out here." [40]

### 2.2.2 Territorial border arrangements

During the reign of Leonid Kuchma, 2 large agreements were signed in which the border of Ukraine was established: the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, and the Treaty between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the Russian-Ukrainian state border.

The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation and the Treaty between the Russian Federation, signed on May 31, 1997, became the final stages in resolving disputes between Ukraine and Russia under the leadership of Leonid Kuchma and Boris Yeltsin. Hence, the countries officially recognized each other's borders and declared their respect for territorial integrity, securing the principles of strategic partnership. Only by this treaty, the question of the ownership of Crimea should have disappeared by itself, since it was documented and confirmed by both countries that Crimea is part of Ukraine and this issue cannot be discussed further. [41]

Later, Vladimir Putin and Leonid Kuchma signed the Treaty between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the Russian-Ukrainian state border, on January 28, 2003, where it was fully aligned on the map. According to the treaty, the Crimean Peninsula was unequivocally defined as part of Ukraine. [42]

### 2.2.3 Tuzla Island

Despite the consolidation of the Ukrainian-Russian border, six months later, a territorial conflict broke out, which would almost have ended in a military confrontation.

In 2003, without any request or notification from the government of Ukraine, Russia began to build a dam, based on various versions, then on the statement that until 1925 Tuzla Island was part of the Taman Peninsula and as a result of a strong storm became

an island [43], then motivating this by the need to prevent erosion of the coastline of the Taman Peninsula and the Spit, restore the ecological balance in the region, and preserve and restore fish stocks and other biological resources. [44]

The border between Ukraine and Russia along the Kerch Strait runs between the Russian coast and Tuzla. But this part of the strait is not navigable. It was formed relatively recently because the sea eroded the land that stretched from the Russian coast, and turned the land into an island. After the collapse of the USSR, it turned out that the entire navigable part of the strait territorially belongs to Ukraine, and Russia is obliged to pay 15 million dollars a year for the passage of the strait with its ships.

The government of Ukraine considered that when the dam is completed, Russia will lay claim to the entire former island and possibly go as far as the entire Crimean Peninsula in its claims. [45]

When the dam was 150 meters from the border, Ukraine announced that they would open fire to kill if the builders continued to advance the dam to the Ukrainian borders. After inspecting the island of Tuzla and a closed meeting with the participation of the military, Kuchma said that he did not see proper respect for Ukraine from Russia, but was still ready for reasonable compromises. [46]

In October 2003, Russia finally recognized Tuzla Island as Ukrainian and stopped the construction of the dam, but the status of Tuzla, like the status of the Kerch Strait, was never finally settled by the parties. This continued until 2012, when the presidents of Ukraine and Russia, Viktor Yanukovich and Vladimir Putin, signed a joint statement on the future delimitation of the maritime border. At the same time, Russia agreed to leave Tuzla behind Ukraine in exchange for retaining the right to block the passage of ships of third countries through the Kerch Gulf. [47]

#### 2.2.4 Plane crash

One of the most discussed points, which may be called into question some of the agreements, was the 2001 plane crash. On October 4, 2001, the Russian aircraft TU-154M, the Russian airline "Siberia", carrying out the flight "Tel Aviv - Novosibirsk" crashed, killing 78 people, 66 passengers, and 12 crew members. The official conclusion of the Interstate Aviation Committee is an unintentional downing by an

anti-aircraft missile during the passage of the Ukrainian-Russian military educational institutions on the Crimean Peninsula.

As a result of the investigation, Ukraine issued \$7.8 million to Russia and \$7.5 million to Israel. [48] However, the fault of Ukraine and the Ukrainian military was not found after all the research. [49]

As a result, the claim of Siberia Airlines for reimbursement of 15.32 million dollars (moral damage and lost profits, the market value of the collection costs associated with the investigation, insurance costs) was completely canceled, experts assert that the crash of the Russian aircraft occurred as a result of the action on its parts in the direction from above and to the middle of many solid objects (striking elements) with a diameter of about 10 millimeters, which possessed significant kinetic energy. The researchers were unable to establish the detection of damaging samples to a potential explosive device. [50]

Summing up the entire legal process, the results of the investigations, and the coverage of Ukraine in this matter, we can say that Ukraine refused to take responsibility for the crash but paid full compensation to the victims.

## **2.3 Orange Revolution and Its Impact on Ukraine – Russia Relations**

### **2.3.1 Orange Revolution**

On November 22, 2004, the day before the announcement of the results presidential election voting, the people of Ukraine were already preparing to challenge the result and demand justice

Over the past few years, society has lost confidence in the authorities and the successor of Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yanukovich. He did not seem to the population as the right option who could solve the problems that concerned the people.

The starting point of the protests can be considered the data of the Central Election Commission dated November 22, 2004, where Viktor Yanukovich was ahead of Viktor Yushchenko by almost 3%. [51]

More than 100 thousand people took to the streets of Kyiv the next day, November 23. People demanded a recount of votes, accusing Yanukovich of electoral fraud. Along

with Kyiv, all western Ukrainian cities supported the protests. People saw Viktor Yushchenko, as president of Ukraine.

Two days later, the CEC of Ukraine published the results and announced that Viktor Yanukovich was the new president of Ukraine. [52]

The world community's reaction regarding the elections in Ukraine was divided into two camps. Most Western countries supported Viktor Yushchenko, in turn, Russia was on the side of Viktor Yanukovich, and Vladimir Putin immediately congratulated him on receiving the presidency of Ukraine on November 22. [53]

By December, the government of Ukraine could no longer effectively contain the protesters, and on November 27, the deputies of the Verkhovna Rada invalidated the results. [54]

Many politicians, voters, and even entire state bodies went over to Yushchenko's side in parallel with this. The head of the campaign headquarters and chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine, Serhiy Tigipko, left the Yanukovich team, which greatly lowered his rating [55]

On December 8, 2004, the Rada adopted constitutional amendments, according to which, Ukraine, from September 1, 2005, should turn into a parliamentary republic with curtailed powers of the president. [56]

And the very same evening, Yushchenko announced the end of the protests, and on December 26, 2004 [57], and becomes the new president of Ukraine, gaining 52% of the vote, while Yanukovich was content with only 44.2%. [58]

Moscow's reserved stance and the lack of tangible support from Kuchma and Ukrainian society forced Yanukovich to refrain from a new confrontation against the backdrop of elections and new protests.

### 2.3.2 **Holodomor**

During his presidency, Viktor Yushchenko many times drew attention to the Holodomor - mass famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933 [59], and most of his political activity was aimed at recognizing the Holodomor as the genocide of Ukrainians, artificially caused by famine, by Stalin and other representatives of the USSR authorities of that time.

The former president was unequivocal in his assessment of the Holodomor as genocide and stated that: "The famine in Ukraine in the 1930s was not death through hunger, but the murder of the people through hunger." According to Yushchenko, "the famine in Ukraine was chosen as a way to pacify the Ukrainian people. These crimes, in terms of their scope, goals, and methods, certainly fall under the definition of genocide, which is given by the 1948 United Nations Convention. The goal was to bleed Ukraine, undermine its strength and thus eliminate the possibility of restoring Ukrainian statehood. This goal was not hidden [60]

In 2006, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine recognized the famine of 1932-1933 as a genocide of the Ukrainian people. [61] And in 2009, a criminal case was initiated by the Security Service of Ukraine "on the fact of the commission of genocide in Ukraine in 1932-1933, that is, on the grounds of a crime under Part 1 of Art. 442 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine" [62]

On December 25, 2009, during the investigation of this criminal case by the Main Investigation Department of the SBU, a new criminal case was initiated against Soviet and party leaders - I.V. Stalin, V.M. Molotov, L.M. Kaganovich, P.P. Postyshev, S. V. Kosior, V. Ya. Chubar and M. M. Khataevich on the grounds of a crime under Part 1 of Art. 442 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. The Kyiv Court of Appeal, which considered this case in January 2010, confirmed the conclusions of the SBU investigators about the organization of the genocide of the Ukrainian national group on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR, that is, the artificial creation of living conditions designed for its partial physical destruction. The court stated that the accused committed the crime imputed to them, and closed the criminal case in connection with their death. [63]

On April 21, 2006, Ukraine, at a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the CIS countries, proposed to include on the agenda the issue of recognizing the famine of 1932-1933 as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. Ukraine supported, Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan voted against, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan voted against, and Armenia, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan abstained. After that, the representative of Ukraine stated that: the CIS "has shown its

inefficiency" and "has no prospects" in the current format, since "the CIS does not respond to situations that are most sensitive for the CIS member countries." [64]

Although the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine stated in 2008: "Once again we reject any connection between the fact that we want the memory of the victims of the Holodomor to be honored and the fact that we will demand compensation from the Russian Federation ... We have said many times that the people and leadership of Russia bear no responsibility for the crimes of the Stalinist regime, except those who say that they are the successors of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin".

Russia refused to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide of Ukrainians, unlike a large number of other countries that supported Ukraine in this matter. [65]

### 2.3.3 **Big treaty**

The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine was the main agreement and indicator of the development of Ukraine and Russia as friendly.

In 2008, the validity of this agreement was coming to an end both in Ukraine and in Russia, the question arose whether it was necessary to extend it, or not to extend it, according to Article 40 of the agreement, if 6 months before the end, none of the parties declare their desire, terminate it, the contract will be automatically renewed for 10 years. [66]

During the operation of the Great Treaty, Ukraine and Russia could not find a compromise on many contentious issues, and relations between the countries heated up again. The issue of the Black Sea Fleet was especially difficult.

As a result of all disputes, and internal and external discussions between Ukraine and Russia, an understanding was reached between both parties that the treaty is considered "the cornerstone in our bilateral relations" and agreed to extend it for 10 years.

On September 6, 2018, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine decided to terminate the treaty. Which led to the termination of the contract on April 1, 2019. [67]

#### 2.3.4 **Timoshenko factor**

The Orange Revolution ended with Yushchenko's victory, but the new leader could not justify the high hopes placed on him by Ukrainian society. The only thing that the president managed to do was to thoroughly spoil relations with the Russian Federation by declaring a course towards European integration and joining NATO. [68]

In addition, Yushchenko launched a Ukrainization policy that provoked controversy in the country, in particular, foreign-made films were henceforth subject to mandatory dubbing into Ukrainian. [69]

Also, he announced the need for reconciliation between the veterans of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Red Army, securing for all of them the status of participants in the Ukrainian liberation movement. [70]

At the same time, none of the promised economic reforms was carried out. The president constantly had conflicts with parliament and the prime minister, this position was occupied by Tymoshenko for most of Yushchenko's reign. Contradictions between the branches of government arose based on the distribution of powers. A cruel joke with Yushchenko was largely played by the constitutional reform adopted in a package with the laws necessary to carry out a re-vote in the 2004 elections. The adopted changes significantly limited the presidential powers. [71]

In the 2004 presidential election, Tymoshenko refused to participate in the election race, supporting Yushchenko's candidacy. [72]

Tymoshenko's eloquence at rallies and active participation in the presidential campaign on the side of the then opposition leader made her one of the most popular faces of the Orange Revolution.

After Yushchenko was elected president, Tymoshenko became prime minister. But the union of two politicians who successfully cooperated in the government in the early 2000s and worked effectively in the opposition did not stand the test of power. In the bowels of the new Ukrainian government, a conflict began between supporters of Yushchenko and Tymoshenko. They accused each other of corruption and betrayal of the "Maidan ideals." [73] As a result, Yushchenko dismissed Tymoshenko from the post of prime minister, after which she went into opposition. [74]

However, after Yushchenko's unsuccessful attempt to create a political alliance with Yanukovich, who briefly headed the Cabinet, the president was forced to dissolve parliament in October 2008 and call early parliamentary elections, which were scheduled for December. According to their results, Tymoshenko was again appointed Prime Minister of Ukraine. [75]

Nevertheless, since Tymoshenko's first premiership, nothing has changed in her relationship with Yushchenko. This time the conflict between the prime minister and the president flared up with even greater force. The political tug-of-war hurt the situation in the country, which at the end of 2008 was covered by another economic crisis. [76]

The leaders of Ukraine, instead of solving the pressing economic problems of the country, defended their interests.

The peak of the confrontation between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko was the gas crisis at the end of 2009. Kyiv for a long time failed to agree with Moscow on new conditions for gas supplies, and Ukraine risked being left without fuel in the dead of winter, there was also a danger of stopping the transit of Russian gas to the EU. Tymoshenko took the initiative into her own hands and, without coordinating Kyiv's position on the new gas contract with Yushchenko, authorized the leadership of Naftogaz Ukrainy to sign this agreement. [77]

Subsequently, Tymoshenko was accused in Ukraine of signing gas contracts on unfavorable terms for the country. She, on the contrary, considered the gas agreements her great merit, arguing that thanks to her, Ukraine and all of Europe were saved from freezing.

The less time remained until the next presidential election in 2010, the more bitter became the confrontation between Tymoshenko and Yushchenko. All the activities of two persons in government positions were reduced to self-promotion on the eve of the elections.

In this struggle, Tymoshenko, who never concealed her presidential ambitions, proved to be stronger. Using her good oratorical skills, populism, and blocking all of Yushchenko's presidential initiatives, Tymoshenko managed to significantly increase



her ratings, while Yushchenko during his reign managed to turn from an idol into the culprit of all the country's failures in the eyes of his supporters.

However, despite all their efforts, Tymoshenko could not become president; in the second round of elections, she lost 3% of the vote to Yanukovych. [78]

In turn, Yushchenko won only 5% of the vote.

After the inauguration of Yanukovych, Tymoshenko left the post of head of government, almost immediately the new government began criminal prosecution of the ex-premier, and several criminal cases were opened against her at once. In October 2011, the court sentenced Tymoshenko to a seven-year prison term for exceeding official powers when concluding gas agreements with the Russian Federation in 2009. [79]

### 2.3.5 Gas conflict

The Orange Revolution and Ukraine's position in the Russo-Georgian war greatly influenced relations between Ukraine and Russia. Russia's main leverage was the gas issue and the price of Russian gas for Ukraine.

Viktor Yushchenko wanted to keep an intermediary in the form of RosUkrEnergo, which was led by Dmitry Firtash, a man close to the president, and took a monopoly position in gas trading, although it had neither its gas transmission system nor gas storage facilities, but used the gas transportation system and gas storage facilities of Ukraine. [80]

In March 2008, the prime ministers of Russia and Ukraine (Putin and Timoshenko) agreed on a gas price of \$179.5 for 2008 [81]

On October 2, 2008, they agreed on a price of \$235 for 2009. [82]

But on December 30, 2008, President Yushchenko forbade Naftogaz from signing an agreement with a price of \$235, although he had no right to do so. To complicate matters, RosUkrEnergo had accumulated \$2.4 billion in debt to Gazprom as of December 2008, even though the Ukrainian state company Naftogaz paid RosUkrEnergo's bills.

The gas crisis began after President Medvedev presented an impossible ultimatum to Ukraine on December 31, 2008 - the gas price for 2009 would be doubled to \$450 per

cubic meter, and Ukraine must immediately pay off the debt of RosUkrEnergo; otherwise, gas supplies will be cut off. On January 1, 2009, Russia stopped gas supplies to Ukraine, and on January 5, it significantly reduced gas supplies to European consumers [83], since January 7, the transit of Russian gas through the territory of Ukraine has been completely stopped.

On January 19, 2009, Gazprom and Naftogaz signed a new agreement, and on January 20, gas supplies to Ukraine and transit to Europe resumed. The prime ministers of Ukraine and Russia (Timoshenko and Putin) organized gas purchases in 2009 in such a way that the “new price” did not differ from the price they agreed on October 2, 2008 - according to the results for 2009, Ukraine received gas from Gazprom at an average price of 232 dollars per 1000 cubic meters

During the natural gas price dispute in January 2009, Russian natural gas exports through Ukraine were stopped. [84]

Relations deteriorated further when Russian Prime Minister Putin during the dispute said that the Ukrainian political leadership was demonstrating its inability to solve economic problems, and the situation underscored the high criminalization of the Ukrainian authorities. [85]

On August 11, 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev criticized Yushchenko for what Medvedev said was the Ukrainian president's responsibility for the deterioration of Russian-Ukrainian relations and the anti-Russian stance of the current Ukrainian authorities. [86]

In response, Yushchenko wrote a letter in which he noted that he could not accept that Ukrainian-Russian relations were in trouble and wondered why the Russian president completely ruled out Russia's responsibility for this. [87]

### **2.3.6 Armed conflict in Georgia**

In August 2008, after the outbreak of the armed conflict in South Ossetia, Ukraine became the only CIS country that openly sided with Georgia and demanded that Russia immediately withdraw its troops from its territory. [88]

After the start of full-scale hostilities, Ukraine was one of the first to come out with official support for Tbilisi. On Friday, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry issued a

statement in which, expressing deep concern about the situation in the conflict zone, it unequivocally blamed Russia for unleashing the war and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia. “Unfortunately, the information that comes from the scene indicates that the Russian Federation, which for a long time played the role of a mediator in the settlement, is gradually becoming a direct participant in the conflict,” the statement said. [89]

Ukraine warned the Russian side against the participation of its Black Sea Fleet ships in the conflict, otherwise threatening to prevent the ships from returning to Crimea. [90]

Viktor Yushchenko said that because of the ships of the Black Sea Fleet, Ukraine is drawn into a military conflict, not wanting it.

In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation expressed surprise at the tone and content of this statement by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry. The commentary of the Russian Foreign Ministry noted that the measures that the Ukrainian side threatens to apply would not be in line with the Russian-Ukrainian agreements and would be unfriendly to the Russian Federation. [91]

The President of Ukraine established a new procedure for crossing the Ukrainian border by ships of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, according to which the Black Sea Fleet forces could cross the border of the republic only with notification of the headquarters of the Ukrainian Navy about their actions at least 72 hours in advance. [92] Russian Foreign Ministry regarded Yushchenko's decree on the Black Sea Fleet as a new anti-Russian step [93], after which Yushchenko called the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation a threat to the security of Ukraine. [94]

On October 2, 2008, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin accused Ukraine of supplying weapons to Georgia during the Russian-Georgian war. Putin also said that Moscow has evidence that Ukrainian military specialists were in the conflict zone during the war. Ukraine denied the allegations. The head of its state-owned arms export company, Ukrspetsexport, said no weapons were sold during the war, and Defense Minister Yuriy Yekhanurov denied that the Ukrainian military fought on Georgia's side. [95]

On September 25, 2009, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine Alexander Medvedko confirmed that the personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine did not participate in the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, the armament and military equipment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were not present in the conflict, and no assistance was provided to Georgia. He also confirmed that international deliveries of military equipment between Ukraine and Georgia from 2006 to 2008 were carried out by previously concluded contracts, laws of Ukraine, and international treaties. [96]

## **2.4 Reparations of Ukraine – Russia Relations under the Yanukovich Administration**

The policies of Ukrainian presidents, from Leonid Kravchuk to Yanukovich, were quite different. If Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma investigated the multi-vector approach, Viktor Yushchenko was in favor of integration with the Western world and Europe. Viktor Yanukovich was a clear representation of the Russian direction in the foreign policy of Ukraine at the beginning of his term. Although he was the most pro-Russian and neo-Soviet president [97], because of the pressure and unanimous support for the European integration of the political elite, he still tried to balance between the West and Russia without resorting to extremes, up to certain points.

### **2.4.1 Kharkiv Agreements and the Black Sea Fleet**

On April 21, 2010, Viktor Yanukovich and the then President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, joined the Kharkiv meetings, in case a situation arises to discuss the situation in the Black Sea Fleet and assess the situation with Russian gas. [98]

The result of this reduction in gas prices for Ukraine was 30 percent. On May 28, 2017, the possibility of deploying the Black Sea Fleet in the Ukrainian Crimea ended [99], and the Kharkiv commissions extended this period for 25 years, with the subsequent automatic extension of the agreement for 5 years, if neither of the parties informs in the protocol about the consideration of alternative use of their action no later than one year before the expiration of the term. It is also expected to increase the rent for the stay of the Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine.

Both Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev announced a significant increase in relations during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovich [100] In turn, the People of Ukraine did not support the president's action regarding the Black Sea Fleet, because, during its deployment in Crimea, many controversial issues have already arisen that were not found in the Kharkiv agreement.

The modernization of armaments and equipment was one of the main priorities of Russia, regarding the Black Sea Fleet. The obsolescence of technology, the danger of losing the fleet, and combat capability were the main concerns for the Kremlin. Ukraine, in turn, was ready for the appearance of modern ships in the Black Sea Fleet but insisted on the obligatory coordination between Russia and Ukraine regarding the replacement of ships, aircraft, and other weapons and equipment, which was categorically unacceptable to the Russian leadership. [101]

A complete list of the new needs of ships and the conclusion of contracts for their maintenance by Ukrainian ship repair enterprises, ground equipment, and central systems, as well as supply by Ukrainian enterprises, where the requirements of Ukraine were ignored. [102]

In addition, separate imports for the Black Sea Fleet, requiring resolutions, were customs duties that Ukraine wanted to collect from goods. But Russia was categorically against this and deterring the abolition of all taxes. [103]

The Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2011, demanded the return of the lighthouses that were used by the Black Sea Fleet [104] At the same time, Oleg Voloshin, a representative of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, said: "We do not want to turn the issue of lighthouses into a conflict situation," it is desirable that the search for a compromise continue on the unification of the Ukrainian-Russian working group. [105]

Despite Ukraine's renunciation of natural conditions and the conditional extension of the base lease term specified in the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, Russia refused to make concessions on the issue of the base gas price (although it did provide a substantial discount). [106]

### 2.4.2 Yanukovych and Tymoshenko

On August 5, 2011, Tymoshenko was arrested; on October 11, 2011, she was sentenced to 7 years in prison in the case of abuse of power and official authority when concluding gas contracts with Russia in January 2009. [107]

Also, according to the decision of the judge, the ex-prime minister must pay Naftogaz more than 1.5 billion hryvnias.

President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych said that the decision in the Tymoshenko case was made within the framework of the law, but it cannot be considered final. [108]

The decision of the court in Kyiv was criticized by the United States, the European Union, Russia, and international human rights activists. The US State Department expressed its deep disappointment with the verdict, calling the process politically motivated. [109]

The Russian Foreign Ministry emphasized the "anti-Russian overtones" of the verdict against Tymoshenko.

Tymoshenko was tried for legally binding agreements between OAO Gazprom and NAK Naftogaz Ukrainy that are in force and have not been canceled by anyone, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. [110]

"One cannot ignore the fact that the leadership of many states and the world community perceive this entire trial as initiated solely for political reasons," the Russian Foreign Ministry said. [111]

Moscow believes that the court ignored convincing evidence that the mentioned gas agreements were drawn up in strict accordance with the legislation of Russia and Ukraine and applicable international law.

In turn, the European Union is sure that during the trial of Tymoshenko "international standards regarding fairness, transparency and independence of legal procedures were not observed." [112]

According to British Foreign Secretary William Hague, the verdict could become a serious obstacle to the signing and ratification of association agreements with the EU and the creation of a free trade zone with the union. [113]

Ex-president of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko does not consider the case of Yulia Tymoshenko politically conditioned. In his opinion, having concluded gas agreements with Vladimir Putin in 2009, she betrayed national interests. [114]

Speaking about the case against Yulia Tymoshenko regarding the 2009 gas contracts, Viktor Yushchenko tried to clearly distinguish between the political and economic components of this process.

"Why does Germany have a base [price] of 250 [dollars per cubic meter of gas], Slovakia, Austria have from 250 to 300, and Ukraine - 450? Does Ukraine pay a price that is located on the border between France and Italy in the Alps? How did it happen that Ukraine pays an incorrect, non-market price?" Yushchenko asks in his interview. [115]

According to Yushchenko, the price for the transit of Russian gas and the approaches to fines for gas not purchased on time are also non-market.

At the same time, the ex-president also recognizes the political factor.

For the first time, a "broad coalition" between the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and the Party of Regions was discussed in 2008. [116]

In early June 2009, the media published a draft amendment to the Constitution of Ukraine, developed by representatives of Tymoshenko and Yanukovich. It provided that the president would be elected not in national elections, but by the votes of deputies of the Verkhovna Rada. [117]

Confirmation of these agreements appeared after the flight of Yanukovich in February 2014. Among the documents that journalists found in his residence "Mezhyhirya" was a draft "Agreement on political cooperation." Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yanukovich planned to conclude it in the spring of 2009, a few months before the start of the election campaign. [118]

The project, dated April 14, 2009, provided for the division of power between Tymoshenko and Yanukovich until 2029 - from the posts of president and prime minister to regional and district councils in all regions of Ukraine.

Separately, we agreed on power in the regions of Ukraine. It was divided according to the population into the regions and positions at the local level.

The agreement spelled out the scenario for the removal of then-president Viktor Yushchenko from office. Until May 12, 2009, they planned to collect 226 signatures needed to initiate this issue in Parliament. And the impeachment itself was supposed to be announced on August 6, 2009.

However, this document was never signed. On June 7, 2009, Yanukovich announced that he was withdrawing from negotiations on a coalition with the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc. [119]

And Tymoshenko, in her address on the evening of the same day, said that deceit, intrigue, betrayal, and meanness still win in Ukrainian politics. [120]

A few years ago, even the opponents of Yulia Tymoshenko and Viktor Yushchenko admitted that serious progress had been made in Ukraine, primarily in terms of developing democratic norms, improving the electoral system, and ensuring freedom of speech.

Therefore, 7 years in prison, for the former Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko, is a blow to the entire system formed after the Orange Revolution

## **2.5 Ukraine – Russia Relations towards the Revolution of Dignity**

### **2.5.1 Yanukovich and Putin**

Viktor Yanukovich met with Vladimir Putin many times, both in Ukraine and in Russia. At the next meeting, on October 22, 2012, both presidents confirmed that the development of mutually beneficial and partnership relations is a common strategic choice based on a strong friendship between the two peoples. Relationships are also strengthened in economic terms, wherein in 2011, the trade turnover between Ukraine and Russia increased by 36% and exceeded \$50 billion. [121]

After the 2005 elections, when Yanukovich lost, and Yushchenko did not want to integrate with Russia and preferred the European Union, relations became very tense, and when Yanukovich did win the elections in 2010, Moscow sighed calmly. In his statements, Putin has repeatedly noted that Russia has a special interest in Ukraine and wants to strengthen integration in the post-Soviet space. Ukraine's course to the West, but is included in Russia's plans to strengthen relations between the post-Soviet countries.



And the criminal cases brought against the political opposition only alienate Ukraine from the European Union, which plays into the hands of the Russian government. [122] Yanukovich's entire policy in relations between Ukraine and Russia boiled down to how much Ukraine was willing to give up its positions in exchange for lower gas prices and satisfying Moscow's appetites. During his reign, the ex-president rather worsened the position of Ukraine on controversial issues but brought the relationship between the countries to a new level, which undoubtedly pleased Moscow. Get a strategic partner in the face of Ukraine, an important point in the Russian plan, increase the level of influence on the entire CIS space and declare to the world about yourself as a new actor to be reckoned with.

In December 2013, Ukraine signed agreements with Russia:

1. Action Plan for the settlement of trade restrictions in bilateral trade for 2013-2014;
2. Agreement on the implementation of state support measures for the resumption of serial production of An-124 family aircraft with D-18T engines and their modifications;
3. Protocol between the governments of the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the supply of goods through industrial cooperation in 2014;
4. Intergovernmental agreement on joint actions to organize the construction of a transport passage through the Kerch Strait. [123]

In turn, Gazprom reduced the gas price for Naftogaz to \$268.5 per thousand cubic meters.

"Russia is ready to go further towards our partners, but we are faced with the task of developing a truly effective and long-term scheme of interaction," Putin said. [124]

Ukraine made significant concessions, for Russia

A single customs space was not created, but the economy was made dependent on the will of Moscow.

Enriching his close associates and obtaining additional privileges is what Viktor Yanukovich wanted to achieve when he sacrificed the interests of his country in exchange for ostentatious loyalty to the Kremlin.

When the whole country wanted European integration, Yanukovich preferred to refuse it, but Ukraine did not join the Customs Union either.

The reasons for choosing Russia were easy to explain to the people, but the Ukrainians did not share it

"This is an association agreement, 610 million euros have been pledged in financial technical assistance to Ukraine. Starting from 2010. For three years in a row, they showed us this candy in a beautiful wrapper and said: you will receive them when you sign an agreement with the IMF. I do not want to be rude, but there is no need to humiliate us like that. We are a serious country, a European one," the president said in response to the proposed association agreement with the EU. [125]

According to Azarov, the main reasons for the government's decision were pressure from Moscow, as well as the refusal of the EU and the IMF to provide financial assistance to Ukraine on acceptable terms.

At the very beginning of the meeting with foreign correspondents in Kyiv, Mykola Azarov assured us that Ukraine constantly turned to the EU with a request to help and compensate for losses from Russia's economic pressure.

"There was not a single meeting with EU representatives at which we would not raise this issue. A month and a half ago, the President handed over to his colleague the data on our losses and compensation, which we wanted to see, but without result," Mykola Azarov assured. [126]

Russian pressure on this issue was also obvious, since if Ukraine still signs an association agreement with the EU, then it will not make sense to continue discussing trade and economic regimes with Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is on a visit to Italy, speaking about the situation in Ukraine, has already recalled that due to the discount on gas for Ukraine provided in exchange for extending the stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, Russia lost more than \$10 billion.

At the same time, according to the Russian president, Ukrainian borrowers owe Sberbank, VEB, VTB, and Gazprombank about \$30 billion.

Putin also said that if the agreement with the EU comes into force, Ukraine will become a transit zone for European goods, which can freely enter the Russian market.

Vladimir Putin also said that this poses a great threat to the Russian economy. [127]

The contours of the foreign and domestic humanitarian policy of "Yanukovych's Ukraine" can be defined in such a way that it is a neutral state in foreign policy. The negotiation process with the European Union will continue, we will agree on a visa-free regime and a free trade zone, but for now, we will not talk about joining the EU itself. The European Union is not ready to spend money on joining such a large country as ours, and the Ukrainian elite is not ready to share its sovereignty with European bureaucrats. The same is true in relations with Russia. Here the model will be approximately the same as that of Canada and the USA or Finland and the USSR - very close economic, political and cultural ties, but there will be no new union. Roughly speaking, economically we will be integrated through free trade zones with both the EU and Russia, but politically we will remain neutral. In domestic humanitarian policy, not everything is clear yet. The authorities hesitate, but everything goes to the fact that the Ukrainization of the south-east of the country will still be established and reversed. The Russian language in the Russian-speaking regions will return to its position, and practically nothing will change for the Ukrainian-speaking population.

Yanukovych managed to radically improve relations with Russia without spoiling relations with the US and the European Union. The West perceives Ukraine's foreign policy with understanding, and the refusal to join NATO even with some relief - there is no need to quarrel with Russia anymore.

For the dissociation of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, Yanukovych traded a sharp drop in gas prices. And instead of a decline in production at a gas price of \$330 and a sharp rise in prices for utilities, Ukraine received a stabilization of the situation, which ensures economic growth of 4-5%. It also saved the budget, helped raise social standards and ensure their timely payment. [128]

Summing up the Yanukovych rule, we can conclude that although there were many positive moments, there were many more negative ones, just knowing about the future policy of Russia towards Ukraine, it can be argued that Ukraine wanted independence,

and Russia was against it, which eventually resulted in huge pressure on Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, a military conflict in eastern Ukraine and a full-fledged war on February 24, 2024, while society more and more wants integration with the European Union and the United States.

On March 1, 2014, when Yanukovich had already been overthrown, he turned to Putin, referring to the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance between Ukraine and Russia, he asked for the entry of Russian troops to stabilize the situation in Ukraine. Also, after the extraordinary presidential elections in Ukraine, Yanukovich repeatedly appeared in the media space, with statements that he was accused of self-elimination, but he just went from the capital to one of the regions of the country. Thus, Viktor Yanukovich considers himself a legitimate president and has repeatedly asked Vladimir Putin and the public to help him find justice. But the former president himself is in no hurry to return to Ukraine because he is sure that he will be arrested as soon as he crosses the border. [129]

In 2015, the ex-president is still set on rapprochement between Ukraine and Russia, and also stated that diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Russia during his reign were maintained on a non-conflict basis, and called the current cooling a "big mistake" of Kyiv.

Yanukovich called the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine a tragedy but did not agree that it was Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine. [130]

### **2.5.2 European integration**

In late 2012 - early 2013, Russia actively offered Ukraine to join the Customs Union, instead of integrating with the West and Europe, arguing this with more favorable conditions, low energy prices, and additional concessions. In turn, the society and political elite of Ukraine chose Europe. Also, the obligation to the European Union and the promises of politicians to the Ukrainian people served as a reason for choosing in favor of the European Union. [131]

As part of the Eastern Partnership, in 2012 it was announced that Ukraine 2013 could sign an association agreement with the European Union. [132] President Yanukovich, continuing Ukraine's movement toward European integration, simultaneously

negotiated with Russia, trying to find an acceptable model for cooperation between Ukraine and the Customs Union. [133]

On September 18, 2013, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine unanimously approved the draft Association Agreement with the European Union. [134]

In October, Russian President Putin said that in the event of an association with the EU, Ukraine would not be able to join the Customs Union. By this time, the position of Ukraine in the world and economically was extremely unstable. Reserves declined, gas debt rose, and foreign loan repayments approached. [135]

Promises to revise the terms of the International Monetary Fund loan were also not kept. [75] In turn, Russia promised Ukraine \$15 billion in direct aid and loans. Lower gas prices and additional benefits, which looked extremely tempting on paper, against the backdrop of 600 million euros from the European Union, in case of signing Association Agreements with it. Russia also agreed to finance several large projects and counted on the support of Ukrainian entrepreneurs, due to the proposal of their extremely profitable projects, which should have caused a personal interest in rapprochement with Russia, instead of the European Union. [136]

On November 21, 2013, a week before the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, the main event of which was to be the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union by Ukraine, the government of Ukraine announced the suspension of preparations for the conclusion of this agreement.

This decision led to a mass protest in the center of Kyiv, as well as in other Ukrainian cities. After the forceful dispersal of the opposition tent camp on the night of November 30, the protest action took on a sharply anti-presidential and anti-government character.

### **2.5.3 Fishing ship**

On July 17, 2013, off the coast of the Sea of Azov, which is considered the inland waters of both Ukraine and Russia, but in this case, far from the borders with Russia, there was a conflict between a Ukrainian fishing vessel and a Russian coast guard boat. [137] Of the 5 crew members, 4 people died and 1 was detained by Russian border guards. [138]

After ramming a fishing boat and shelling by Russian border guards, the only surviving Ukrainian fisherman was taken to a hospital in the city of Yeysk (Russia). On August 12, 2013, the victim was supposed to be sent to Ukraine, but the Russian prosecutor's office opened a criminal case against him for "poaching and border violations" [139] The Russian border guards were without uniforms, kept silent about the fact that they immediately found the bodies of all the dead, and did not give them away because they wanted to hide the bullet wounds.

In turn, the Russian side claimed that "Trying to break away from the Russian security forces, the offending vessel made a dangerous maneuver, abruptly changed course towards the pursuers, violating international rules for preventing collisions of ships at sea," said the press officer of the border department of the FSB of the Russian Federation for Krasnodar edge [140] September 20, 2013, "Russia refused to conduct a joint investigation into this event, despite repeated insistence by the Ukrainian side" [141]

A similar incident occurred on August 28, 2013, when a Russian tractor driver and 2 of his friends crossed the border into Ukraine while intoxicated. Unlike the incident in the Sea of Azov, the Ukrainian side immediately turned over the citizens of Russia to the Russian authorities, and the tractor on which the border was crossed was transferred to the Ministry of Revenues and Duties [142]

The obvious pro-Russian position of Viktor Yanukovich and the opposed position of the people and political elites, with the inability to find compromises in the gradually increasing number of contentious issues between Ukraine and Russia, and a sharp course change, escalated the situation to very critical proportions, which led to serious consequences for Ukraine. Therefore, the Ukrainians decided to repeat the experience of the Orange Revolution and take to the streets.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. UKRAINE - RUSSIA RELATIONS AFTER 2014

#### 3.1 Revolution of Dignity and Its Repercussions on Ukraine – Russia Relations

##### 3.1.1 Euro-Maidan

After a sharp and unexpected appeal from the side of the appeal in the Russian Federation and the refusal to sign the Ukrainian Convention on Association with the application, on the same day, November 21, 2013, the "Maidan" was considered. The youth protest was supported by the Ukrainian opposition, which on November 24 announced the start of an indefinite action in the center of Kyiv. [143]

On November 30, 2013, the assembly of "self-defense" detachments began to protect the Euromaidan. By mid-December, more than 5 thousand people signed up for them. [144]

Leaders of three opposition parliamentary parties: Batkivshchyna, UDAR, and Svoboda announced the size of the National Resistance Headquarters [145]

Russia's position was the same - open, but not too obvious. In three months, Euromaidan has gone from demands to sign an agreement with the EU to the overthrow of the president and the change of the entire Ukrainian political system.

December 1, the situation changed dramatically. During this time, Yanukovich managed to accept the proposal from the EU, and the security forces brutally dispersed the protesters. [143]

In a couple of days, the protesters took control of several state buildings, including the Kyiv City Hall and the House of Trade Unions. After that, people went to storm the presidential administration.

As a result of the power confrontation in the center of Kyiv, the seizure of buildings and authorities in higher and regional centers, the creation of authorities, and the organization of informal law enforcement agencies, Ukraine found itself on the verge of consolidating its position [146]

The assault on the presidential administration was unsuccessful, but the Maidan has not gone away either. A week later, the security forces launched attacks that dispersed

the protesters. Three days of clashes ended in nothing. In January, Yanukovich criminalized rallies and banned rallies, triggering a new escalation in the conflict. [147] On the morning of January 20, the Kyiv health department reported hundreds of protesters. The Ministry of Internal Affairs found many wounded police officers. Fighting, fires, and shelling at the barricade detention area continued for several days. [148]

On January 22, three protesters were killed, and on the 23rd, opposition leaders announced a suspension of the fight against radiation. Under heavy pressure, Yanukovich fired the government, repealed previous laws against protesters, granted amnesty to those already detained, and accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Mykola Azarov. [149]

In turn, the protesters unblocked the buildings of regional administrations and other important objects, including Hrushevsky Street. [150]

The truce lasted two weeks, during which situations were discovered when barricades were fortified at Yanukovich's headquarters on the Maidan. Vitali Klitschko proposes to return to the 2004 constitution and the parliamentary-presidential resolution. 18th of February. In a protest action, the protesters began a "peaceful performance" on the building of the Rada.

Fierce clashes began with the security forces: they pushed back the protesters, returned to the Maidan, and began to prepare for its assault. Three days of fierce fighting in a rapidly spreading environment. More than 100 people were killed, participating in initiatives against unidentified snipers, which forced many of Yanukovich's exporters to withdraw from the supply. [143]

On February 21, hostilities were stopped and Viktor Yanukovich, under pressure from the West, signed an agreement [151], on the settlement of the political crisis in Ukraine, which occurred after the end of the political crisis and announced the holding of early presidential elections, no later than December 2014 [152]

On the same day, Yanukovich left Kyiv. And on February 22, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a resolution stating that Yanukovich "unconstitutionally removed himself



from the exercise of constitutional powers" and does not fulfill his duties, and also scheduled early presidential elections for May 25, 2014. [153]

On February 23, Oleksandr Turchynov became acting president of Ukraine. [154]

On February 24, 2014, the European Union and the United States recognized the new government in Kyiv as legitimate. [155]

The Russian side perceived Maidan as "a pro-European revolution, not only as a breakthrough by the West into the space that the Kremlin considered its zone of influence but also in the context of signs of domestic political instability that manifested themselves in 2011-2012. in Russia. The Ukrainian revolution has become another case of the fall of the post-Soviet regime, once again pointing to the internal weaknesses that are characteristic of these regimes, as well as to the threats that the pro-Western sentiments of the population and elites pose to them. [156]

The Russian leadership refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new Ukrainian government, which "does not have a nationwide mandate" [157]

However, on May 25, 2014, after the elections, Russia recognized the new president of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, as the legitimate president. [158]

### **3.2 Annexation of Crimea and Its Impact on Ukraine – Russia Relations**

The Crimean issue has been and remains one of the main issues in which the opinions of Ukraine and Russia do not coincide. After the events of the Maidan and the Revolution of Dignity, the inhabitants of Crimea felt a threat to the Russian language from the new Ukrainian authorities [159] and the position of the residents themselves, who for the most part supported Yanukovich and Ukraine's path towards rapprochement with Russia.

Russia, in turn, feared that the new government would revise the agreements on basing the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, and generally perceived the outcome of the Euromaidan as a major foreign policy defeat - the "loss of Ukraine" in favor of Western countries - and in the end, went to the annexation of Crimea with the stated goal of "protecting the Russian-speaking population" of the peninsula [160]

### 3.3.1 The beginning of the aggression

On February 28, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted an appeal to the countries - guarantors of the integrity of Ukraine, which signed the Budapest Memorandum in 1994 [161], demanding from them "by practical actions to confirm the obligations enshrined in the memorandum to respect the independence, sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine." In addition, the Rada demanded that Russia "stop steps aimed at infringing on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and not support separatism". [162]

Yuriy Sergeev, permanent representative of Ukraine at the UN, demanded an urgent convening of the UN Security Council in connection with the aggravation of the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, threatening the territorial integrity of Ukraine [163]

To which the Russian Foreign Ministry responded with a refusal of Ukraine, the proposal to hold urgent bilateral consultations by the provisions of Art. 7 of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine of 1997 [164]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine handed over to the Russian side a note of protest in connection with the violation of Ukrainian airspace and non-compliance with the agreement on basing the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea. It was also noted that Ukraine did not turn to Russia for help to ensure order in the territory of Crimea, in connection with which Russia was required to immediately return troops to their places of permanent deployment. [165]

And Oleksandr Turchynov, as interim president of Ukraine, accused Russia of military aggression in Crimea [166]

To which an immediate response was received from Russia that the movement of armored vehicles of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation in Crimea, "associated with was the need to ensure the protection of the Black Sea Fleet's deployment sites on the territory of Ukraine" and taking place "in full accordance with the basic Russian-Ukrainian agreements on the Black Sea Fleet" [164]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine called Charge d'Affaires of Russia Andrey Vorobyov and protested the statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry, which

recognized the declaration of independence of Crimea and Sevastopol as legitimate: "Ukraine categorically condemns the direct interference of the Russian Federation in the internal affairs of our state. The actions of the Russian side directly contradict the fundamental principles of international law and the generally recognized principles of the coexistence of states. " [167]

And already on March 11, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine appealed to the countries - guarantors of Ukraine's security under the Budapest Memorandum with a call to preserve the territorial integrity of the country, using all possible measures - diplomatic, political, economic, and military measures. [168]

On March 13, the Verkhovna Rada adopted an appeal to the UN with a request to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine. In its statement, the parliament accused Russia of unjustified aggression and an attempt to annex part of Ukrainian territory. The Rada called on the UN to immediately consider the situation in Crimea [169]

### 3.3.2 Annexation of Crimea

Crimea was indeed part of the Russian Empire, later in the RSFSR, but since 1954, it was part of the Ukrainian SSR, according to international law, Crimea is a part of Ukraine.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a lot of controversy about the belonging of Crimea to Ukraine, but everything ended with a verbal debate. In 1997, Ukraine and Russia signed an agreement "On friendship, cooperation and partnership" [170] which provided for respect for each other's territorial integrity. In 2003, an agreement was signed "On the Ukrainian-Russian state border", [171] which secured the territorial affiliation of Crimea to Ukraine.

Against the backdrop of the events of 2013-2014 and the Revolution of Dignity [172], which the part of society loyal to Russia perceived as a threat to their interests, pro-Russian political forces came to power in Crimea, and Russia supported them. [173] Initially, Putin denied the participation of the Russian army in the conflict [173] but later admitted [175] blocking of the Ukrainian army by the Russian armed forces. Later, the Supreme Council, under the supervision of Russian soldiers, elected a new leader of the Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov. [176]

Aksyonov was the head of "Russian Unity", which in the elections to the Supreme Council of 2010, scored 4.02% and took fifth place, which may indicate the real position of the Crimeans in support of joining Russia in peacetime. [177]

The referendum was announced on March 6, 2014, and held on March 16, 2014. [178]

The conditions under which the referendum was held, were a stang with outward signs of a referendum. There was no real national expression.

According to the laws of the Russian Federation, a referendum on the accession of one village to another must be announced 45 days in advance. If a referendum on the accession of regions, then 60 days. [179]

In turn, according to the legislation of Ukraine, a referendum on Crimea must be held throughout Ukraine. [180]

The Scottish independence referendum, which also took place in 2014, was announced 547 days before the vote. [181]

Such a long period is necessary for a detailed discussion, agitation for and against such a decision, to understand the dangers of making this or that choice.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke about the impossibility of holding a real election campaign in 10 days. [182]

The illegitimacy of the referendum, as well as its result, was commented on by a specialist in electoral geography Alexander Kireev.

Kireev drew attention to the fact that in Sevastopol the voting results turned out to be surprisingly round.

Official data for the city of Sevastopol

Are you for the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation? 262041 95.6%

Are you for the restoration of the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of 1992 and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine? 9250 3.37%

Valid votes 271291 98.97%

Invalid votes 2810 1.03%

Total votes 273101 100%

Total number of registered voters 306258

Turnout 89.5%

Based on these data, we find out that turnout is the number of all votes divided by the total number of voters,  $273101 \div 306258 = 0.8950000\dots$ . The same story with the votes "for Russia", we divide the number of those who voted for joining Russia by the number of all those who voted, and we get  $262041 \div 274101 = 0.9560000\dots$  it wouldn't work. Either this is an amazing, extremely unlikely coincidence, or it is very simply explained. First, they came up with percentages, and then, figures were adjusted to these percentages. In turn, the percentage "for Ukraine", calculated, but crookedly, 9250 is exactly 3.53% (3.52998%) of ... 262041. That is, from the number of votes "for Russia". Multiplied by the wrong line. Well, the invalid ones were simply written according to the residual principle: 100% minus for Russia and minus for Ukraine. That's the whole clue.

From, this we can conclude that, at least in Sevastopol, the results were written without any connection with how the citizens voted. [183]

Such violations became possible because there were no independent observers at the referendum. Many international organizations and national authorities refused in advance to recognize the referendum as legitimate and did not send their observers. [184]

But some Russian independent journalists worked at the polling stations and they reported violations. Ilya Azar at that time, the Dozhd correspondent, and Skate, Irina Vinokurova, who worked at Znak.com, said that in Simferopol, at polling station 08001, they were forbidden to be present during the vote count. Members of the election commission told them that, according to the regulation on the all-Crimean referendum, only members of the commission can be present during the counting of votes. After such a statement, the journalists were put out of the door by self-defense representatives with the support of a police squad. [185]

The regulation on the all-Crimean referendum proclaimed the right of citizens of Ukraine registered in Crimea to freely and comprehensively discuss the issue of the referendum, its possible consequences, and go on the stump. [186]

In the result we can see that the campaign was one-sided, there were billboards all over Crimea, and the peninsula in the colors of moisture of Russia was contrasted with the blood-red Crimea, behind a black grille and a black swastika in the center. [187]

In addition, all Ukrainian TV channels were turned off in Crimea, but Russian ones were broadcast perfectly.

Also, an important point of the illegitimacy of the referendum is that the voters had no opportunity not to change anything.

1. Are you in favor of the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation?

2. Are you for the restoration of the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of 1992 and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine?

Under the 1992 constitution, the peninsula received broad autonomy rights. However, in the period preceding the voting, no explanatory campaign on this issue, formulated rather intricately, was carried out in Crimea.

There was no point to leave everything as it is. No one asked the inhabitants of Crimea whether it is worth changing the status of Crimea at all.

The most important problem, this entire referendum took place under the supervision of Russian troops, who blockaded Ukrainian military units, and took control of strategic facilities, and local authorities, including the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers in Simferopol. The voting in the Supreme Council of Crimea on the appointment of this referendum and the leadership of the republic took place under pressure. Igor Strelkov later told himself, at the head of the militias, he drove the deputies into the hall by force. [188]

"Unfortunately, I didn't see any support from the state authorities, where exactly I was, I didn't see the deputies, the militia gathered to drive them into the hall so that they accepted, what can I say?" [189]

When a referendum is held under the supervision of the military, it is strange to expect that civilians will oppose it, if it is not an occupation that is completely unacceptable to them. While there were Russian troops in Crimea in 2014, for

Ukrainians and Crimeans in particular, they were not enemies and were not perceived as a threat.

Those who did not care would not speak out against it, and those who were strongly opposed, for example, the leader of the Crimean Tatars, Mustafa Dzhemilev, were not allowed to debate or campaign [190]

Based on a poll by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology conducted on March 4, 2014, only 41% of Crimeans were in favor of joining Crimea Russia. [191]

From the same survey, we can conclude that if the inhabitants of Crimea, like the inhabitants of Scotland, 547 days [192] could openly and freely discuss the pros and cons of uniting with Russia, then at the very least these questions would make people think carefully about whether they want to join another country:

1. What will be the price of such a sharp exit?
2. What will happen to bank deposits and property?
3. What if the world community does not recognize the results of the referendum and imposes sanctions?
4. What will happen to the electricity and water supplied by Ukraine?
5. How will the problem with transport and cargo transportation be solved?
6. Are the inhabitants of Crimea ready for several years, or even decades, of life in the status of occupied territory?
7. What will happen to the entry into the territory of Ukraine, where many relatives and acquaintances live?
8. Who and according to what principles will govern the peninsula after joining Russia?
9. How to integrate into the Russian system with its corruption and lawlessness of the security forces?
10. What will happen to the property in Crimea, will it be taken away, or will it be recognized?

On March 6, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea decided to join the Russian Federation as a subject of the Russian Federation [193]

Summing up, we can say with confidence that if it were not for the strong influence of Russia on Crimea and the whole situation, with a high probability, the inhabitants of Crimea would ask for greater autonomy and a special law on the Russian language, which is the main language of communication in Crimea. There would be no talk of any accession of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to Russia

### 3.3.3 History of the peninsula

Crimea was part of the RSFSR until 1954. Russians have made up the majority of Crimea's population since the late 19th century, so Russia's annexation of Crimea may have some justification.

First, it is unnecessary to determine that the annexation of Crimea in 1954 has nothing to do with Khrushchev. [194]

In the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the transfer of the Crimean region from the RSFSR on February 19, 1954, there is no mention of Khrushchev. In 1954, there were collegial leadership, and decisions were made by more than one person. Prime Minister Georgy Malenkov, in 1954, had more power than Nikita Khrushchev, [195] who established himself as the leader of the USSR only in 1955. [196]

The official version of the transfer of Crimea is called economic considerations, territorial proximity, and close economic and cultural ties between the Crimean region and the Ukrainian SSR. In principle, there was no talk of a gift, as well as about the 300th anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement.

A threefold reduction in the population during the Second World War, from 1.2 million people to 400 thousand people. Almost destroyed were Kerch and Sevastopol, as well as 127 villages, hundreds of enterprises, and thousands of houses. [197]

After the deportation of Crimean Tatars, Armenians, Germans, Bulgars, and Greeks from Crimea [198], whose place was replaced by hard-working Ukrainians, who, according to the plan, they were supposed to rebuild Crimea on their own, there was a particular decline in the agricultural sector, while the industry as a whole had already been renovated and rebuilt.



"Agricultural production in the region has achieved notable success over the past decade. Gross meat production is now 160% by 1953, milk production has more than doubled, grape production has increased 14 times, the area under orchards has expanded 3 times, and under vineyards 9 times." - said Nikolai Surkin in the speech at the plenum of the Crimean industrial Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine on July 9, 1963 [199]

Thus, it turns out that the plan to restore Crimea, at the hands of the Ukrainian SSR, was justified and brought its results, the mixing of nations and the strengthening of Ukraine's ties with Russia also strengthened. Therefore, to call the annexation of Crimea to Ukraine a "gift" is fundamentally wrong.

In addition, the base of the All-Union Black Sea Fleet was located in Crimea, which was supposed to limit Kyiv's influence on Crimea. As experience has shown after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Black Sea Fleet has already proved to be an effective lever in limiting influence. And in 2014, the Black Sea Fleet became a participant in Russia's military aggression on the territory of Ukraine and the annexation of the peninsula.

It follows from all this that the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 was not an act of goodwill and a gift, but a far-sighted and pragmatic move by the Kremlin, which acted based on the benefit of the USSR, and not for the Ukrainian people. However, Russia does not have any legal grounds to review this decision and carry out the annexation of the peninsula. This is confirmed by the opinion of the international community, as 100 states supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine [200]

Summing up, it can be argued that Crimea was part of the RSFSR from 1922 to 1954, which is 32 years old, and part of the Ukrainian SSR from 1954 to 1991, which is 37 years old, and after another 23 years, part of independent Ukraine. Why is it necessary to consider that the return of Crimea is historical justice and why exactly the period from 1922 to 1954 is taken, the possibility should be to consider Crimea, part of Turkey, as a descendant of the Ottoman Empire, or focus on the treaties and recognition of the borders of 1991, by all countries, including and Russia  
Ukraine and Russia after the annexation

On April 2, 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation sent a note to the Embassy of Ukraine in Russia, notifying them of the entry into force of the Federal Law "On the termination of agreements relating to the presence of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine":

1. Agreement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the parameters of the division of the Black Sea Fleet of May 28, 1997;
2. Agreement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the status and conditions of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine dated May 28, 1997;
3. Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of Ukraine on mutual settlements related to the division of the Black Sea Fleet and the presence of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, dated May 28, 1997;
4. Agreement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the issues of the presence of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine dated April 21, 2010.

[201] And on April 25, 2014, the state border of Russia was established between Crimea and Ukraine [202]

In turn, Ukraine protested against Russia because of the arrangement of this border. [203]

The official position of Ukraine, from the very annexation until today, remains the same. Ukraine does not recognize the annexation of Crimea to Russia and considers the peninsula a temporarily occupied territory [204]

On March 17, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine called on the international community not to recognize the Republic of Crimea, proclaimed by the Supreme Council of Crimea "based on the results of an anti-constitutional referendum held with blatant violations of European norms and standards for holding referendums" [205]

On April 11, 2014, Ukraine joined the individual EU sanctions imposed against several Russian citizens and pro-Russian Crimean politicians, and also banned more than 100

Russian civil servants who supported the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation from entering its territory. [206]

On April 15, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the law "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens and the Legal Regime in the Temporarily Occupied Territory of Ukraine", which stated that the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea is an integral part of the territory of Ukraine, which is subject to Ukrainian legislation [207]

And the Crimeans who received Russian passports, from the point of view of Ukrainian legislation, continue to be considered citizens of Ukraine if they have not renounced Ukrainian citizenship [208]

Most UN member states did not recognize the legitimacy of the Crimean referendum. USA [209], EU states [210], and several other partner countries of the US and the EU [211], as well as several international organizations and associations, including the NATO Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe [212], Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [213], characterized Russia's actions as aggression, occupation, and annexation of part of Ukrainian territory, undermining the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Russia, for its part, refers to the right of peoples to self-determination enshrined in the UN statutory documents, which, according to the position of the Russian Federation, was realized by the population of Crimea, who "rebelled" against the forceful change of power in the country. [214]

Russia's refusal to accept the demands of the Western community led to a sharp cooling of relations with NATO, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the member states of these organizations, and subsequently to the introduction of political and economic sanctions against Russia and several Russian individuals and legal entities and organizations involved in the opinion of Western countries, to destabilize the situation in Ukraine.

### **3.3 Ukraine – Russia Relations under Poroshenko Administration**

#### **3.3.1 The Donbas Conflict**

Following the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, mass protests erupted in eastern Ukraine. Participants hung out the Russian tricolor in public institutions in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Odesa, and other cities.

Ukraine, the USA, and several other states, as well as NATO [216], Council of Europe [216], OSCE Parliamentary Assembly [217], and the European Union [218], accused the Russian Federation of organizing mass protests in the south-east of Ukraine [219], and later - in the use of regular troops in hostilities on the side of anti-government rebels, as well as in the supply of weapons and financial support for the self-proclaimed republics. The Russian leadership has consistently denied these allegations [220], stating that Russia is not a party to the confrontation. [221] The official date of the beginning of the conflict is April 7, 2014, when the acting President of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov, in connection with the seizure of administrative buildings in Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk and the proclamation of the Kharkiv and Donetsk People's Republics, announced the creation of an anti-crisis headquarters and that against those who took up arms, anti-terrorist measures will be carried out. [222]

The pro-Ukrainian population of Donbas has become more active. On March 5, the Day of Civil Resistance to the Russian Occupation was held in the center of Donetsk, which brought together more than ten thousand residents of Donetsk. [223]

Meanwhile, separatists in the Donbas have begun calling for secession from Ukraine. And on March 1, 2014, the Council of the Russian Federation supported Putin's request for permission to use the armed forces in Ukraine. [224]

This was facilitated by Russian propaganda and the vague official position of Kyiv, which was preparing for snap elections after Yanukovich fled Ukraine.

On April 13, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry accused Russia of concentrating troops near the border with Ukraine and announced its readiness to provide evidence of the involvement of Russian special services in the events in the east of the country. [225]

The attempt of the Russian side to present its point of view to the UN Security Council was not successful: many members of the Security Council, based on information from

the Ukrainian side [226], supported the version that Russia is trying to play the "Crimean scenario" once again. [227]

According to the Russian authorities, the protests in the south-east of Ukraine are the result of the unwillingness and inability of the leadership in Kyiv to take into account the interests of the Russian and Russian-speaking population", and to resolve the conflict, it is necessary "to involve all major political forces and regions in a transparent process of developing a new constitution that guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, the federal structure of the country and its non-bloc status. [228]

Sloviansk was the first city in eastern Ukraine to be occupied. It was captured by Russian troops and local separatists on April 12, 2014. [229]

On March 2, 2014, the Luhansk Regional Council voted to recognize the central government of Ukraine as illegitimate. They also voted for holding a referendum on federalization, recognizing the Russian language as the second state language, and banning Ukrainian patriotic organizations. [230]

Polls showed that only a quarter of the region's population would like to become part of Russia, and more than half were in favor of the remaining part of Ukraine. [231]

On April 27, 2014, the separatists proclaimed the so-called Lugansk People's Republic [232], On April 29, the buildings of the Luhansk Regional Council and the city council, as well as the regional television company and the prosecutor's office, were seized by pro-Russian separatists. [233]

Since the beginning of March 2014, the separatists have repeatedly captured the Donetsk regional administration, which was then liberated by the Ukrainian security forces. It was finally captured on April 6, 2014. [234]

The next day, the separatists proclaimed the so-called Donetsk People's Republic. [235]

On April 16, 2014, the city hall was also captured. Armed Russian supporters attacked numerous pro-Ukrainian rallies. On April 28, 2014, the last pro-Ukrainian rally took place in Donetsk.

People attacked its participants in camouflage uniforms with batons, and local policemen only watched. [236]

On April 12, 2014, at 9 am, two buses with several dozen armed Russians drove up to the building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Sloviansk and opened fire into the air. Within hours, they seized weapons from the local department. After capturing police officers (terrorists seized 20 assault rifles and 400 pistols), the Russians built barricades and stormed the local branch of the Ukrainian Secret Service. [237]

Two days later, the terrorists took control of the exits from the city. On April 13, 2014, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine announced the start of an anti-terrorist operation. [238]

From the very beginning, Ukrainian forces were opposed by Russian intelligence services, professional military, and local separatists with Russian weapons. About 300 fighters of the Ukrainian special forces groups Alpha and Jaguar, as well as the 80th brigade and units of the National Guard, headed towards Sloviansk. On April 13, 2014, the first battle took place in the Donbas. [239]

Later that month, the terrorists occupied Kramatorsk and Druzhkovka. [240]

The scenario was similar: mass protests, Russian flags, and the seizure of local police buildings. The Russians also occupied the strategically important Kramatorsk airfield, which was subsequently recaptured by Ukrainian troops. [241]

Under the leadership of the Russian military, local criminal groups brought people from Russia to block Ukrainian military operations in Kramatorsk.

Despite numerous pro-Ukrainian rallies in Donbas, the pro-Russian population forced them out of the regions.

In May 2014, fighting took place in Mariupol, Zhovtnev, Volnovakha, and Rubizhne. In the Lugansk region, the Ukrainian 92nd brigade captured two Russian conscripts - Alexandrov and Yerofeev. [242]

In a few years, people who came by bus to Sloviansk will reveal their faces. One of them will be identified as Igor Girkin, an officer of the RF Armed Forces. [243]

In the future, he will be brought to the Red List as a suspect in the downing of the Malaysian flight MH-17. [244]

Later, in an interview, the fighters of the 4th Panzer Division of the Russian Federation will confirm that they participated in the war in eastern Ukraine. They were members

of the crew of the T-72-B3 tank. This is a special modification of Russian tanks that have never been exported. [245]

Donetsk and Lugansk are unstable regions that always require money and military equipment. The occupation authorities in the east of Ukraine are trying to educate a new generation of Ukrainian citizens according to the canons of Russian propaganda. They only speak Russian, they love Putin, and they sincerely hate Ukraine.

The leaders of pseudo-republics are constantly at war with each other. Pseudo-patriotic rallies are held regularly. The local population leaves the region either for the free part of Ukraine or for Russia. Which country to choose depends on the views of the person. [246]

### 3.3.2 **Downed Boeing**

On July 17, 2014, a Malaysian Boeing 777 flew from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. Onboard were 298 people, of which 80 were children. The plane was in the airspace of Ukraine, in the zone of control of the Dnipropetrovsk air traffic controllers, then the Russian air traffic controllers from Rostov-on-Don were to take over the ship. Less than 2 minutes before entering Russian airspace, the plane was attacked by a Buk launcher. All 298 people died. [247]

First, Russian media announced that the militias were able to shoot down the Ukrainian An-26 [248], but when it became clear that a passenger Boeing had been shot down, the rhetoric of the media changed dramatically, claiming that it was Ukraine that shot down the plane.

The International Joint Investigation Team (JIT) concluded that the airliner was shot down by a surface-to-air missile from the Buk anti-aircraft missile system. [249] from rebel-controlled territory. [250]

According to the conclusions of the JIT, this Buk belonged to the 53rd air defense brigade of the Russian Armed Forces and was delivered to Ukraine from Russia on the day of the disaster, and after the launch of the missile that shot down the plane, it was returned to Russian territory. [251]

The State Prosecutor's Office of the Netherlands accused Russian citizen Igor Strelkov, who commanded the rebel forces in the summer of 2014, and three of his subordinates (two Russian citizens and one Ukrainian citizen) of involvement in the disaster. [252] The trial of the case began on 9 March 2020 at the District Court of The Hague. [253] All parties involved in the conflict in eastern Ukraine deny their involvement in the death of the airliner. [254]

The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and other Russian officials publicly reject the findings of the investigation and deny any involvement in the disaster. [255] The chairman of the Dutch prosecutor's office said that the actions of the accused not only took the lives of 298 people, but also left deep scars on the souls of the living - relatives of the victims and residents of the settlements near which the MH17 crash occurred, and no punishment for the accused will be fair.

According to the investigation, none of the defendants personally participated in the launch of the missile at Boeing. The following are accused of involvement in the plane crash:

- Igor Girkin (Strelkov), Russian citizen, defense minister of the self-proclaimed DPR, retired FSB officer
- Sergei Dubinsky, Russian citizen, retired senior GRU officer of the Russian army
- Oleg Pulatov, a citizen of Russia, Lieutenant Colonel of the Airborne Forces of the Russian Army
- Leonid Kharchenko, a citizen of Ukraine, commander of the intelligence unit of the GRU of the self-proclaimed DPR

Therefore, based on all the evidence that has already been collected and proven, the Dutch prosecutor's office asks for life imprisonment for the accused. [256]

### 3.3.3 Minsk agreements

On August 25, Presidents of Ukraine and Russia Petro Poroshenko and Vladimir Putin shook hands and held talks in Minsk. At this time, a drama was unfolding near the city of Ilovaisk in the Donbas, which will end on August 28-29 with the execution of the military in the green corridor guaranteed to them by the Russian command. [257]



The Russian president, despite numerous evidence of the Russian military presence in Ukraine, said that his country had nothing to do with the fighting in the Donbas. [258] Regular Russian units interrupted the hasty counter-offensive of the Ukrainian army, which lasted from June to August. One by one, the cities were liberated, and the area of the occupied territory was systematically melting on the map. After the breakthrough of the Russian army to Novoazovsk, a new uncontrolled strip appeared on the map in a completely different place, in the south of the Donetsk region. Ukraine has lost part of the Azov coast.

Therefore, on September 5, 2014, the Minsk Protocol (peace plan) was signed, which was supposed to stop the heated conflict.

1. Ensure an immediate bilateral cessation of the use of weapons.
2. Ensure monitoring and verification by the OSCE of the non-use of weapons regime.
3. To carry out the decentralization of power, including through the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On the temporary order of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions" (Law on special status).
4. Ensure permanent monitoring of the Ukrainian-Russian state border and verification by the OSCE with the creation of a security zone in the border regions of Ukraine and the Russian Federation.
5. Immediately release all hostages and illegally detained persons.
6. Adopt a law to prevent the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.
7. Continue an inclusive national dialogue.
8. Take measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Donbas.
9. Ensure the holding of early local elections by the Law of Ukraine "On the temporary order of local self-government in certain areas of Donetsk and Lugansk regions" (Law on special status).
10. Withdraw illegal armed formations, military equipment, as well as militants and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine.

11. Adopt a program for the economic revival of Donbas and the restoration of the region's livelihoods.

12. Provide guarantees of personal security for the participants of the consultations. [259]

Petro Poroshenko commented on the signing of the Minsk Protocol on the same day in Newport, during the NATO summit. The fifth president of Ukraine said that he had instructed the army to observe the truce and stressed that the ceasefire is now the joint responsibility of Poroshenko and Putin. [260]

But as it became clear later, the peace plan did not help, so on February 12, 2015, the Second Minsk Agreements were signed.

The agreement provided:

1. An immediate and comprehensive ceasefire from 00:00 hours. (Kyiv time) February 15, 2015.

2. Withdrawal of all heavy weapons by both sides at equal distances to create a security zone at least 50 km wide from each other for artillery systems with a caliber of 100 mm or more, a security zone 70 km wide for MLRS and 140 km wide for MLRS "Tornado-S", "Hurricane", "Smerch" and tactical missile systems "Tochka" ("Point U"):

for Ukrainian troops - from the actual line of contact;

for armed formations of "separate regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine (ORDLO)" - from the contact line by the Minsk Memorandum of September 19, 2014.

The withdrawal of heavy weapons was to begin no later than the second day after the ceasefire and be completed within 14 days.

3. Monitoring and verification of the ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons by the OSCE using technical means.

4. Starting a dialogue on the modalities of holding local elections by Ukrainian legislation and the Law of Ukraine "On the temporary order of local self-government in certain areas of Donetsk and Lugansk regions", as well as on the future regime of these areas based on this law. Adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of a

resolution indicating the territory to which the special regime applies, by this law, based on the line established in the Minsk Memorandum of September 19, 2014.

5. Adoption and enforcement of a law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons involved in the conflict.
6. Release and exchange of all hostages and illegally detained persons based on the “all for all” principle.
7. Ensuring safe access, delivery, storage, and distribution of humanitarian aid to those in need based on an international mechanism.
8. Restoration of socio-economic ties with the territories, including the payment of pensions and other payments to the population, and the resumption of taxation within the legal framework of Ukraine.
9. Restoration of full control over the state border by the government of Ukraine in the entire conflict zone, which was to begin on the first day after local elections and be completed after a comprehensive political settlement (local elections in certain areas of Donetsk and Lugansk regions based on the Law of Ukraine and constitutional reform) by the end of 2015, subject to the implementation of paragraph 11.
10. Withdrawal of all foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine under the supervision of the OSCE. Disarmament of all illegal groups.
11. Carrying out constitutional reform in Ukraine and the entry into force by the end of 2015 of a new Constitution, which implies decentralization as a key element (taking into account the characteristics of certain regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, agreed with representatives of these regions), as well as the adoption by the end of 2015 of permanent legislation on the special status of certain areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.
12. Coordination of issues related to local elections with representatives of certain districts of Donetsk and Lugansk regions within the framework of the tripartite Contact Group. Conducting elections under monitoring by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

13. Activation of the activities of the tripartite Contact Group, including through the creation of working groups to implement the relevant aspects of the Minsk agreements.

The special status of “separate districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions” was to include, in particular:

1. exemption from punishment, persecution, and discrimination of persons involved in the conflict;
2. the right to linguistic self-determination;
3. participation of local self-government bodies in the appointment of heads of prosecution bodies and courts;
4. state support for the socio-economic development of territories;
5. assistance of the central authorities to cross-border cooperation of the territories with the regions of the Russian Federation;
6. Creation of people's militia detachments by decision of local councils to maintain public order. [261]

The signing of the Agreements evoked the approval of the world community. On February 17, 2015, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution in support of the agreements. [262]

On February 12, 2015, a Declaration was adopted in support of the Agreements [263], which was signed by Presidents Petro Alekseevich Poroshenko, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, Francois Hollande, and Chancellor Angela Merkel. This Set of Measures was approved in the text of the declaration. He was also supported by the President of Ukraine Vladimir Aleksandrovich Zelensky within the framework of the Paris summit in the Normandy format on December 9, 2019, in a communiqué following which it was said: "Minsk agreements (Minsk Protocol of September 5, 2014, Minsk Memorandum of September 19, 2014 and the Minsk Package of Measures of February 12 2015) continue to serve as the basis for the work of the Normandy Format, whose member states are committed to their full implementation." [264]

Also, the leaders and foreign ministers of the Normandy Four countries over the following years have repeatedly stressed that there is no alternative to the Minsk agreements.

According to the report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, prepared based on the results of the work of the UN monitoring mission, from April 14, 2014, to February 15, 2019, at least 3,023 civilians died in the Donbas, and taking into account the crash of the Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 the total number of civilian deaths related to the conflict is at least 3,321. The number of injured civilians is estimated to be over 7,000. The first ten months of the conflict (from mid-April 2014 to mid-February 2015) accounted for 81.9% of all civilian deaths (2,713), and four years after the adoption of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements - 18.1% (608 dead). [265]

Later, already under Zelensky, it will become known that Russia is doing everything that destroys the logic of the Minsk agreements. Recognition of the independence of the "DNR" and "LNR" contradicts the provisions of the Minsk agreements since it is about the recognition of the sovereign territories of Ukraine as independent subjects. And supporters of the rejection of the Minsk agreements remind that Ukraine signed them under pressure from the Kremlin, forcedly, after the invasion of Russian troops in the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, several tragic defeats of the Ukrainian army, and against the background of the threat of a large-scale offensive by pro-Russian separatist forces with the support of the Russian Federation.

Thus, on February 21, 2022, the Minsk agreements will lose their force. [266]

#### **3.3.4 Presidency of Poroshenko**

After the annexation of Crimea and the military conflict in the Donbas of Ukraine, it was clear that new and effective reforms of the Ukrainian army were needed. In 2013, 19 billion hryvnias were allocated for the entire army, which amounted to 2.4 billion dollars [267] when, as in 2019, the military budget amounted to more than 100 billion hryvnias or 3.7 billion dollars. [268]

The total security and defense budget amounted to 210 billion hryvnias or 5% of GDP.

In 4 years, the number of combat units of the Armed Forces has increased, from 99 to 143. And the number of Armed Forces has also increased, from 168 thousand [269] up to 255 thousand people. [270]

The level of trust in the army also increased, from 2013 to 2019, from 21% to 61% [271]

One of the main pillars of the entire policy of Petro Poroshenko was the church, and during his reign, he was able to achieve great results. A canonical independent Orthodox Church appeared in Ukraine, based on the previously unrecognized Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Great efforts were made to ensure that the independence of the Ukrainian church was recognized in the world. [272]

On December 15, 2018, under the leadership of the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, a unifying council was held in Ukraine, at which the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was created and Epiphanius was elected Metropolitan of Kyiv. On January 6, he received the Tomos of autocephaly. [273]

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church, did not recognize the creation of an autocephalous church and called this whole process illegal and non-canonical. [274]

At the very beginning of his presidential term, Petro Poroshenko made the dream of many Ukrainians come true and the work started by Viktor Yushchenko signed an association with the European Union and introduced a visa-free regime.

Ukraine has not received any guarantees to become a member of the European Union, but it has unequivocally decided with whom it wants to build relations, with Russia or with Europe. And the choice in favor of Europe met with great support among Ukrainians.

After signing an association and a free trade area with the European Union, Ukraine changed the vector of its foreign trade. [275]

Up to this point, Russia has been Ukraine's largest and most important trading partner. In 2013, Ukraine exported \$14.7 billion to Russia and imported \$23 billion. When all European exports were \$16.8 billion and imports were \$28.2 billion. [276]

In 2018, Ukrainian exports to Russia amounted to \$3.7 billion and imports to \$8 billion. When both exports to the EU countries exceeded 40% of all exports and, together with services, amounted to \$23 billion, and imports \$26.2 billion. [277]

During the reign of Poroshenko, minimum quotas were set for the Ukrainian language in the media, radio, and television. In turn, Russian social networks, Russian TV channels, and many Russian services and websites were blocked. [278]

### **3.4 Zelensky Administration and Ukraine – Russia Relations before February 2022**

#### **3.4.1 Passport issue**

On April 24, 2019, Vladimir Putin signed a decree allowing residents of Donbas to obtain Russian citizenship in a simplified manner. [279]

Russia claims that the decision was made due to the complete lack of prospects for improving the situation in the conflict zone, the socio-economic blockade of Donbas, and the systematic infringement by the Ukrainian authorities of the basic civil rights and freedoms of the inhabitants of the region. [280]

Later, answering journalists' questions, Putin said that Moscow was considering the possibility of granting Russian citizenship in a simplified manner not only to residents of the DPR and LPR but also to citizens of all of Ukraine. [281]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine protested in connection with the issuance of Russian passports to residents of the LPR and DPR. Ukraine believes that Russia neglects the norms and principles of international law, and also undermines the Minsk agreements. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs demands to cancel the relevant changes in the legislation of the Russian Federation, and from the international community - not to recognize and not accept the documents issued by the Russian Federation to citizens of Ukraine who live in the DPR and LPR. And besides, to increase pressure and expand sanctions "against the aggressor state." [282]

On May 8, 2019, the government of Ukraine adopted a resolution on the non-recognition by Ukraine of passports issued by authorized bodies of a foreign state. [283]

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry called the new decree of the Russian president interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine and a serious threat to security throughout the European continent. Ukraine also demanded to immediately cancel all aggressive decisions against Ukraine and stated that despite numerous statements about the desire to establish peace as soon as possible, the Kremlin, by its actions, demonstrates a frank intention to continue a hybrid war against Ukraine. [284]

### 3.4.2 Zelensky Period

Russian President Vladimir Putin did not congratulate Vladimir Zelensky on taking office. According to his press secretary Dmitry Peskov, President Putin will congratulate Zelensky on the first success in resolving the internal conflict in southeastern Ukraine, as well as on the first success in normalizing Russian-Ukrainian relations. [285]

In his first statements on Ukraine's foreign policy, Volodymyr Zelensky called on the US and the EU to tighten sanctions against Russia to help Ukraine cope with Russian aggression. [286], and also stressed that he was counting on the solidarity of the EU on the issue of countering the implementation of the construction of the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline. [287]

On June 17-18, 2019, Zelensky paid official visits to Paris and Berlin. The talks held here have shown that Zelensky is continuing the course of Petro Poroshenko, adhering to a tough stance towards Russia. One of the main topics of the talks was the cessation of the military conflict in eastern Ukraine. Zelensky said that Europe will not be able to feel completely safe while Russia pretends that international law simply does not exist. Like Poroshenko, Zelenskiy insisted on maintaining diplomatic and sanctions pressure on Russia. [288]

In August, when information appeared about the possible restoration of the G8 and the return of Russia to this informal political club of world powers, Zelensky launched an activity to prevent this. Zelensky called the conditions under which, in his opinion, Russia can expect to retake its place in the "high diplomacy agenda" and be restored to the G8 - this is "the return of the occupied Crimea, the cessation of hostilities in the



Donbas and the release of more than a hundred political prisoners and Ukrainian sailors held by the Kremlin.” [289]

On September 7, an exchange of detainees took place between Ukraine and Russia in the 35 to 35 format. In particular, Russia handed over to Ukraine 24 sailors detained during the incident in the Kerch Strait (November 25, 2018), Oleg Sentsov, Alexander Kolchenko, Pavel Grib, Nikolay Karpyuk, Artur Panov, Roman Sushchenko, Volodymyr Balukh, and Ukraine handed over to Russia Kirill Vyshinsky and Vladimir Tsemakh. [290]

On November 18, Russia handed over to Ukraine the ships that were detained during the incident in the Kerch Strait. [291]

On December 31, a telephone conversation took place between the presidents of Russia and Ukraine. Putin and Zelensky discussed the December 29 exchange of prisoners in the Donbas and the signed gas contract. They stressed the importance of the gas agreements reached, expressed hope for an early ceasefire on the line of contact in Donbas, called for the development of Russian-Ukrainian relations in 2020, and also congratulated each other on the New Year holidays. [292]

In February, speaking at the Munich Security Conference, Volodymyr Zelensky called for the return of the issue of Crimea to the international agenda and the resumption of discussion of this issue. [293]

In the same month, he ordered that February 26 be considered the day of resistance to the occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol since on this day in 2014 a rally was held in Simferopol in defense of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. [294]

At the beginning of 2021, the issue of the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the topic of the return of Crimea to Ukraine, given the lack of progress in the political settlement of the armed conflict in Donbas, finally became the center of the foreign policy efforts of the Ukrainian leadership. In mid-March, Zelensky signed the Strategy for the De-occupation and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, developed by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.

(On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated March 11, 2021 "On the Strategy for the De-occupation and Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol") [295], which states that Kyiv will apply diplomatic, military, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other measures to return this territory. [296]

At the same time, an internal political process was initiated in Ukraine to search for those responsible for the preparation, signing, and ratification of the Kharkiv agreements of 2010, as well as those responsible for the loss of Crimea in 2014. [297]

On August 23, Kyiv hosted the main foreign policy event of the year for the country — the summit of the Crimean Platform — a new international negotiating platform designed to unite international efforts to de-occupy Crimea. [298]

The new Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, signed by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky and published on March 25, 2021, states that at the national level, the Russian Federation remains a military adversary of Ukraine, carrying out armed aggression against Ukraine, temporarily occupying the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, systematically using the military, political, economic, information-psychological, space, cyber and other means that threaten the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. [299]

According to the signed document, the main threats to Ukraine come from Russia, which temporarily occupies part of the territories of Georgia and Ukraine, militarizes Crimea, prevents free navigation in the Black and Azov Seas, tries to keep Belarus in its sphere of influence, uses the conflict in Transnistria and other frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space, as well as building up offensive groupings of troops, deploying new missile weapons and conducting exercises on the western borders and in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. [296]

In April, the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation announced the suspension from April 24 to October 31 in connection with naval exercises of the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea of the Russian Federation for foreign warships and other government ships. Three sections of the Black Sea were closed - along the coast

of Crimea between Sevastopol and Gurzuf, off the coast of the Kerch Peninsula in the area of Cape Opuk, and near the western tip of Crimea. The Black Sea Fleet announced the release of warships to the sea for firing practice. The grouping of the Black Sea Fleet was joined by a detachment of ships of the Caspian Flotilla and 4 large landing ships from the Northern and Baltic Fleets of the Russian Navy. In Ukraine, they announced Russia's attempt "in violation of the norms and principles of international law to usurp the sovereign rights of Ukraine as a coastal state." Russia's actions, according to the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, indicate the absence of any intention on its part to abandon the continuation of aggression against Ukraine using military and hybrid methods. [300]

On April 16, 2021, Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Paris, where he held talks with Emmanuel Macron [301], after which Angela Merkel joined their conversation via video link. The main item on the agenda of the meeting was the issue of "the presence of the Russian military near the eastern border of Ukraine." All three sides - Kyiv, Paris, and Berlin - demanded that Russia withdraw its troops from the border areas, as well as from "illegally annexed Crimea." [302]

### 3.4.3 Escalation of the Conflict

Another aggravation of relations occurred in late October - early November and was provoked by the first combat use of the Ukrainian Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicle. [303]

The message about the use appeared almost simultaneously with the news about the liberation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the village of Staromaryevka on the line of contact of the parties, in which 37 Ukrainian citizens received passports under a simplified program live. [304]

At the same time, publications appeared in the Western media that Russia was again gathering troops to the Ukrainian border. Satellite photos of Russian armored vehicles were cited as evidence. [305]

On November 2-3, 2021, the head of the CIA, William Burns, went to Moscow, where he met with high-ranking officials of the Russian special services. The purpose of the

trip was to convey to the Kremlin Joe Biden's concerns about the situation on the border with Ukraine. [306]

Back in early November, Ukrainian intelligence stated that information about the transfer of additional Russian troops to the Ukrainian borders was nothing more than an element of psychological pressure. [307]

However, a week later, the office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky admitted that Russia was reinforcing troop groups near the border. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba called on Paris and Berlin to prepare for a possible military scenario for Russia's actions in the Ukrainian direction. [308]

On November 21, the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Defense Ministry, Kirill Budanov, reported that Russia had concentrated more than 92,000 troops and Iskander short-range ballistic missile systems near the Ukrainian borders.

Russia wants the Ukrainians to change power themselves, and if this fails, the army will step in. [309]

And also that active actions should be expected in January-February 2022. [309]

Despite Russian assurances that the troops pose no threat [310], she stated that Russian forces will act to protect Russian citizens in Ukraine, and any escalation will lead to the beginning of the end of Ukraine. [311]

Other politicians such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and US White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki made comments, Merkel called Putin to demand that the surge be canceled. [312], and Psaki called the build-up "the biggest since 2014". [311]

At the end of October, the Russian news agency TASS reported on mass exercises in the Astrakhan region involving more than 1,000 personnel and 300 pieces of military equipment using Buk, S-300, and Tor-M2 missile systems. [313]

On December 7, 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin via secure video link regarding a Russian military build-up and rising tensions on the border with Ukraine in response to Ukraine's intention to join NATO, which Putin described as a security threat to Russia. [314]

These tensions also arose with the election of Volodymyr Zelensky, who opposed Russia's encroachment on Ukraine's sovereignty. [315]

During a video conference, Putin said Western military activity in Ukraine was approaching a "red line" and reiterated that he sees it as a threat to Russia's national security. [316]

On December 9, 2021, Joe Biden called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky about tensions in Donbas and internal reforms in Ukraine [317], Zelensky issued a statement thanking Biden for his strong support. [318]

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters that the President's intention during this call was to provide President Zelensky with an update on his telephone conversation with President Putin and to highlight our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Despite these assurances, Biden stressed that the idea that the United States is going to unilaterally use force to counter Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not being considered now, but if Russia invades Ukraine, there will be serious consequences. [317]

US Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, again proposed the idea of tough sanctions at the maximum end of the spectrum and confirmed the possibility of Russia's exclusion from SWIFT, saying that Putin himself, as well as his inner circle, would lose access to bank accounts in the West. Russia will be effectively cut off and isolated from the international economic system. [317]

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz also warned of the implications for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, the Russian gas pipeline project operated by Gazprom under its subsidiary Nord Stream AG 2, which supplies natural gas to Germany. [318]

Ukrainian General Kirill O. Budanov told the New York Times that Ukraine does not have sufficient military resources to repel a full-scale Russian attack if it starts without the support of additional forces and that without the delivery of reserves, no army in the world could resist. [319]

On January 19, 2022, a draft appeal to President Putin was submitted to the State. [320]

On February 21, the heads of the self-proclaimed DNR and LNR, Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik appealed to the President of the Russian Federation with a request

to recognize the independence of the republics, motivating this to determine international legal personality, which would effectively counter Ukrainian aggression and, according to the heads of the republics, prevent civilian casualties. [321]

The issue of appeals from the State Duma and the heads of the republics was considered at an expanded meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, where the recognition of the independence of the republics received full support.

On the evening of the same day, Vladimir Putin made a televised address to the citizens of Russia and signed decrees recognizing the independence of the DPR and LPR, after which agreements on friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance were signed between Russia, the DPR, and the LPR. [322]

As follows from the decrees of President Putin on the recognition of the DPR and LPR, the Russian armed forces were supposed to “ensure the maintenance of peace” on the territory of the DPR and LPR until the conclusion of agreements on friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance. In addition to recognizing the sovereignty and independence of the republics, the decrees instructed the Russian Foreign Ministry to conduct negotiations with the "Donetsk side" and the "Luhansk side" on the establishment of diplomatic relations. Also, the Russian diplomatic department was instructed to conduct negotiations with the participation of interested executive authorities on the preparation of draft agreements on friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance with the DPR and LPR. [323]

On February 24, Vladimir Putin announced that he had decided to conduct a special operation in the Donbas. At the same time, he stressed that the plans of the Russian authorities do not include the occupation of the territories of Ukraine. [324]

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned that Russia was planning "the biggest war in Europe since 1945" as Putin intended to invade and surround the capital Kyiv. [325]

Although Russia has repeatedly denied any plans to invade Ukraine [326]

On February 24, the Russian army launched an invasion of Ukraine, inflicting ground and airstrikes on many parts of the country, including the capital Kyiv. [327]

President Zelensky has announced that Ukraine has severed all diplomatic relations with its eastern neighbor. [328]

### **3.5 Russia's Full-Scale War against Ukraine and Its Effect on Ukraine-Russia Relations**

The pressured Minsk agreements are contrary to the Constitution of Ukraine, international law, and the UN Charter, as they were signed under the pressure of the defeat of Ukraine by the Russian regular army and separatist forces with Russian equipment. In addition, these acts do not have a legally strong signature, they have not been ratified by the Verkhovna Rada - that is, they are not constitutional. [329]

As of February 21, 2022, Russia de facto controlled the territories of the self-proclaimed DPR and LPR. Carried out mass certification

Of residents of the separatist "republics". According to various sources, from 700 to 800 thousand residents of occupied territories of Ukraine received Russian passports, while the total number of residents of territories not controlled by Kyiv is about 1.2 million. [330]

Russia calls passportization a humanitarian mission, but in fact, it has received jurisdiction over these citizens and believes that it has the obligation and authority to represent and protect their interests in any territory. [329]

Which on February 24, 2022, resulted in a full-scale war.

#### **3.5.1 Support for Ukraine**

US President Joe Biden condemned Russia for the "unjustified" attack on Ukraine, promising that the US and allies would respond in a united and decisive manner.

"President Putin has chosen the path of a deliberately planned war that will bring catastrophic loss of life and suffering," Biden said. "Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction that this attack will bring." [331]

He was joined by Boris Johnson, Olaf Scholz, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, and NATO. [332]

After Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, the UN General Assembly held an emergency vote to immediately condemn Russian aggression. The resolution was supported by 141 out of 193 UN member states. [333]

Already on the third day of the war, actions against Russian aggression were held all over the world

In London, including at the Russian embassy and at the doors of Downing Street, 10, as well as in Manchester and Edinburgh, protests of thousands took place. People with Ukrainian flags and posters lined up outside the prime minister's office and chalked drawings and inscriptions were left on the wall of the Russian embassy.

Large demonstrations took place in Israel - a march in support of Ukraine took place in Tel Aviv, on Rothschild Boulevard. According to rough estimates, more than 5 thousand people gathered to participate in the action. Here, some protesters appear to have burned their Russian passports.

In Poland, which has been accepting Ukrainian refugees in recent days, protests took place in several cities. More than 100,000 Ukrainian refugees entered Poland in the first days of the war. [334]

As of March 10, 2022, 14 countries supplied weapons to Ukraine

Germany supplied 1,000 anti-tank grenade launchers and 500 Stinger missiles. The Baltic countries also supplied thousands of weapons, including Stinger and Javelin missiles. The latter is one of the most effective means of combating tanks with a range of up to 2.5 km. Ukraine says it has already successfully destroyed many Russian T-72 tanks with their help. [335]

And on April 10, 2022, Ukraine received military assistance from more than 30 countries, including 1 billion euros from the EU and 1.7 billion dollars from the United States;

NATO members fear that the supply of heavier offensive equipment - tanks and fighters - could lead to direct military conflict with Russia;

This did not prevent the Czechs from transferring Soviet T-72 tanks to Ukraine. [336]

On May 9, 2022, US President Joe Biden signed the Lend-Lease Act into law.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Joe Biden has provided three packages of military assistance to Kyiv worth \$800 million each. On April 28, the US President asked Congress for an additional \$33 billion to help Ukraine.



The task of the lend-lease law is to strengthen the position of Kyiv in peace negotiations with Moscow.[337]

And on May 20, 2022, the United States allocated \$40 billion for weapons and other assistance to Ukraine.

Initially, the President of the United States asked Congress for \$33 billion to help Ukraine, but after discussion, this amount was increased. A significant part of the aid package will be aimed at supplying Ukraine with the weapons it needs to counter the Russian army. [338]

\$6 billion will go to defense assistance (training, equipment, and armaments);

8.7 billion will be used to replenish stocks of American weapons that are sent to Ukraine.

Another \$3.9 billion will be sent to help the US European Command.

American lawmakers have decided that President Biden can quickly send US aid for \$ 11 billion (Presidential Drawdown Authority) without the consent of Congress.

The package also included \$5 billion to address the global food crisis caused by the war in Ukraine; nearly 9 billion in economic aid to Kyiv and about 900 million to support Ukrainian refugees. [339]

Ukraine relies heavily on Western weapons to organize defense and counter-offensive against positions already occupied by the Russian army. With the help of this technique, she hopes to form new units that will be able to oust the Russian army from the Donbas, as well as from the Kharkiv Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

The most significant so far have been deliveries from the United States of 90 long-range M777 howitzers, which are already used at the front and, according to experts, help the Ukrainian army win artillery duels with the Russians. In addition, the United States is sending 16 Mi-17 helicopters to Kyiv - they were originally intended for the Afghan army, but their dispatch was stopped after the Taliban came to power. [340]

“If Ukraine had access to all the necessary weapons that our partners have and are comparable to the weapons that Russia uses, we would have already ended this war,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a speech at the end of April. [341]

The first deliveries of US weapons to Ukraine were even before the start of the war. After, when it became clear that Ukraine was ready to fight to the end and the plan to quickly seize the entire territory of Ukraine failed, the whole world began to help Ukraine with weapons and money. As of May 20, 2022, Ukraine is successfully using the received weapons and now it needs offensive equipment, which has already begun to be delivered.

### 3.5.2 Negotiation Process

On February 24, Dmitry Peskov, press secretary of the President of the Russian Federation, said that Russia was ready for negotiations with Ukraine if the Ukrainian leadership was ready to discuss key Russian demands - a neutral status and renunciation of the deployment of weapons. Speaking about the task of "demilitarizing" Ukraine, outlined by Russian President Vladimir Putin when "announcing the start of a special military operation," Peskov noted that this, of course, means neutralizing Ukraine's military potential, which has recently been significantly increased, including thanks to the activity of foreign countries. [342]

Later, President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko proposed holding such negotiations in Minsk. [343]

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he tried to contact the President of the Russian Federation but did not receive a response. [344]

In the evening, at the request of Zelensky, a telephone conversation took place between the President of Russia and President of France Emmanuel Macron to offer him negotiations, to ask him for negotiations with President Zelensky. [345]

The first round of negotiations between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations took place on February 28, after which the parties parted for further consultations with the leadership. [346]

According to some sources, the Ukrainian side demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops, including from the LPR, DPR, and Crimea. [347]

During the negotiations, hostilities on the territory of Ukraine did not stop. [348]

Second round - March 3rd. The talks were held in the area of the Belarusian-Polish border. At the end of the negotiations, the Ukrainian side stated that "it did not receive the results that it expected." [349]

Shortly before the third round of negotiations, Vladimir Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov, in an interview with Reuters, outlined the main requirements for Ukraine: the cessation of hostilities, the consolidation of neutrality in the Constitution, and the refusal to join any bloc, recognition of the independence of the LPR and DPR, recognition of Crimea as Russian. [350]

The third round of negotiations took place on March 7 in the afternoon in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. [351]

At the end of the talks, Vladimir Medinsky noted that it was too early to talk about something positive. [352]

Mykhailo Podolyak said that some positive results have been achieved regarding humanitarian corridors, but there are no results that significantly improve the situation. [353]

President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky said on the air of the ABC TV channel that he was ready to discuss the issues of Crimea and Donbas, but as part of Ukraine. [354]

On March 10, the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation and Ukraine Sergey Lavrov and Dmitry Kuleba took place. [355]

The meeting took place within the framework of a diplomatic forum in Antalya with the participation of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. At the end of the negotiations, which lasted 1.5 hours [355], Dmitry Kuleba said that the parties failed to agree on a ceasefire. Sergey Lavrov, in turn, said that he was not going to agree to a ceasefire. [356]

Mevlut Cavusoglu noted that no one expected the solution to all problems from this meeting, but it "became an important start." [357]

On March 29, the fourth Russian-Ukrainian talks took place in Istanbul. Following its results, the head of the Russian delegation, Vladimir Medinsky, said that Russia would take two steps to de-escalate the conflict. He noted that Kyiv provided Moscow with confirmation of Ukraine's desire for a nuclear-free and neutral status. Also, according

to Medinsky, the Ukrainian proposals include the rejection of the production and deployment of all types of weapons of mass destruction. [358]

A member of the Ukrainian delegation, David Arakhamia, noted that a new system of security guarantees for Ukraine was discussed at the talks within the framework of an international ratifying treaty. Among the guarantor countries, according to him, are the countries of the UN Security Council, the United States, France, Germany, Canada, Poland, Turkey, and Israel. These same countries, he said, will have to help Ukraine join the EU. [359]

The head of the Ukrainian delegation, Mykhailo Podolyak, proposed holding negotiations on the status of Crimea and Sevastopol for 15 years. At the same time, both Moscow and Kyiv should refrain from resolving this issue by military means throughout this period. [360]

Vladimir Medinsky, in turn, said that this does not correspond to the Russian position. [361]

The attention of the international media was drawn to the fact that Israeli-Russian businessman Roman Abramovich took part in the negotiations. [362]

On May 17, 2022, Mikhail Podolyak, adviser to the head of the office of the President of Ukraine, announced that the negotiation process had been suspended for today. After the Istanbul meeting, there have been no changes, no progress. On the Russian side, Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko noted that negotiations were not continuing. Ukraine withdrew from the negotiation process. In no way do they go. According to Rudenko, no response was received from the Ukrainian side to the Russian draft treaty. [363]

In turn, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the UK and the US of influencing negotiators from the Ukrainian side to prolong the conflict and inflict heavy losses on Russian servicemen. [364]

The position of both negotiating groups directly depends on the situation at the front, therefore, when Ukraine realized that it could successfully resist the Russian army on the battlefield, it was decided to suspend the negotiation process and concentrate on the de-occupation of its territories.

### 3.5.3 Refugee Crisis

Since February 24, 2022, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as of May 20, 2022, more than 6.4 million Ukrainian refugees were forced to flee Ukraine, and about 7.7 million became internally displaced persons. [365]

By March 20, more than ten million people had left their homes in Ukraine - about a quarter of the country's total population. [366]

Due to restrictions on the exit from Ukraine of males of military age from 18 to 60 years, 90% of Ukrainian refugees are women and children. [367]

According to UNICEF, by March 24, 2022, more than half of all children in Ukraine (approximately 7.5 million) were forced to leave their homes, of which approximately 1.8 million became refugees in other countries. [368]

The Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II and its aftermath, the first of its kind in Europe since the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, and one of the largest migration crises in the world in the 21st century, with the highest the rate of refugee flight in the world. [369]

The main destinations for refugee migration are neighboring countries to the west of Ukraine: Poland, Romania, Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia, and Germany. At the same time, Poland accepted more refugees from Ukraine than all other European countries combined, as of May 20 - more than 3.4 million people. Some refugees then moved further west to other European countries or outside the EU. Part of the migrants entered Belarus and Russia. [370]

For the first time in their history, officials of the European Union and individual states have discussed the application of the "Temporary Protection Directive" so that refugees do not have to go through the standard asylum procedure in the European Union. [371]

Railway companies in several countries, including Germany and Austria, allow Ukrainian refugees to travel by train for free. [372]

On March 4, US authorities announced that they would grant Ukrainians who arrived in the country before March 1 the status of "temporarily protected persons" for 18 months. [373]

The number of refugees may vary in different sources, and official data may differ from the actual state of affairs. In particular, this is due to the large flow of Ukrainian migrants who can enter some countries without a visa, as well as the lack of border control within the Schengen zone. Before the invasion, Ukrainians had the opportunity to stay in EU countries for up to 90 days, but later some countries extended this period. Migrants of different nationalities who have previously lived in Ukraine and have applied for protection status can receive a temporary residence permit for one year with the possibility of extension. [374]

Already on the first day of hostilities, about 100 thousand people were forced to leave their places of residence. [375]

On the third day since the start of the Russian invasion, 368,000 people left Ukraine [376], and on the fifth - already 600 thousand. [377]

In total, more than a million people left Ukraine in the first week of the war. [378]

Most emigrated to neighboring countries, especially Poland, Moldova, and Romania. [379]

So, on March 4, almost half of all those fleeing hostilities crossed the Ukrainian-Polish border. [380]

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees at the beginning of March assumed that more than 4 million people would have resettled from Ukraine by July. Of these, 1.5 million were expected in Poland, 250 thousand each in Romania and Hungary, 100 thousand in Moldova, and 60 thousand in Slovakia. [381]

However, only in the first 5 weeks of the military conflict, a quarter of the population of Ukraine was forced to leave their homes. And already on March 29, more than 4 million people left the country, and another 6.5 million were displaced within the country. Thus, this migration crisis was the largest resettlement in the European region since the Second World War. [382]

After the return of cities under the control of the Ukrainian army, many refugees, mostly men, return to Ukraine to help their country in difficult times. [383]

Thus, the patriotic mood of the population rises significantly and the fighting spirit of the Armed Forces of Ukraine rises, which inexorably brings victory closer.

### 3.5.4 Regional Repercussions of the War

The war launched by Russia against Ukraine brings us more and more of its horrific evidence, but we already have its military-political consequences.

With the withdrawal of their peacekeepers from Nagorno-Karabakh, the expected happened, and the Azerbaijani army came in their place. [384]

It seems to be a local event, but in fact, it shows the loss of this month by Russia, its very status in the region.

Firstly, a discussion about historical justice, about the true ownership of the lands, since this can go far because every country has historical grievances. In Kazakhstan, for example, they may decide that since Russia can seize territories based on historical rights, no one bothers to challenge the sovereignty of Uzbekistan over Karakalpakstan, because it was in the Kazakh SSR in the early 1930s. [385]

In response, Uzbekistan will announce claims to all of southern Kazakhstan, because in the 19th century, the possessions of the Kokand Khanate included Shymkent and Turkestan. [386]

Kazakhstan will respond with a claim to Tashkent since in the 17th century this city was the residence of the Kazakh khans. [387]

This senseless controversy will continue for a long time until someone decides, following the example of Putin, to win this dispute by force. Then another, protracted, violent conflict awaits us, where many people will die.

Secondly, the whole world learned what the Russian army is like. It's huge, but it's completely useless. Ukraine, which 8 years ago experienced the actual exclusion of lands, including budget-significant industrial territories, which is experiencing big problems with the economy, which, as a result of the frozen conflict, was cut off from the arms market for many years, has been successfully resisting the Russian army for more than three months, stopping its advance and inflicting horrendous losses.

Not far away there is, for example, Azerbaijan, a very resourceful petrocracy with an abundance of oil money, with a modern army that has already shown itself in the Karabakh conflict, with a powerful ally, a NATO member, Turkey behind its back. This, of course, does not mean that Turkey will fight for Azerbaijan and involve the

entire alliance in this matter, but this implies access to weapons and technologies of modern warfare, and most importantly, Azerbaijan is an autocracy, Aliyev is not Biden or Scholz, he does not depend on voters and he understands the price of Putin and his threats, he understands that Putin will not throw a nuclear bomb on Baku, in defense, even of the whole of Armenia, that everything will remain at the level of formidable statements and a ban on imports. The entire combat-ready Russian army is concentrated in Ukraine, it showed its combat capability there. There is no opportunity to open a second front with Azerbaijan now, will the moment be better to resolve the smoldering conflict, and for one to strengthen your power?

What Ukraine does not have or almost does not have, for example, combat aircraft or air defense systems, Azerbaijan has in abundance. What role of a regional policeman, what role of a conflict pacifier can we talk about with such an army. It is worth noting that at least Azerbaijan does not claim anything other than Nagorno-Karabakh, at least now and at least publicly. But just to the east, not far from the borders with Russia, there is such a country - Afghanistan, the Americans recently left there and the Taliban seized power again. The Russian government does not officially consider the Taliban to be terrorists. [388], although they are precisely terrorists, with medieval ideas about the structure of the world and an irresistible desire to spread these ideas as widely as possible, next to the Taliban, there are former Soviet republics: Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, a little further - Kazakhstan. By itself, none of these countries will be able to resist the Taliban. All hopes for security in this region have traditionally been associated with Russia, not for anything that Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan are members of the CSTO. [389]

It was expected that the expansion of the Islamists in Central Asia if it happened, would be stopped by the Russian army, and this was also expected by the Taliban themselves, who are now very closely following what is happening in Ukraine and drawing conclusions. The current state of affairs creates huge risks that the whole region will fall under the influence of religious fanatics and the emergence of Islamic formations in Central Asia, near the borders with Russia.



In the early 1990s, when Russia ceased to cope with the police function in the region, religious radicals took control of most of Tajikistan. Then the Islamists, with the support of the Taliban, turned an ordinary, inter-clan conflict into a bloody massacre lasting 5 years, it claimed tens of thousands of lives and threw back a poor post-Soviet republic to the level of the poorest countries in Africa.

It is naive to believe that the Taliban, seeing the current weakness of Russia and [390] the Russian army, will not try to create a couple of new states in the north, living according to Sharia law.

Fergana massacre 1989 [391], Osh massacre 1990 [392], pogroms in Uzbek Andijan 1990. [393]

All these hotspots and more may flare up again because it has become clear that there is no longer a force in the region that can stop them, or not yet, because China is not far away, which may like the idea of taking control of the Central Asian part of the former great silk road. But everything is not limited to Central Asia, except for Nagorno-Karabakh [394], there is Georgia in Transcaucasia, and Georgia has an unresolved problem with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. [395]

By the way, the Russian contingent from the South Ossetian base has already been fully or partially sent to fight in Ukraine. Then there is Moldova and Transnistria [396], you can also remember Japan, claiming the Kuril Islands [397], and in Russia itself there are enough territorial disputes, for example, between Chechnya and Ingushetia [398], now the case is being decided in favor of Kadyrov, who is supported by the federal government, but everything can change in a moment and lead to bloodshed.

Everyone who could still be under the illusion found out that the country that claims leadership in the entire post-Soviet space not only does not have the real strength to provide this leadership but knows absolutely nothing about this region.

At a time when Russia, 2% of the world's GDP violates the rules and decency, the leaders of countries whose economy and military power exceed Russia's by an order of magnitude, only express concern. [399]

It is very easy to create a new world order, in a world where decent countries do not fight.

The rules in the world are set in order not to kill each other. When a country defiantly violates the rules of good neighborliness, then you need to remember that others can play this game.

Ukraine is an independent country that can and wants to choose its president, solve its problems, and not be influenced by Russia. The fact that historically Ukraine and Russia are neighbors is indisputable. These are 2 different peoples, with a common history, but different values and courses of development. Everyone has the right to their opinion and no one can limit others in this pursuit

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. CONCLUSION

Following Russia's initiation of full-scale war against Ukraine, it is difficult to predict the future of Ukrainian-Russian relations. They will never return to the level before 2014 and even before February 24, 2022, but the territorial position of the countries cannot be changed, therefore, although Ukraine has severed all diplomatic relations, they will have to be restored. This work has been divided into mainly two periods before and after 2014 and includes the reign of various presidents and turning points in Ukrainian history. It describes the way how the Russian Federation with an ethnic and culturally close nation to Ukrainians turned out to be the most unwanted country among the Ukrainians. It uncovers how the Kremlin officials misused the common history and culture between Ukraine and Russia for their imperial ambitions.

In the early 1990s, when Kravchuk ruled the country, the countries were closely connected and worked to maintain a high level of friendship which was supposed to benefit both sides. This had been realized despite Russia's systematic allegations on certain regions of Ukraine and put political pressure on Kyiv. Starting with Kuchma and after the Orange Revolution, this pressure increased significantly and economic problems appeared. It was also the time of the first encroachments on Ukrainian territory. Despite The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine was concluded, Ukraine gradually moved away from the position of an ally and was already on the way to neutral relations with Russia. It was expressed in the armed conflict in Georgia, where Ukraine supported the latter, caused the wrath of Russia.

Following Yushchenko, the new president of Ukraine became Yanukovich, the most pro-Russian one, in its entire history. Treaties that are very important for Russia were immediately signed, including the Kharkiv agreements, which significantly weakened the position of Ukraine. At the same time, the attitude of the West, which previously supported Ukraine in its desire to integrate with it, has cooled

significantly. When Yanukovich refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union, the Ukrainian people could not stand it and went to the Maidan, which ended in a bloody revolution, but the goal of this movement was fulfilled, and the president was changed. Against the backdrop of the Euro-Maidan, Russia was afraid of losing its spheres of influence in Ukraine. Therefore, it first annexed Crimea and then supported an extremely violent conflict in the Donbas of Ukraine, (Donetsk and Luhansk regions).

Poroshenko's presidency began with the reformation of language, faith, and the army. Since the majority of Ukrainians did not want to favor relations with Russia, Ukraine had to completely isolate itself from a large part of the services that it received from Russian society and companies. The armed conflict was supposed to end with the Minsk agreements, but both sides understood that this would not happen. Although the level of tension gradually subsided, the forcibly separated regions became a new tool of leverage for Russia.

After the election of Zelensky, the situation did not change at all, the conflict gradually faded away. That is why Russia decided to escalate this whole tragedy and as a result, without any reason and without any purpose invaded Ukraine. To support his rating, Vladimir Putin unleashed a war in the center of Europe, violated countless treaties and agreements, and killed many Ukrainians and Russians. Only history will show the full scale of the damage done to both countries and both peoples. Russia's global isolation has hit its economy hard. In turn, the Ukrainian economy has been almost incapacitated it is barely functioning thanks to its allies, without them the economy could collapse completely. The Allies selflessly support Ukraine, both financially and militarily, to fight the invaders and restore peace and tranquility to these lands.

Following the brutal and injustice war, it seems that Ukraine and Russia can not repair their relations for a long time. The path from ally to the sworn enemy has been passed and it can no longer be turned. When arrogance subsides, power will change in Russia and more than one year will pass, perhaps the Ukrainians will be able to restore relations with the Russians, and from the rank of sworn enemies, they will

transfer the latter to a neutral rank. History has repeatedly shown that Ukraine should not be friends with Russia, it has never ended well.

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## APPENDIX

The relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine do not only concern the domestic affairs of these countries but has also great repercussions in the regional and international realm. Therefore, it is of great importance to examine Russia-Ukraine relations. The thesis titled *Ukraine - Russia Relations before And after 2014* written by Kyryliuk Artem grasps the whole picture of the relations between these countries. The thesis aims at answering the question of how the relations between Ukraine and Russia have developed since the 1990s. It investigates the main factors which formulated Ukraine-Russia relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union. By analyzing the period before and after 2014, Kyryliuk mainly seeks to answer the question of why Ukraine-Russia relations deteriorated and finally ceased to exist. After examining the Ukraine-Russia relations in two different periods, this thesis reveals that the main reason why the relations between these two countries have deteriorated is that Moscow cannot accept Ukraine's independent foreign policy. In this context, the thesis unveils that Russia has always been inclined to interfere in Ukraine's domestic issues and tried to limit Kyiv's aspirations for integration with the Western world, which eventually led to Russia's large-scale war against Ukraine. In this regard, *Ukraine - Russia Relations before And after 2014* would be a highly good starting point for those who wish to examine the relations between the Russia-Ukraine.

Consequently, as an undergraduate thesis, this work is well written and organized. I believe it is a satisfying study that may enable an international relations student to obtain a bachelor's diploma.

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