

# **MILITARY CONFLICT IN UKRAINE: UKRAINE'S AND WORLD'S CHALLENGES**

**Ivan PANKEVYCH**

E-Mail: [ipankevych@gmail.com](mailto:ipankevych@gmail.com)  
Professor, Faculty of Law and Administration,  
University of Zielona Góra, Poland

**Iryna SLOVSKA**

E-Mail: [slovska@ukr.net](mailto:slovska@ukr.net)  
Professor, Institute of Law,  
National University of Water and Environmental Engineering,  
Rivne, Ukraine

## **Abstract**

This article studies the sources and the development of the military conflict in Ukraine. It is widely accepted that a conflict is a natural state for the human society, but the nuclear threat hanging over the world has made the problem of national and international security much more topical and urgent. Different countries try to solve conflicts peacefully using political means. The struggle for the natural, human, territorial, financial, economic, information, humanitarian and other resources is one reason for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. An ideological split is another cause for the act of war between these two countries. The war in Ukraine can be classified as a hybrid that includes the use of the protest potential of the population, accompanied by the covert military operations with the implementation of the adversarial informational methods and the special operation forces. The scope and negative after-effects of the military conflict are specified including the killed, the wounded, the annexed territories, the ruined industry and social infrastructure. The prolonged tactics of the conflict solution can bring it to the “frozen state” that automatically dooms the European and NATO perspectives of Ukraine for an indefinite period and can even result in the loss of Ukrainian sovereignty.

**Key words:** *military conflict, hybrid war, military intervention, annexation, sovereignty protection, Ukraine-Russian conflict.*

## Introduction

Every historical epoch is specified with ideological struggle. Defending the political course of the national and social development does not always take place in the peaceful environment for the controversial issues solution. The problems of the prevention of military conflicts, global and environmental safety support, and poverty reduction do not exhaust the list of threats hanging over the human civilization. Taking into account all these complicated multi-faceted challenges in the world arena, every country has to guarantee military-strategic and humanitarian balance, using its own efforts and resources as well as soliciting the help of international safety and security institutions.

The foreign policy of the country preconditions its position in the international legal sphere. It is widely known that the international-legal position of the country is based on the same principles as the national political course and has the same aims as the geopolitics on the whole (Tunkin, 1970, p. 307-308). Peaceful development plans based on the principles of mutual aid and support, rejection of global or local war propaganda, and impeding the nuclear proliferation can provide safety for both leading democracies and those that are just at the beginning of their democratic development.

The creation of nuclear and other mass destruction weapons significantly changed the balance of political forces in the world. Lack of credible deterrents for the aggressive foreign diplomacy of some countries affect the formation of the international environment that would be favorable for social and military conflict resolution. Contemporary wars that use modern weapons cannot bring positive results in achieving any political goals. Human and material casualties will always be many times higher than the campaign results. Possible disastrous effects can become a real warning for those that strive for global or regional supremacy. Besides, the use of totally new weapons and military means make the solution of world problems absolutely unreasonable, in particular when it concerns historical conflicts between Western-minded and Eastern-minded progress values or socialist and capitalist ideas.

Of course, human coexistence is naturally prone to conflicts that accompany the entire history of our civilization. Confrontation of judgements, competition of different viewpoints with the impossibility of compromise evidence the further social, political and ethnic crisis growth in any society (Dahrendorf, 1988, p. 13; Bernard, 1951, p. 243; Kriesberg, 1982, p. 17; Konstitutsionnoye pravo, 2002, p. 450). But significant changes in the balance of power in the world arena in favor of the “nuclear” countries with their powerful military potential leaves no chance for peaceful conflict resolution with no control over the performance of international safety contracts. In such a case, we do not mean a conflict as a dynamic phenomenon with the positive regulative influence, as a stimulator and a driving power for social and political changes (Coser, 1968, p. 79). All the forms of confrontation acquire the characteristic of a threat. Conflict can no longer be considered a permanent social state and the lack of conflict is not an unnatural extrinsic social situation that some experts consider a strange “reason for suspicions” concerning the

unrevolutionary way of the development of civilization (Dahrendorf, 1970, p. 127).

The threat of nuclear war hanging over the world made the problem of international and national safety protection more topical. Life as a human right must be in the center of any theoretical discussion and the practice of state-building must apply various forms of political struggle instead of military conflict.

It has been proved that the conflict is never closed till there is a subject for an obvious or hidden misunderstanding. It is important to avoid direct confrontation of hostile entities as achieving the liquidation of hotspots of tension can be quite possible over the longer term.

The antithesis of war and peace is today the main antithesis that is discussed in society. The possibility or impossibility of a new global war has become quite an unexpected problem for many countries. Politicians are searching for possible actions to be implemented to support global safety, but they cannot find any. Social organizations also feel quite bewildered and confused. The strong belief that highly-developed countries and global institutions can save the world from the threat of new global wars seems to be an illusion. The European Union arose from the ruins and horrors of the World War II, though currently there are some technical opportunities and endeavors of some countries to exceed these horrors. Military conflicts and wars arise in different parts of the world without any official declaration.

It is quite symbolic that the conflict between Ukraine and Russia arose and is developing and can be considered the nerve center of the recent years in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Despite the declaration of democratic values in the Constitution, the USSR did not translate these values into action. The governing ideology of those times did not teach that a political system and its institutions need to function in accordance with the ideals of real democracy and sovereignty. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) that had no analogue to the western parliamentary parties was the only unit that had a governmental monopoly. The "leading and guiding force of the Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system" (Part 1, Article 6 of the Constitution of USSR) levelled the problem of values and democratic state structure (Nikolaev, 2010). The ideological split between the countries of the entire Communist bloc beyond the Soviet Union and the western liberal countries complicated the development of the national leaders that might have tried to implement real democratic traditions capable of any reforms.

All the growing discrepancies between the "fossilized", authoritarian and centralized country like Russian Federation (RF) and Ukraine, a country that aspired to pursue pro-European civilized development and breakthrough in the social state, made the political situation more strained. Rejecting the post-war experience of peaceful conflict resolution, RF used the contrived pretext and military intervention as a way to resolve international conflicts. In fact, a political conflict turned into a military one. Non-recognition of freedom and democracy as the highest national political values became the basis of returning

the world agenda to the problems of war and peace and the reallocation of sovereign territories.

Every person, including the political leaders, must respect the democratic principles that should be common for the state and the society. This can give growth to the common supra-national values that can, at a critical moment, stop the conflicts from arising between the states and between the nations (Krizis tsennostey, 2016).

Taking into consideration the topicality of the conflict problem, especially when it concerns the military conflict in Ukraine, the polemical character of this research, its scientific and practical value, the works of Ukrainian and foreign scientists, public leaders and experts were analyzed. In addition, this article studies the military conflict in Ukraine, its background and effects, the specific role of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine in their struggle with the aggressor with regard to the legal instruments available. A wide range of documents were used as a theoretical basis for this work to attract special attention to the pressing and complicated problem of the process of the formation of the modern state of Ukraine.

### **Military conflict in Ukraine: on terminology**

The military conflict in the South-East of Ukraine has taken place during the last six years (2014-2020). Ukrainian law interprets the term “military conflict” with regard to its legal status. Thus, the Law of Ukraine “On National Security” specifies a “military conflict as a form of international or national controversy with bilateral use of armed forces; war and armed conflict are named as forms of military conflict” (Part 1, Article 1 of the Law). Such a definition corresponds with the position of some academics. Giddens says that military conflict is an armed conflict is a real military struggle between the political entities irrespective of the forms of the warfare, types and means mobilized by every party of the conflict (Giddens, 1989, p. 198).

The concept of a declaration of war is an important war indicator though it is not the only one. The declaration of war is usually accompanied by the following significant features: 1) breaking diplomatic, consular, trade, economic, cultural and other relations between the countries; 2) cancelling any peacetime contracts and treaties except for the ones regulating the warfare or concluded specially in the event of war; 3) installing a special legal regime of the partial limitation of rights; transformation of the entire political system that starts performing some specific functions preconditioned by the war and aimed at the victory; 4) warfare in some territory (land, naval or air) that is named the theater of hostilities or the theater of war that has a potential for the development of hostile activities (Mezhdunarodnoye pravo, 1994, p. 349-350). Thus, a war is a social-political phenomenon that is the most acute form of the settlement of social-political, economic, ideological, national, religious, territorial and other controversies between the countries, nationalities, nations, classes and social groups by means of armed violence (Voyenni konflikty, 2004, p. 10).

The Law of Ukraine "On the National Security" explains that a military conflict is an armed conflict between the countries (international armed conflict or the conflict on the state border) or between hostile parties within one territory (non-international or internal armed conflict) usually supported from outside (Part 7, Article 1 of the Law).

An armed conflict is characterized by a high involvement of the local population with lethal results, the implementation of irregular paramilitary forces or militant groups, the wide implementation of sabotage and terrorist means, complicated moral-psychological environment of the warfare, involuntary diversion of forces and means to support displacement routes, regional and encampment safety as well as the risk of transformation into the local (international armed conflict) or the civil war (internal armed conflict) (Siryy, 2006, p. 124-134).

Though the situation in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions and the Crimea meets the definition and characteristics of the internal military conflict, the real situation provides the evidence of a real war, though of a hybrid character, without an official war declaration. Nowadays, the term "war" is more often applied to the situation that cannot be qualified as an armed conflict. For example, information war, ideological war, war on terrorism (Ladynenko, 2009, p. 136-150; Nikitin, 2018, p. 55-56). With the beginning of the hybrid war, the governmental authorities are given much greater powers and the power becomes more centralized. Ideological government machinery caters to the military aims and the economy is reorganized, partially or totally, for the military purposes. Material and moral powers of the state become more concentrated (Siryy, 2006, p. 132).

The Chief of the General Staff of RF, General V. Gerasimov explained the concept of hybrid war at the meeting of the Academy of Military Science in 2010 as follows: "The accent of the confrontation methods applied shifts to the wide use of political, economic, information, humanitarian and other non-military instruments with the involvement of the protest potential of the population. That is supplemented with the hidden military activities, including the media war and special forces involvement. The evident use of military forces usually starts at a definite stage often under the pretext of the peacemaking activities and crisis management to achieve the final success in the conflict" (Lyutkene, 2010, p. 171).

The studies and projects of the General Staff were obviously applied the theories the former White Russian emigre E. Messner that have been distributed in Russia since 2006. The researcher framed the concept in accordance with which the future wars would be fought over the "national minds and spirits" instead of fighting over territories and resources. These would be rebellious wars or "wars of aggressors", i.e. these would be the conflicts or special operations aimed at the national and social fights and disinformation. In fact, these would be psychological wars and their methods would imply provoking tension and propaganda activities. "Special purpose troops" or specially trained units for unconventional activities are the most useful in such wars. The result of such wars is never achieved on the battlefield.

The army is mostly used to terrify the population and the military forces of the potential enemy instead of discouraging the adversary forces (Mysli E. Messnera, (n.d.); Chupriy, Zahrebelnyy, 2017, p. 67).

The war in Ukraine is aimed at the world repartition. This war is latently in the phase of the local colonial wars and has not turned into the global nuclear conflict yet, due to the fear of the nuclear weapons and unacceptable damage from the responsive attack. In addition, and most importantly, the pre-war geopolitical situation has not yet been formed (Voznyak, 2013).

### Reasons of military conflict in Ukraine

The reasons for the warfare can be quite different. In Ukraine, it started through artificial reasons that were officially declared by the aggressor. In reality, the gropolitical background becomes important. For example, during three months after the Crimea was annexed by Russia, V. Putin appeared three times in public with the resume on the military campaign in such Ukrainian regions as Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol. On March 18, 2014 he addressed the members of the State Duma and the Federal Council. On April 17 of the same year the President gave a large press-conference. On July 1, he addressed the ambassadors and plenipotentiaries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conclusions he presented are summarised in the following table:

March 18	April 18	July 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Common history and common honor</li> <li>- The historical territory of South Russia</li> <li>- Reunification of the divided Russian nation</li> <li>- Correcting historical injustice</li> <li>- Life of Russians and Russian speaking people in the hostile, non-democratic and uncivilized environment</li> <li>- Response to deprivation of Russians of their historical memory, their forced assimilation and 20-year crisis in Ukraine</li> <li>- No legitimate power in Kyiv</li> <li>- Threats of repressions and punitive operations</li> <li>- Appeal of the Crimeans to protect them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Threat to the Russian speaking population</li> <li>- Wish of the local population</li> <li>- Saving the money for the fleet management in Sevastopol</li> <li>- Potential for shipbuilding and repairing in the Crimea</li> <li>- Source of pride and glory</li> <li>- Russian assistance for Ukraine for hundreds of billions of USD</li> <li>- NATO expansion to the East</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arbitrariness of militant nationalists and radicalists</li> <li>- Restricted access to the Black Sea area</li> <li>- Supposed arrival of NATO into the Crimea</li> <li>- Shift in the force balance in the Black Sea region (strategic position of the Crimean Peninsula)</li> <li>- Possession of the area conquered since the times of Peter the Great</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Kosovo case</li> <li>- No armed resistance</li> <li>- NATO expansion to the East</li> <li>- Rude, irresponsible and unprofessional Russia-restricting policy of the West</li> <li>- Sovereignty of Russia and its interests in Ukraine</li> <li>- Striving of the Russian World for the re-establishment of unity</li> <li>- Respect to the territorial integrity of Ukraine</li> <li>- Inadmissibility of the banderization of the Crimea</li> <li>- Strategic position of the Crimean Peninsula</li> <li>- Threat of NATO for the South of Russia</li> <li>- Wish of the local population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Correcting historical injustice</li> <li>- Ethnic makeup of the Crimea</li> <li>- Supposed arrival of NATO into the Crimea</li> <li>- Response to the West in terms of defence missile talks</li> <li>- Strategic position of the Crimean Peninsula</li> </ul>	
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The comparison of speeches elucidated two main reasons of annexation that were declared in all the three cases:

1. Strategic position of the Crimean Peninsula.
2. Response to the hypothetical arrival of NATO troops to the Crimea.

According to Putin, the Ukraine - European Union Association could cause, at a conservative estimate, about 100 billion RUB damage to the Russian economy and some sectors of the Russian industry and agroindustrial complex would find themselves at the risk of negative effects with regard to economic growth and public employment (Rossiya riskuyet, 2014).

If Russia could annex the Ukrainian territories by force it would have a chance to get possession of the Ukrainian resources and pretend for the superpower status (Kaspruk, 2019). Thus, one of the warfare reasons was the struggle for the human, territorial and financial resources. As a result of the annexation of the Crimea, the Kremlin obtained control over the oil and gas production and fossil fuels transportation to Europe. Today, oil and gas are mainly produced at the drilling platforms in the Black and the Azov Seas that were declared "nationalized" by the new government of the Crimea. By expert estimates, the prime cost of the offshore oil and gas production is 1.7-2.5 times higher than the Siberian analogues in Russia but it can be compared to the transportation price to this region at the world prices. Russia is interested in the unexplored and potentially large hydrocarbon resources in the region (Ryzhkin, 2014).

Contrary to the Crimea that has no great industrial potential, the Eastern Ukraine is an industrial and mineral mining region of Ukraine.

In 2013, Donetsk region provided about 18% of the total industrial production in the country with the 10% population of Ukraine. Coal and steel industries were the main manufacturing sectors. Non-ferrous metal industry, salt production, chemical industry, various machinery manufacturing, metalworking, glassmaking and building materials manufacturing are also well-developed.

Donetsk region also has the best developed railway network in the former Soviet Union. The greater part of electric power is provided at the coal power stations and wind farms.

Most enterprises of Donetsk Coal Basin are in the territory of Donetsk region. The development of Donbas resources took place from east to west; that is why the most perspective coal fields are now in the west though anthracite is mined in the eastern part of the region.

Mining industry supplies the raw materials for the regional enterprises as well as provides for the most needs of the metal industry of the country in the non-metallic minerals (dolomite, fluxing limestone, fireclay, moulding sand). Besides, one of the biggest mercury deposits in the former USSR was developed in Horlivka that is now the biggest in Ukraine.

Luhansk region is one of the top-five industrial-economic regions of Ukraine. This area concentrates about 4.6% of the main funds of the country and about 5% of labor resources.

The region has a multi-industry potential with the accent on the heavy industry. Fuel and energy complex is the leader of the industry with the key role of the mining industry and coal enterprises. The region also has powerful oil refinery facilities, railway facilities production, metal-cutting machinery production, calcined soda, synthetic resins and plastics, windowpane and cardboard production (Gusev, 2015; Slovsk, 2020, p. 214-215).

Thus, there were no armed conflicts or human losses in the Crimea. RF did not annex the Crimea by force but it provided the background for the pseudo-referendum and further annexation with the help of special forces and the army (Larionov, 2014; Pankevych, 2018, p. 202-203).

As of February 26-27, 2014, according to the official staff data, there were a total number of 20,315 Ukrainian military personnel and the uniformed services in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. This number takes into consideration all the units and the manpower of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and all the governmental authorities that had the rights and instruments to exercise the powerful functions such as prosecution authorities and the judiciary.

These forces of the Ukrainian Army included 13,468 militaries, 2,560 of the National Guard, 1,860 of the State Border Service, 1,614 of the Security Service of Ukraine (officers), 527 of the Department of State Guard and 274 of the State Space Agency of Ukraine.

From February through May 2014, only 6,010 of the 20,315 militaries had arrived in the mainland Ukraine including 3,990 of the Ukrainian Army, 1,177



of the National Guard, 519 of the State Border Service, 242 of the Security Service of Ukraine, 20 of the Department of State Guard and 61 of the State Space Agency of Ukraine. 14,062 troops did not arrive at their permanent stations and stayed in the occupied territory of the Crimea including 9,500 of the Ukrainian Army, 1,386 of the National Guard, 1,350 of the State Border Service, 1,372 of the Security Service of Ukraine, 500 of the Department of State Guard and 507 of the State Space Agency of Ukraine (Matios obnarodoval, 2016).

About 16 airdromes with the military equipment and service infrastructure as well as about 40% of the aircraft fleet of Ukraine were left in the Crimea. 189 military units and institutions of the Military Forces of Ukraine joined Russia.

Such a quick reversion of the Ukrainian troops over the Russian command might be attributed to several reasons. First, as of 2014, during 23 years of Ukrainian independence, combat effective military units had been turned into the scrap iron depots, the best military staff had been lost and the property had been sold and filed away in storage as the army management and maintenance during peaceful times seemed burdensome to the state budget.

Second, after the Revolution of Honor (November 21, 2013 through February 2014), the entire governmental system, including the army, was demoralized and there was much talk among the Ukrainian militaries in the Crimea about the legitimacy of the new authorities, including the military. The uncertainty of future army service made the militaries feel even more demoralized. With the deepening of the economic crisis, the declarations of the new government about the lack of money in the budget and the possible cuts of some budget items (including the military ones) as well as the arrears in the salaries and financial aids payment to the Crimean militaries for over 1.5 months, the main staff of the Military Forces of Ukraine expressed more and more discontent and disapproval. At the same time, Russian propagandists agitated the Ukrainian militaries to join the Russian army. The Russian arguments were quite strong: stability and high financial standards. For example, the salary of a Russian lieutenant is about 1,200 USD, the highest salary for the post-Soviet countries and can be compared to the salary in the Israeli army (from 1,200 to 1,800 USD). At the same time, the Ukrainian lieutenant made about 180 USD per month.

Third, a great number of the militaries of the Ukrainian Army were the locals. They did not want to leave the Crimea and were favorably disposed to Russia. There is significant evidence of campaigning on the part of the locals and of the families on the Ukrainian militaries pressing them to move to the Russian authority.

There is one more aspect. Many people in Ukraine saw Russia as a USSR successor and they saw nothing tragic or unexpected in annexing the Ukrainian territories to Russia (Ryzhkin, 2014; Kak Rossiya, 2018).

The above reasons for the annexation of Crimea are relevant in explaining the conquest of Donbas by Russian troops. This region was one of the "the most Russian" in the national composition of the population due to Holodomor or

Terror Famine – the real act of genocide of the Ukrainians organized by the Soviet government by means of creating an artificial mass famine in 1932–33. According to some historians, about 3,941 million people died in Ukraine (except for the western regions, the Crimea and South Bessarabia that did not belong to Ukraine at those times but are the parts of it nowadays). Russians and other nationalities arrived instead of the died and the deported (mass ethnic cleansing in pre-war, war and post-war period of World War II). They had no mental relationship with this area and brought their culture and language to the new territories (Holodomor, 2018; Blednov, 2008, p. 295; Shurhalo, 2019).

Economic (powerful industrial area), political (reluctance of Ukraine to join NATO and the EU) and ethnic reasons (pro-Russian sentiment due to the majority of non-Ukrainians by nationality) served the rapid advance of the Russian troops in Donbas and their support by the local people.

### **Military conflict realia**

The Crimea is a separate administrative unit of Ukraine that was annexed for the Russian Federation at the beginning of 2014.

The war came to Donbas starting in March when anti-government protests expanded and turned into the seizure of the administrative buildings in Luhansk and Donetsk and other places of these regions. People called for the organization of so-called Luhansk and Donetsk “people's republics”.

On April 12 the armed combatants, under the command of the former Russian military Igor Girkin, seized Sloviansk in the Donetsk region. Olexandr Turchynov, who at that time was acting as the President of Ukraine, declared the beginning of the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) in the east of the country.

In 2014, Ukraine and the Ukrainians felt the need for the Ukrainian army, though the combat effectiveness of the army was quite a low level at that time, due to 23 years of total corruption, plundering and ageing of the equipment and facilities and the staff cuts. Ukrainian men took up arms voluntarily and many volunteer battalions were created. Many people were recruited to the Ukrainian Military Forces and the National Guard revived.

At the same time, the combatants seized most of the cities of Donbas. The Ukrainian troops tried in vain to bring the border with two RF regions under control. The occupied territories were quickly packed with Russian-made heavy weapons. Tank and armored vehicle convoys moved freely across the Donbas steppes.

During the summer of 2014, ATO forces wrested Mariupol from the enemy, regained control over Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and other places in Donbas. The combatants occupied Donetsk and Luhansk and Ukraine lost control over the border between the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Russia.

On July 17, 2014 the separatists shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 over the separatist-controlled part of Donetsk region, killing 298 people (Viyna na Donbasi, 2019). This was tantamount to a war crime.

The dynamics of the conflict development is always marked with the changes of the character of the conflict. It can develop more or less positively but the conflict settlement trends are often complicated in this case: the conflict

situation gets worse and worse that is usually known as a conflict escalation. The fight for a definite status, power, material and human resources ends with the full or partial satisfaction of the aims of the stronger adversary. At the time of detente, as soon as the adversary's aims are neutralized, the contradictions between people and social groups become settled (Coser, 1967, p. 8).

Russian aggression against Ukraine with the violation of the provisions and principles of UN Charter caused 13 thousand killed (about 4-5 thousand of them were militaries) and 28 thousand wounded (Russia Occupied). After the conflict became less intense, the number of civilians killed considerably reduced. By the estimates of the United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights, the share of the civilians killed in the conflict in 2014 made 33-34% whereas it was 10-11% in 2018 (Miller, 2019).

The annexation of the Crimea, making Donbas a battlefield and further aggressive expansion to the Azov and Black Seas and the Kerch Straits, resulted in the occupation of 44 thousand sq.km. or 7% of the territory of Ukraine including the Crimea and the eastern parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Over 1.8 million of the residents of the Crimea and Donbas (as for August 2018) had to leave their homes. Ukraine lost about 13% of its population through their residing in the temporarily occupied territories.

International organizations speak of 2 million refugees, over 40 thousand ruined residence buildings, schools and hospitals. There is no exact data for missing people. Official statistics mention over 400 missing, whereas the International Committee of the Red Cross mentions a number that is four times greater.

Ukraine modified and increased its army to twice its pre-invasion size - up to 255 thousand people. It received American Javelins and launched the production of its own missiles. Still, it almost lost the Azov Sea area. The port blockade caused great losses to the industry of the region. Last year experts spoke of approximately 100 billion USD losses (Tysyachi pogibshikh, (n.d.).

As a consequence of the warfare, Ukraine and Russia broke their scientific-technical and military bonds which caused the need for closed-cycle production of basic weapons and military equipment in Ukraine by means of technological infrastructure innovations at the existing enterprises and the launch of new Ukrainian and international defence enterprises in cooperation with other countries.

It has become obvious that the liberal world order is becoming a thing of the past. A further hybrid war against Ukraine this year will result in the gradual depletion of the country while there is the possibility of dilution/cancellation of international sanctions against Russia. Under these circumstances, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict settlement requires the search for new and more fair-minded solutions. Delaying the conflict settlement will surely result in the "frozen conflict" that automatically dooms the European and NATO prospects for Ukraine for an indefinite term and can even cause the chance of Ukrainian sovereignty loss (Rossiya okkupirovala, 2019).

## Conclusions

The military conflict in Ukraine has lasted from at least 2014 to 2020. The Russian Federation violated the principles and standards of international law and annexed the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and some parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Considerable human and material losses is the price Ukraine paid for its endeavors to become a part of the western world.

About a century separates us from the days when the Bolshevik regime led by V. Lenin eliminated Ukraine and implanted the new type of democracy - "the democracy of the working class" that became the beginning of mass terror against all nationalities and ethnoses that populated the former Russian Empire. Fanatics of the Revolution eliminated separate social groups trying to found a new Soviet great state. The current warfare became an extension of this Russian-Ukrainian confrontation.

In the new reality, post-Soviet "democratic" Russia is trying to "swallow up" Ukraine applying the methods of so-called hybrid war, for which we were not ready. This aggression manifests itself through the use of the conventional armed forces, special operation forces and non-traditional forces, the military element. Civilian element includes political, ideological, information and economic activities.

The military conflict in Ukraine is marked with war crimes, violation of human rights and crimes against humanity. This became possible because of the systemic preparatory measures Russia applied during the dozens of years before the immediate conflict, including the work of the security services, elimination of the defence by the pro-Russian staff, ideological propaganda, bribery, blackmail, mass murders and deportations of the Ukrainian population and populating the territories with Russians that wanted to return to their ethnic motherland (so-called "ethnic cleansing").

For the present, the Russian-Ukrainian war is on the agenda of both Ukraine and other world countries. The undeterred aggression allows for another redrawing of the political map of the world due to the contrived ideological, language or religious confrontation, forwarded by the Kremlin. Any social conflict turns into the warfare for the purpose of the radical reformation of the present political order with a resulting geopolitical tragedy.

All intentions of the people of one country or another to change the policy offered by the national government and parliament should not be realized in the form of military conflict, which might well be followed by active intervention by an outside element, such as the Russian special services.

For Ukraine, the loss of the Crimea and the "frozen conflict" in the Donbas region has had serious negative internal political consequences. At the same time, the war united the nation, for which the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, voluntary units and mass volunteer movement are fighting.

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