

The Ukrainian Crisis and its Impact on Security in the Central Asian Region

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ABSTRACT

In the article is introduced the essence of Ukrainian crisis, its causes and consequences, the behavior of individual international actors, as well as the reaction of the rest of the world community.

The material contains assessments of international experts, representatives of individual countries and international organizations regarding the state, dynamics and prospects of processes due to the Ukrainian crisis. There are also possible options for the development of a critical situation, its impact on the situation in the countries of Central Asia.

KEYWORDS: unpredictable geopolitical prospects, foreign policy, tension, withdrawal, mobilization, refugees, infrastructure, wave of separatist sentiments, the practice of checks and balances.

Introduction

The ongoing events as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict are characterized by forcing an atmosphere of interconnection in the world, creating prerequisites for unpredictable geopolitical prospects for the countries of Central Asia.

Thus, over the past few years, the priority vector of Ukraine's foreign policy has been accession to the EU and NATO, which is also included in the corresponding provision in the Constitution. At the same time, Russia categorically opposes such actions, fearing threats in its direction.

Against the backdrop of rising tensions in the region, at the end of 2021, the Russian Federation will put forward a number of security demands to the United States and other NATO members, including a call to refrain from building up military potential to the east and withdrawing weapons from Eastern Europe. These requirements were not taken into consideration.

On February 19 this year, President of Ukraine V. Zelensky, in his speech at the Munich Conference (Germany), announced a possible withdrawal of the country from the agreements of the Budapest Memorandum, which provide for Kyiv's abandonment of the nuclear arsenal in exchange for security guarantees from the signatory countries (Russia, the USA and Great Britain) .

Main Part

These statements were perceived by the Russian Federation as the intention of the Ukrainian side to obtain nuclear weapons. On February 24 this year, Russia recognized the independence of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), the Luhansk People's Republic

(LPR), referring to Article 51 of the UN Charter, the sanction of the Federation Council and announced a "special military operation" on the territory of Ukraine.

Such a decision of the Russian Federation is justified by the need to ensure security in the DPR/LPR within the framework of the agreements reached. The main goal of the military operation is "demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine." Third countries are warned by Russian Federation about the negative consequences in case of intervention.

Russian troops entered Ukraine from the territory of the Russian Federation and Belarus, units of the DPR and LPR joined the fighting. Advances have been launched in four main directions - from the north to Kyiv, from the northeast to Kharkov, from the southeast from Donbas and from the south from Crimea.

President V. Zelensky declared martial law in the country and general mobilization of citizens, signed a decree on the International Defense Legion. Combat units have been formed in the regions, mainly at the expense of Belarusian volunteers, Russian prisoners of war and others who have expressed a desire to go over to the side of Ukraine.

In turn, the leadership of the Russian military command gave permission to foreign volunteers (more than 16 thousand) to fight on the side of the DPR and LPR. The selection of recruits with experience in combat operations in the urban environment of the Russian Federation is also carried out on the territory of Syria, including through the private military company Wagner.

Russia noted the taking under its control of the island of Zmeiny, Genichesk, Novaya Kakhovka, the Kakhovskaya hydroelectric power station, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, and the resumption of water supply to the North Crimean Canal. Declared control over 93% of the Lugansk region, 54% of the Donetsk region, as well as over the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions, blocking the cities of Kiev, Kharkov, Chernihiv, Sumy, Nikolaev, etc.

At the same time, Western officials denied the progress in the offensive of Russian troops on Kharkov and others due to the counter-offensive of Ukraine. The control of the territory of the Kyiv region by the Ukrainian side and achievements in the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Sumy region are actively proclaimed.

According to the German publication DW, Russian military formations continue to attempt to seize the territory of a neighboring country. So far, about 12.8 million people in Ukraine have left their homes. At the same time, it is impossible to verify the statements of representatives of the parties to the conflict from independent sources.

Earlier, the UN disseminated information that since the beginning of the military conflict, about 1.8 thousand people have died in Ukraine; over 2.5 thousand civilians have been injured. The Russian troops also carry out missile strikes on residential complexes, hospitals and other objects of the social infrastructure of Ukraine. Under these conditions, more than 4.5 million refugees left Ukraine.

According to updated data, now such figures exceed 6 million people. UNHCR stressed that more than half of Ukrainian citizens who left the country are in Poland. 3,272,943 refugees crossed the borders of this country, Romania - 895,828, Russia - 785,348, Hungary - 583,066, Moldova - 459,546, Slovakia - 409,527 and Belarus - 27,308.

The financial and economic magazine Forbes (USA) notes that 9 million Ukrainians are away

from home, of which 4 million are abroad, 5 million are inside the country. The proportion of migrants and internally displaced people who returned home is estimated at 25%

At the same time, according to the director of the Institute of Demography of Ukraine E. Libanova, the total number of refugees is actually overestimated: people are counted both in the country of the first border crossing and at the moment they receive documents in the next state.

The military operation initiated by Russia in the direction of Ukraine was negatively perceived by most countries and international organizations. The UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution (voted by 141 countries), according to which, the Russian Federation was recognized as an aggressor country, called for the immediate withdrawal of troops.

The International Criminal Court in The Hague is considering the issue of investigating possible war crimes on this basis.

European experts in international law regard the reference of the Russian Federation to Article 51 of the UN Charter as incorrect. It is emphasized that it is intended for self-defense against direct aggression and protection of other member countries of this international organization. LPR and DPR are not members of the UN. This interpretation is shared by representatives of the OSCE, the UN Secretary General.

After the massacres in the city of Bucha, Ukraine, President V. Zelensky accused the Russian Federation of the genocide of Ukrainians. The Holocaust Memorial Museum in Auschwitz (Poland), the Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington), the International Association of Genocide Researchers, and the United Jewish Community of Ukraine criticized this country.

European countries, Japan and others continue to impose anti-Russian sanctions. In particular, Sovcombank, VTB, VEB, Sberbank, Promsvyazbank, Alfa-Bank, Rostec, Uralvagonzavod fell under such restrictions. They also affected the Aeroflot airline. The United States limited the export of technology to the Russian Federation by 50%.

Great Britain, among others, announced sanctions against relatives of Russian President V. Putin. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the said country, L. Truss, stated that the sanctions are aimed at the shadow network of the Russian leader that supports a luxurious lifestyle. At the same time, he added that the United Kingdom will continue sanctions "against all those who incite Putin's aggression until Ukraine wins. "

The US Treasury has compiled a list of 50 citizens of the Russian Federation, the sanctions control over which will be carried out in a priority mode. It has the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin, Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Lavrov, Minister of Defense S. Shoigu, businessman O. Deripaska, Deputy Chairman of the Investment Council under the Chairman of the State Duma K. Dmitriev, as well as a member of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly from Dagestan S. Kerimov.

In addition, the American authority imposed personal sanctions against the heads of Sberbank, 27 top managers of Gazprombank, Moscow Industrial Bank and its subsidiaries. They are now banned from entering the US. The sanctions also affected the Russian TV channels Channel One, Rossiya 1, and NTV.

Along with this, visa restrictions were imposed on more than 2.6 thousand officials from the Russian Federation and Belarus, including the military and bankers. The measures taken are

motivated by their involvement in human rights violations and ongoing attempts to undermine the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

In response to this, the Russian side imposed sanctions against representatives of the US leadership and persons associated with them. According to the published information, on the basis of reciprocity, the list includes President J. Biden, Secretary of State E. Blinken, Secretary of Defense L. Austin, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff M. Milley and others.

According to a statement circulated on this occasion, "this step was the result of the Russophobic course taken by the current US Administration, which, in a desperate attempt to maintain American hegemony, has staked, discarding all decency, on ... containing Russia."

At the same time, Russia imposed personal sanctions against the top leadership, parliamentarians and "anti-Russian figures" of Canada. Most of the deputies of the House of Commons of the Canadian Parliament, other so-called "aggressive pro-Bandera elements" (over 300 people in total) fell under the restrictions.

The German edition of DW, referring to the statement of an anonymous high-ranking government official in the structure of the European Union, disseminated information about the transition of Russia's invasion of Ukraine into the phase of a war of attrition.

Ukraine is regularly fed by Western countries (Great Britain, the EU, the USA, etc.) with the necessary military equipment and ammunition, which motivates it to further confrontation with the Russian Federation. At a press conference held in Brussels, NATO Secretary General J. Stoltenberg stated that the members of the alliance provided assistance to Ukraine in the amount of about \$8 billion.

Ukrainian troops are currently using heavy weapons received from foreign partners at the front. In addition to anti-tank, anti-aircraft missile systems "Javelin" and "Stinger", there are American 155-mm howitzers in service. According to the Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine A. Malyar, negotiations are also underway to accelerate the pace of receiving assistance.

The latter noted that "... the next stage of the war will be "complicated and lengthy", ... the Russian Federation has enough resources and equipment, which allows it to mobilize people into the army, "which can be done in the coming weeks." Thanks to the available stocks of weapons, the Russian Federation can afford to wage a "long war."

The United States is stepping up pressure on the Russian Federation, despite the growing risk of the conflict going beyond Ukraine. May 9 this year US President John Biden signed the law on Lend-Lease for Ukraine. It is assumed that this step will significantly speed up the supply of American weapons to Ukraine. Moreover, the bill will enable the US administration to provide military equipment to Ukraine up to and including fiscal year 2023, and, if necessary, to other countries of Eastern Europe.

According to experts from the American edition of The New York Times, the Lend-Lease law signed by J. Biden "reflects historical echoes and a reversal in the current war." "President Franklin Roosevelt originally signed the Lend-Lease Act in 1941 to help the British repel Nazi aggression in World War II, which was later expanded to help the rest of the Allies, including the Former Soviet Union. However, in the current lend-lease law in defense of democracy in Ukraine, all kinds of assistance will be oriented towards countries that are fighting exclusively against the Russian Federation.

In an interview with CNN, American Senator Democrat B. Cardin noted that the lend-lease law is a kind of signal to European and other US allies. According to him, “this law will allow us to provide Ukraine with the necessary equipment to defend against Putin’s aggression in a timely manner” ... that they need to further increase their efforts at a time when we hope to find ways to ensure that Ukraine succeeds in this military operation. .

The prominent philosopher N. Taleb (USA) expressed the opinion that the current war will exacerbate confusion among Russians and their supporters in understanding the state as a nation in the ethnic sense and the state as an administrative unit. A state that wants to base its legitimacy on cultural unity is doomed to hostility from others. The disintegration of the Russian Federation into separate entities is also not ruled out.

He noted that the EU countries have plans to abandon Russian oil in the next few months. In his opinion, these measures will lead to a reduction in state revenues in the Russian Federation, which will cause a wave of separatist sentiments among Russians and actualize the mood in the Russian regions to secede from a single federal state.

According to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine V. Oгрыzko, the collapse of the Russian Federation was inevitable even before the full-scale war with Ukraine. Recent events have accelerated the likelihood of a trend towards further Kiev-centricity of Western countries, as well as bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The current conditions and other related problems contribute to minimizing the volume of international trade, rising food and energy prices, and provoking economic stagnation. In turn, it creates an atmosphere of unpredictability for the countries of Central Asia in geopolitical and other respects.

In the Central Asian countries, members of the EAEU (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, there has been a certain collapse of the national currency and a fall in the stock market. Due to interconnectedness, the situation also affects other regional subjects of international law.

From the point of view of the economy, Tajikistan is significantly connected and dependent on the Russian Federation. In terms of foreign trade turnover, Russia occupies the first place for it. In 2021, the trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$1.352 billion. Moreover, the current situation or the imposition of sanctions against the Russian Federation, where there are more than a million Tajik migrants, will have a significant impact on the Tajik economy.

The continuation of the conflict provokes the suspension of a number of joint ventures with Russian capital, jeopardizes the prospects for the operation of the TALCO plant, which accounts for about 75% of all foreign exchange earnings to the state budget and 1/3 of the country's exports. Postpone plans for a joint air defense (AD) system.

Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, as well as Uzbekistan are considered a significant Russian economic and political partner. Uzbek exports to Russia amount to 2.05 billion dollars (12% of the total), imports - about 5.45 billion dollars (21%). About 2.2 million Uzbek labor migrants work in the Russian Federation, remittances are carried out in the amount of more than 7-8 billion dollars a year.

Due to the deterioration of the economic and other situation in the country due to sanctions, enterprises in Russia that operate at the expense of labor from Central Asia may close. This

will lead to a change in migration policy on the part of the Russian Federation to provide its citizens, including refugees with jobs. These conditions will lead to the return of a significant part of labor migrants, which will aggravate the situation associated with unemployment.

At the same time, it is noteworthy to note that the desire of the Russian Federation, headed by V. Putin, to expand its geopolitical hegemony by all available means, poses a potential threat to the sovereignty of the states of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. In this context, V. Putin's statements regarding the lack of the state history of Kazakhstan, as well as his statement that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, "one or another republic received a large number of traditional Russian historical territories as baggage" raises suspicion.

Considering that the Russian Federation, when invading Ukraine, aimed primarily at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the countries of Central Asia will need to rethink interaction and cooperation in this regard through the prism of repeating a similar scenario in their region.

The available materials allow us to conclude that, regardless of the outcome of hostilities, the Russian Federation will find itself in diplomatic isolation and under the pressure of comprehensive sanctions. This circumstance, due to the proximity of borders, economies, as well as the well-established relations and other objective reasons, will affect the geopolitical situation in the Central Asian countries.

It seems possible that the failure of the Russian military campaign in the Ukrainian direction will lead to a change in the palette of interregional and interstate relations in the post-Soviet space, also calling into question the prospects for the functioning of military-political and economic associations under the auspices of Russia, including the CSTO and the EAEU.

The precedent on the basis of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict may lead to a revision of the integration processes in Central Asia in order to strengthen the regional security system. It is possible that the most mutually beneficial regional projects will emerge on the basis of existing associations.

As the Russian Federation recovers from the situation in Ukraine, the importance of the United States, European countries, China, Japan, as well as individual other states of the Asia-Pacific region may increase for the CA region, trade and other ties through Azerbaijan further to Turkey, etc. may be updated. (Commodity flows through the Caucasus region).

Due to the direct correlation of NATO's position with the political ambitions of the United States, it is possible to increase the priority of their cooperation with the Central Asian republics, which is beneficial due to the availability of opportunities to use the logistical and economic (raw material) potential of the region, as well as to solve other strategic tasks.

Conclusion

In terms of ensuring stability in the region, the Central Asian countries will need to build a perspective for further actions using the emerging opportunities for maneuver in the foreign policy space by diversifying interaction and introducing the practice of checks and balances. At the same time, it will be necessary to take into account the specifics of the interests and foreign policy of world / regional players (primarily the Russian Federation, China, the USA, Turkey, the countries of the Islamic belt, etc.), in the economic, military-strategic and other spheres.

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