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## THE 2008 RUSSO-GEORGIAN WAR THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE UKRAINIAN POLITICUM

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the research is to characterize the Ukrainian political community's reaction to the armed conflict in Georgia (2008) comprehensively, to determine the range of problems that were most often raised by the Ukrainian political elite in the public discourse in the context of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. The methodology of research is based on general scientific and special historical methods (a complex of problems related to the vision of the Ukrainian political community of military events in Georgia (2008). The methodological basis of the article consists of the principles of historicism, consistency, scientific pluralism, objectivity, systematicity, and comprehensiveness. In the research there have been widely used a number of theoretical methods, in particular (comparative, dialectical, structural and functional), which allowed to reconstruct the historical process as a symbiosis of facts in their integrity and historical connection. The scientific novelty of the research: the position of the President of Ukraine and the “democratic coalition” regarding the 2008 Russo-Georgian War have been critically analyzed; the suggestions of the opposition political forces (the Party of Regions, the Communist Party of Ukraine) regarding the situation settlement in Georgia at the height of the hostilities have been considered; the efficiency of Parliament's actions and the attitude of the leading*

factions to the events in Transcaucasia have been determined. **The Conclusion.** The unprecedented actions of the Russian Federation in relation to Georgia, which in 2008 carried out a full-scale invasion of the territory of a sovereign state, caused a heated discussion among the Ukrainian politicians. Pro-government political parties led by the President of Ukraine V. Yushchenko criticized Russia's actions sharply and called on the world public to help resolve the military conflict. Political parties that were in opposition to the authorities after the Orange Revolution limited themselves to theoretical calls to stop the bloodshed, criticized the authorities for involving the state in the military conflict, taking into account the latter's critical attacks on the Russian Federation and the aggravation of the problem of the aggressor's Black Sea Fleet on the Crimean Peninsula. After Russia's invasion of Georgia, many politicians predicted further escalation in the Russian-Ukrainian relations and the inevitability of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

**Key words:** Russo-Georgian War; Ukraine, political elite, President of Ukraine, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, armed aggression

### РОСІЙСЬКО-ГРУЗИНСЬКА ВІЙНА (2008) У ВІЗІ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО ПОЛІТИКУМУ

**Анотація.** *Мета статті* – всебічно охарактеризувати реакцію українського політикуму на збройний конфлікт у Грузії (2008), визначити коло проблем, які найчастіше порушувала українська політична еліта у суспільному дискурсі у контексті російсько-грузинської війни. **Методологія дослідження** комплексу проблем, пов'язаних із візією українським політикумом військових подій у Грузії (2008), базується на загальнонаукових та спеціальноісторичних методах. Методологічну основу статті становлять принципи історизму, послідовності, наукового плюралізму, об'єктивності, системності та всебічності. У дослідженні широко використано низку теоретичних методів, зокрема (компаративний, діалектичний, структурно-функціональний), які уможливають реконструювати історичний процес як симбіоз фактів у їх цілісності та історичному зв'язку. **Наукова новизна статті:** критично проаналізовано позицію Президента України та “демократичної коаліції” щодо російсько-грузинської війни; розглянуто пропозиції опозиційних політичних сил (Партія Регіонів, Комуністична партія України) щодо врегулювання ситуації у Грузії у розпал воєнних дій; визначено ефективність дій парламенту та ставлення провідних фракцій до подій на Закавказзі. **Висновки.** Безпрецедентність дій Російської Федерації щодо Грузії, яка у 2008 р. здійснила повномасштабне вторгнення на територію суверенної держави, викликала жваву дискусію серед українського політикуму. Провладні політичні партії на чолі з Президентом України В. Ющенком гостро розкритикували дії Росії, закликали світову громадськість посприяти у врегулюванні військового конфлікту. Політичні партії, які після Помаранчевої революції перебували в опозиції до влади, обмежувалися теоретичними закликами до припинення кровопролиття, критикували владу за втягування держави до військового конфлікту, зважаючи на критичні випадки останньої на адресу Російської Федерації та загострення проблеми перебування Чорноморського Флоту агресора на Кримському півострові. Чимало політиків після вторгнення Росії на територію Грузії прогнозували подальше наростання ескалації у російсько-українських відносинах та неминучість російсько-української війни.

**Ключові слова:** російсько-грузинська війна, Україна, політична еліта, Президент України, Верховна Рада України, збройна агресія.

**The Problem Statement.** The Ukrainian political elite always paid attention to the epoch-making military and political events in Transcaucasia, which received a wide response in Ukrainian socio-political opinion. The so-called “five-day war” in Georgia (2008) was not an exception. The state's political elite, mass media, public opinion leaders, regardless of ideological beliefs, had their “own recipe” for solving the military problem, tried to teach lessons for the Ukrainian state, because many experts directly connect the events of 2014 with the Russo-Georgian armed conflict on the Crimean peninsula – de facto, the President of the

Russian Federation V. Putin realized his impunity, convinced himself of the “irreversibility” of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO), which demonstrated its inability to respond to the challenges of today promptly.

**The Analysis of Recent Research Papers.** Partially, the military and political events in Georgia (2008) became already the subject of scientific interest of the Ukrainian researchers. In scientific papers, (see H. Perepelytsia “Genesis of Conflicts in the Post-communist Space of Europe” (Perepelytsia, 2003). Chief focus is on the milestone periods of the military conflict in Georgia, in the majority of cases with an emphasis on the political components. Numerous researchers (O. Zvezdova (Zvezdova, 2016), O. Brusylovska (Brusylovska, 2011), S. Troian & A. Kyrydon (Troian & Kyrydon, 2017), P. Chernyk (Chernyk, 2011), D. Solomko (Solomko, 2020), V. Machulskyi (Machulskyi, 2012), I. Habro & A. Kurilenko (Habro & Kurilenko, 2021) and the others) were dedicated to the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space. The war in Georgia is often considered by scholars in the context of the so-called “frozen conflicts” (I. Zelmanovych (Zelmanovych, 2016), O. Alieksieichenko (Alieksieichenko, 2013) and the others). There are diverse publications which focus on the informational component of the Russo-Georgian war in Ukrainian scientific opinion (V. Savintsev (Savintsev, 2009), Yu. Liebidieva (Liebidieva, 2018), O. Hapeieva (Hapeieva, 2017), A. Shumka (Shumka, 2009), L. Pavliuk (Pavliuk, 2012), N. Mutina (Mutina, 2009), N. Nechaieva-Yuriichuk (Nechaieva-Yuriichuk, 2011), P. Artymyshyn (Artymyshyn, 2018), S. Vidnianskyi (Vidnianskyi, 2020), O. Pokotylo and O. Nashyvochnikov (Pokotylo & Nashyvochnikov, 2021), I. Soliar (Soliar, 2022), A. Sorokivska-Obikhod and I. Chobit (Sorokivska-Obikhod & Chobit, 2022) and the others.

Nevertheless, for the time being there is no comprehensive scientific study in Ukrainian historiography, which focuses on the 2008 Russo-Georgian War through the prism of the Ukrainian political community, despite considerable work done by Ukrainian scholars in the context of the studied thematic niche. The source basis of the article is materials from the periodical press (printed, online media), memoirs, sociological studies. **The main purpose of the research** is to characterize the 2008 Russo-Georgian War through the prism of the Ukrainian political elite’s analysis.

**The Results of the Research.** The 2008 Russo-Georgian War stirred up the Ukrainian society, splitting it into sympathizers of Georgia and the Russian Federation. The political elite of Ukraine had also its vision of the events in Transcaucasia. The President of Ukraine V. Yushchenko was perhaps the first official of our state to react to Russia’s armed aggression, who did not hesitate to support the President of Georgia M. Saakashvili, and strongly condemned the actions of the Russian Federation, unlike European leaders. The President’s Secretariat was convinced that the war in Georgia was not a local conflict and, probably, “the time-tested principle “the right of the stronger” will be applied, as it happened in Kosovo, and as it is happening in Georgia...” (U SP perekonani, 2008). Central authorities led by V. Yushchenko tried not only to express verbally “the concern about the actions of the aggressor country”, but also to provide moral and psychological assistance to the Georgian people, as it was evidenced by the President’s visit to Georgia on August 12. Yushchenko also emphasized that “the ball is on the Russian side of the field now” (Zlaz, 2008), therefore European countries should resolve the issue of the conflict on the territory of the Georgian state as soon as possible (Zlaz, 2008).

On August 13, 2008, in order to avoid “Ukraine’s involvement into the international conflict” (Yushchenko zaiavyv, 2008), V. Yushchenko signed two decrees that regulated

the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the Crimean Peninsula (a new procedure was established for the crossing of Ukraine's border by the military personnel, military ships and aircraft of the Russian Federation) (Samar, 2008). On August 15, 2008, the press service of the President of Ukraine once again disseminated his comment on the situation in Georgia. V. Yushchenko's basic position was that Ukraine should consider the threat to the territorial integrity of Georgia as a possible threat to its own territorial integrity (Yushchenko: *Dopustyty reviziiu suverenitetu Hruzii*, 2008). It should be noted that such statements were usually not approved by the allies and opponents of the President of Ukraine, who considered it impossible to destabilize the situation in the Crimea according to a scenario similar to the one in South Ossetia (Nalyvaichenko, 2008).

Due to the propaganda by the pro-Russian mass media in Ukraine, the statement about the Ukrainians' participation in the Russo-Georgian War, the President of Ukraine, V. Yushchenko was forced to make a statement in which the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as noted by the Internet resource "RBK-Ukraine", was "ready to support any international investigation into the participation of the Ukrainian citizens in the Russian-Georgian conflict" (V. Yushchenko *zaiavliaie*, 2008). In particular, the President of Ukraine noted the following "this is a big lie [participation in the conflict on the Georgian side – auth.]" (V. Yushchenko *zaiavliaie*, 2008).

We should add that during the Russo-Georgian War the sociological services recorded an extremely low rating of V. Yushchenko. 71.5% of respondents answered negatively to the question: "Do you trust the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko as the Supreme Commander?" Young people aged 20–29 (73.4%) were in majority, who supported the above-mentioned position. In the regions, the mistrust rating ranges from 51.1% in the West to 78% in the East and 84.3% in the South (Ukrainci *vvazhaiut*, 2008). Only 22.2% of the respondents expressed confidence in V. Yushchenko as the Supreme Commander (Viina *v Hruzii*, 2008).

The Russo-Georgian War caused a wave of contradictions between V. Yushchenko, President of Ukraine and Yu. Tymoshenko, Prime Minister. Thus, the Deputy Head of the Presidential Secretariat A. Kyslynskyi told the Presidential Secretariat that there were "certain agreements between BYuT (Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko) and its leader [Prime Minister of Ukraine Yu. Tymoshenko – the auth.] with Russia concerning support in the upcoming Presidential elections". In contrast, the government of Ukraine called "a challenge the announcement of the Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine" and expected that the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko would give these applications a proper assessment (Z *chyioho holosu?*, 2008). In particular, at a briefing in Kyiv Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine H. Nemyria stated the following: "This statement is shameful. It borders on challenge" (Z *chyioho holosu?*, 2008).

However, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, headed by Yu. Tymoshenko took a truly extremely cautious position on the issue of the Russo-Georgian War. In the relevant statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, it was emphasized that our state supported the territorial integrity of Georgia and was ready "within the framework of the international diplomatic efforts to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the situation in the region" (Krit, 2008). Ukraine, expressing regret that Russia had turned from an intermediary to a direct participant in the conflict, called on the Russian Federation, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, "to withdraw its troops from the territory of Georgia, to exercise restraint in its actions and to exert the necessary influence on the separatist regime of Tskhinvali in order to return its representatives to the negotiating table" (Krit, 2008).

On August 12, 2008, the position of the Ukrainian government in the Russo-Georgian War was expressed by the First Vice-Prime Minister O. Turchynov who stated the following: “Regarding the events in South Ossetia and Georgia, our position is quite specific – we are exclusively for a peaceful way to resolve this problem. None of the parties to the conflict can solve their internal and external issues by force” (Boiko, 2008). Such statements caused a mixed reaction in the Ukrainian society. “Such “game of silence” is quite strange, taking into account that Yulia Tymoshenko and Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili had quite friendly relations,” wrote, in particular, daily Ukrainian informational and political newspaper “Ukrayina Moloda” (Boiko, 2008).

According to some analysts, Tymoshenko’s unclear position was dictated by political factors. Thus, according to the leader of the “Yedyni Tsenter” party, I. Kril, Tymoshenko “was worried about how to satisfy the Russian leadership and secure its support during the next presidential campaign, rather than about the steps that could prevent the Georgian option from repeating in Ukraine” (Boiko, 2008). A bit later (September 2008), Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko stated that the political partners of BYuT were engaged in provocations on the topic of the Russo-Georgian conflict, and “the position on this conflict on the part of BYuT and NY-NC is the same”. In particular, it consists in protecting the territorial integrity of Georgia and supporting N. Sarzoki’s plan (Yu. Tymoshenko, 2008).

The Ukrainian Parliament also did not remain aloof from the Russo-Georgian War. The Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine A. Yatseniuk held consultations (over the phone) with the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament D. Bakradze, the Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation S. Mironov and the Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation B. Hryzlov already on August 8, 2008. The main topic of discussion was the situation in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone (Holova Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy, 2008). In the framework of the consultations, A. Yatseniuk urged his interlocutors to do everything possible “to stop the hostilities immediately and start peace negotiations” (Holova Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy, 2008).

The parliamentary group on relations with Georgia had its own vision of the development of the Russo-Georgian War. Its representatives expressed “concern in connection with the events taking place on the territory of a sovereign state of Georgia” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a). The members of the group stated that the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation committed an act of aggression against the independent state of Georgia under the pretext of carrying out a “peacekeeping mission” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a). The parliamentary group on relations with Georgia believed that by using armed force in violation of its obligations under the UN Charter and international law, the Russian authorities were speculating with the categories: “coercion to peace”, “humanitarian catastrophe”, “ethnic cleansing” and “genocide” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a). The following was mentioned in the statement: “By providing armed support to the separatist regime of South Ossetia, Russia encroaches on the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of another state. Particularly dangerous in this context is the recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which is tantamount to the territorial dismemberment of this state” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a).

During the period of an active escalation of confrontation in the Russian-Georgian relations, a platform where the representatives of diverse political forces, the Ukrainian state bodies and special services, Heads of other Committees of the Verkhovna Rada were able to discuss the situation in the Caucasus professionally in connection with military actions

between Russia and Georgia “without journalists and television cameras”, as well as the issue of minimizing its possible negative consequences for our country, became the parliamentary Committee on National Security and Defense (Sylina, 2008). Head of the Committee on National Security and Defense, A. Hrytsenko noted that “Russia’s response to the events in South Ossetia was clearly inadequate in terms of its strength and scale – Russia violated the norms of international law when it introduced its regular troops into the territory of a sovereign state and launched a large-scale military aggression against Georgia. It is difficult to call such actions for peacekeeping, let’s be straightforward – it is war” (Sylina, 2008).

The Ukrainian Parliament tried to express its own position on the Russo-Georgian War. On September 2, 2008, the political party “Nasha Ukraina – Narodna Samooborona” offered to convene a coalition council in order to determine a common position on the issue of assessing events related to the Russian-Georgian conflict, before the start of consideration at the meeting of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Russian-Georgian conflict. However, V. Kyrylenko, the head of the faction “Nasha Ukrayina – Narodna Samooborona” informed the public about the fact that BYuT ( Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko) refused to hold the meeting. According to him, “it means BYuT’s rejection of the agreed position within the framework of a democratic coalition on this issue” (BluT vidmovyvsia, 2008).

In general, People’s Deputies of Ukraine prepared 7 resolutions of the Verkhovna Rada of the VIth convocation, in which they expressed their position on the Russian-Georgian armed conflict, uniting them into the thematic block “On Russia’s Military Aggression in Georgia”. None of these resolutions received enough votes to be adopted (Yak Verkhovna Rada, 2018). The initiators of 5 resolutions were deputies from the coalition (“Nasha Ukrayina – Narodna Samooborna”, “Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko”), and two more were initiated by opposition deputies. Deputies from the “NUNS” faction initiated 4 resolutions, deputies from the Party of Regions, the Communist Party and Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko – one each (Postanova Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy, 2008).

The fact that it will be difficult for the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to reach a consolidated position on the issue of the Russo-Georgian War became obvious, given the large number of draft laws submitted for consideration by the Parliament (№ 3053-d, № 3054-d, № 3070-d, № 3076-d, № 3076-1d, № 3082-d, № 3083-d, № 3089-d, № 3059-d.). The first was the draft resolution “On Condemnation of the Military Intervention by the Russian Federation on the Territory of Georgia” was introduced by people’s deputies V. Aryev and T. Stets (№ 3053-d-d). The authors of the project noted that “what happened next was a humanitarian disaster on the territory of Georgia, when Russian troops entered there” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). V. Aryev noted that the most important thing was Ukraine was involved in this conflict not because of the position of the Ukrainian leadership, but because the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, which was temporarily based on the territory of Ukraine, went from the territory of Ukraine to the Georgian shores (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

Draft Law No. 3054 (sponsored by People’s Deputy of Ukraine Yu. Kostenko (UNP)) caused a lot of discussions within the walls of the Parliament. The head of the UNP noted in his speech the following: “If we talk about what happened in Georgia directly, then this is an act of annexation of a sovereign state and a full-scale military aggression in the Caucasus” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). Answering the question of V. Zubov (Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko): How do you consider the position of the President of Ukraine that he took in the conflict? Yu. Kostenko noted that his position was based on the protection of the national interests of Ukraine, “as required by the Ukrainian Constitution, according to which he is the

guarantor of security in Ukraine” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

Draft Law No. 3059, prepared by a member of the Party of Regions (author – I. Konovaliuk) had a diametrically opposite consideration of the situation in the Caucasus region. The regionalists convinced that “attempts today to transfer this conflict ... to the territory. Ukraine has not only been condemned by our citizens – the voters of Ukraine, but they also demand from us... the adoption of immediate decisions that would contribute not only to achieving a certain control on the part of the Verkhovna Rada, but also, most importantly, to ensure that illegal actions are not carried out with the Ukrainian weapons, peaceful people are not killed and so that we understand that the funds that Ukraine receives as a state from the arms trade do not provoke conflicts and do not create tensions in our region” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

Another draft law initiated by the Party of Regions (No. 3076-1) called on the parties to the armed conflict to resolve it peacefully, to cover the events objectively by the mass media, and also proposed to “involve international organizations in order to develop proposals for determining the future status of unrecognized state entities by expressing the will of the population living in these territories, in accordance with the UN Charter, the 1970 Declaration on the Principles of International Law and the Helsinki Final Act of 1975...” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

Draft Law No. 3070 “On Condemnation of Georgia's Military Aggression against the People of South Ossetia”, which was registered in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine by the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) P. Symonenko, was the most pro-Russian on its content and shifted all responsibility on Georgia for the Russo-Georgian War breakout (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). The leader of the Ukrainian communists described the actions of the Georgian army as a “punitive operation” and the central authorities as the “national militarist regime of Saakashvili” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). According to P. Symonenko, Russia “had to use combat troops in order to protect its citizens, including the peacekeepers, who were in South Ossetia at that time” in that situation (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

Draft Law No. 3083-d considered the Georgian-Ossetian conflict “a typical example of an ethnic conflict engendered by the nationalist reactionary regimes in the period of historical time” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a). At the same time, V. Kyrylenko, a member of the political alliance “Nasha Ukraina – Narodna Samooborona”, offered to testify their commitment to the standards of international law, to support the active efforts of the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to restore peace in the Caucasus and to remove all the issues regarding the commitment of the majority Ukrainian deputies of Verkhovna Rada in draft law No. 3076 (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

The draft law initiated by the BYuT faction was quite similar to the draft law brought in by “Nasha Ukraina – Narodna Samooborona”. The faction made comment and limited to “deep concern” about the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia and its serious negative consequences for the regional security in Europe and the world, as well as expressed “deep sadness” about the deaths and the situation that led to the suffering of the civilian population, the increase in the number of refugees, the destruction of social and economic infrastructure and threatens to turn into a humanitarian catastrophe (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a).

The “Lytvyn Bloc” faction in the Verkhovna Rada also expressed great concern over the aggravation of the situation that took place in Georgia around South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Draft Law No. 3094). S. Hrynevetskyi emphasized out that “the course of events in the Caucasus was predictable in a certain way” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a). He persuaded

the People's Deputies that "in recent years there has been an increased militarization of the region. The potential for conflict in the Black Sea region as a whole is also growing, which is becoming one of the main areas of confrontation between the West and the East, in particular over access to energy resources and their transportation routes. The source of these conflicts is not only an external factor..." (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a). The "Lytvyn Bloc" faction truly believed that the conflict in the Caucasus also revealed a number of problems for Ukraine, first of all, the GUAM organization turned out to be completely helpless in a crisis situation, although the topic of solving "frozen conflicts" was declared as one of the main ones in its activities (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a).

It should be mentioned that voting for draft laws was not unexpected – none of the suggested proposals received the necessary votes: draft resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, registration number 3053 – 65 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3054 – 66 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3070 – 196 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3076 – 72 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3076-1 – 201 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3076-2 – 167 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3082 – 70 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3083 – 167 votes in favour; draft resolution No. 3094 – 22 votes in favour (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a).

The political parties of Ukraine were characterized by diversity regarding the issue of the Russo-Georgian War. The block of political parties "Nasha Ukraina – Narodna Samooborona" and the President of Ukraine expressed unequivocal support for Georgia. According to the members of these political parties, the armed action of the Russian Federation against Georgia, as well as the subsequent recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia was an unconditional violation of the key standards of the international law and a challenge to the entire civilized world (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

According to the party "Nasha Ukraina – Narodna Samooborona", the prerequisite for lasting peace and stability in the Caucasus the following: the Russian troops withdrawal from the entire territory of Georgia and the replacement of the Russian contingent in Abkhazia and South Ossetia with the peacekeeping forces of an authoritative international organization such as the UN, OSCE, European Union or NATO (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). V. Kyrylenko noted the following: "It is obvious that the Russian troops did not cope with the peacekeepers mission, as they took part in hostilities as a party to the conflict, including far beyond the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia" (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

The Narodnyi Rykh Ukrainy (People's Movement of Ukraine), led by B. Tarasiuk, also kept to a pro-Georgian position. The leader of this political force compared Russia's act of armed aggression against the sovereign state of Georgia to the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, when approaches to the concepts of "a citizen security", "state security" and "collective security" were changed radically (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a). According to B. Tarasiuk, "the Russian side was cynically, manipulating the terms "coercion to peace", "humanitarian catastrophe", "ethnic cleansing", "genocide", encroached on the territorial integrity of the sovereign state. The events in the Caucasus once again confirmed that the so-called peacekeeping, in which Russia was engaged in allegedly, was a cover" (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a).

Ivan Stoyko (Narodnyi Rykh Ukrainy (People's Movement of Ukraine)) noted that the war in the Caucasus "has been going on for more than a century", but Russia never conquered and will not conquer the Caucasus. "Nowadays I draw an analogy with the 1930s of the last century, when the regime of Adolf Hitler began, who later became who, you know, conquered Europe and became the Führer. These days, Putin wants to do the same in the post-Soviet



space. This is a struggle for democracy and nothing else” – one of the leaders of the Narodnyi Rykh Ukrainy believed (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008a).

The Ukrainiska Narodna Partiya (Ukrainian People’s Party) (UNP) also gave its assessment of the events in Georgia. According to its authors, the draft Statement of the UNP gave a clear answer to three questions: the first question was: what happened in Georgia; the second – why did this happen and the third – how should the Ukrainian authorities react? (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). The Ukrainiska Narodna Partiya (Ukrainian People’s Party) took into consideration the norms of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the final provisions of the OSCE, when they were analyzing what happened. Yu. Kostenko stated the following: “According to the conclusions of our experts, we offer to state that the actions of the Russian authorities fundamentally go beyond the format of the peacekeeping activities and we should regard them as Russia’s military aggression against sovereign Georgia” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). The members of the UNP, while pondering over the reasons for such actions of Russia, believed that it had begun “the practical implementation of its aggressive military doctrine and foreign policy, which are aimed at establishing the dominance of Russian political, military, and economic interests in the post-Soviet space” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

Ya. Dzhodzhyk (UNP) stated that Russia was preparing for this aggression in Georgia in advance by introducing an additional contingent of railway and other types of troops and started this aggression under the pretext of protecting Russian citizens, who received previously Russian citizenship by the thousands (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). The UNP member stated the following: “Nowadays, we are witnessing the continuation of the same scenario in Ukraine, when thousands of people in the Crimea receive Russian citizenship. These days we witness that the leadership of Russia prefers to demonstrate that the Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine would behave as if they were at home” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

The nationalists were much more radical, who on August 11, 2008 organized a spontaneous rally near the embassy of the Russian Federation (more than 300 people gathered). The main group of protesters consisted of the Georgian diaspora representatives in Ukraine, as well as the Ukrainian public and political organizations UNA–UNSO, VO “Tryzub”, “Pora” (Bykodir, 2008b). The protesters criticized the Ukrainian authorities and the international community for their “inadequate response” to recent events (Bykodir, 2008b). One of the picket participants noted the following: “The Ukrainian state should respond to the Russian aggression in Georgia more actively. It is quite possible that the Ukrainians will soon feel Russia’s imperial ambitions” (Bykodir, 2008b).

The head of the UNA–UNSO Kyiv organization, I. Mazur, noted that more than 50 statements from young patriots “about the desire to help the Georgian people” were sent to the leadership. However, one of the leaders of the UNA–UNSO noted that “UNSO citizens consider the possibility of humanitarian aid only”, and the representatives of the organization “can appear in the conflict zone only as military journalist – for the objective and impartial coverage of the situation in Georgia...” (Bykodir, 2008b).

The Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) took a clearly pro-Russian side in the conflict. The party had its own position on the issue of the war in the Caucasus. First of all, according to the communists, it was Georgia that acted as the aggressor. Thus, P. Tsybenko (CPU) emphasized that the aggression was launched by Georgia on the eve of the opening of the Olympic Games and, in his opinion, this was “sacrilege” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). Second of all, the communists believed that Russia had a full right to invade the territory of a sovereign state. On this occasion, P. Symonenko stated the following: “Russia had every

reason to respond adequately to the armed attack of the “Saakashists” and conduct a military operation to force the Saakashvili regime to peace”. Russia had every reason to respond to the request of the people of South Ossetia and protect them from physical destruction, as, by the way, it was Russia’s right to recognize. Shouldn’t we recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, taking into account the nation’s right to self-determination and at the request of the peoples of these republics...” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

Thirdly, the Communist Party of Ukraine demanded the impeachment of V. Yushchenko, who questioned partnership relations with Russia. According to the leader of the Ukrainian communists, “the August events in the Caucasus and the informational hysteria organized by Bankova and Ukrainian national extremists around the alleged annexation of Georgia by Russia and its encroachment on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, in particular on the Crimea, raised the question of further strategic partnership relations with by the Russian Federation impolitely” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). Fourthly, the Communist Party demanded that the international community respond adequately to the “punitive operation” of the President of Georgia M. Saakashvili (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b).

The Party of Regions also took the pro-Russian side in the Russo-Georgian War. To begin with, we should mention that V. Yanukovych (the Party of Regions), who tried not to make odious statements, at the end of August 2008 took the initiative to recognize the independence of the pseudo-republics of the Caucasus unexpectedly. The newspaper “Dzerkalo Tyzhnia” wrote with sarcasm the following: “Probably, the leader of the Party of Regions or his advisers really suspected that Tymoshenko was trying to seize the role of “Russia’s best friend”. And the white-blue (the Party of Regions) can not allow this. We had to react quickly, and it seems that they went too far...” (Mustafin, 2008).

In general, the Party of Regions suggested that the Ukrainians did not worsen the Russian-Ukrainian relations, warned that our state could be involved in a “serious international conflict” (Yanukovych zaproponuvav, 2008). According to V. Yanukovych, the Party of Regions “always insisted on conducting a friendly and non-confrontational foreign policy with all of Ukraine’s neighbors”, therefore, condemned the actions of the current government, which “causes irreparable damage to the national interests of the Ukrainian state” (U Yanukovycha, 2008). The Party of Regions also demanded the introduction of an embargo on any deliveries of Ukrainian weapons to Georgia and other hotspots of the planet (U Yanukovycha, 2008). The following was written in the party’s statement: “We are initiating the creation of a temporary investigation commission in the Parliament of Ukraine, which would investigate the circumstances and conditions under which Ukrainian weapons were supplied to Georgia” (U Yanukovycha, 2008). At the same time, the regionalists condemned any “aggressive actions aimed at resolving regional conflicts by force” and called for “ceasing hostilities and proceeding to peace negotiations immediately” (U Yanukovycha, 2008).

On September 1, 2008, the Politrada of the Party of Regions approved the Statement on the events in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The document expresses “concern about the situation that has developed in South Ossetia and Abkhazia as a result of the armed confrontation between the military units of Georgia and the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation” (Verkhovna rada Ukrainy, 2008b). However, it should be noted that not all members of the Party of Regions held similar beliefs. Hence, R. Bohatyrieva, answering journalists’ questions about whether she supports the position of President V. Yushchenko regarding the territorial integrity of Georgia, or is leaning towards V. Yanukovych, who called for the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, R. Bohatyrieva said that “Yanukovych

expressed only his own opinion, which does not reflect the position of the party” (Chy rozkoluivetsia Partii rehioniv, 2008). As a result, she was expelled from the Political Council (Chy rozkoluivetsia Partii rehioniv, 2008).

Actually, the events in Georgia forced the Ukrainian authorities to take a closer look at the activities of pro-Russian political and public organizations in Ukraine. “We are concerned about the activities of the radical pro-Russian organizations. You know that the registration and activity of most of them has been suspended by the decision of the Ukrainian courts, – said the Acting Head of the Security Service of Ukraine V. Nalyvaichenko during this period. – The first such organization is “Proryv” (Breakthrough) with its headquarters in Transnistria. The second is the “Eurasian Union of Youth”, an extremist organization close to terrorist manifestations”. According to the head of the SBU, the investigation into the case of another radical pro-Russian organization, “Sevastopol – Crimea – Russia” was currently ongoing (Nalyvaichenko, 2008).

On August 12, 2008, a rally-picket “to protect the people of South Ossetia from genocide by the leadership of Georgia” (Bykodir, 2008a) was held in Simferopol near the representation of the President of Ukraine in the Crimea. According to the Interfax-Ukraine agency, about 250 people took part in the action, which was organized by representatives of the Russian community of Crimea, local organizations of the parties “Russian Bloc”, “Soyuz”, “Union of Left Forces”, KPU and PSPU. An action in support of Russia’s actions in Georgia with the participation of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Party of Regions, and the Progressive Socialist Party was also held in Kharkiv (Bykodir, 2008a).

The armed conflict in the Caucasus improved the opinion about Russia of every third supporter of P. Symonenko and every fifth supporter of V. Yanukovich (data from a telephone survey conducted by the “First Rating System” on September 13-16, 2008 by telephone interview method at the respondents’ place of residence in five large cities of Ukraine. The sample consisted of 990 respondents over the age of 18. The statistical error did not exceed 3.2%) (Posle voiny v Gruzii, 2008). At the same time, the attitude towards Russia of half of P. Symonenko’s supporters and 64% of V. Yanukovich’s supporters remained unchanged (Posle voiny v Gruzii, 2008). Potential voters of V. Yushchenko and A. Yatseniuk reacted the worst to Russia’s recent actions in the Caucasus region. About half of their supporters condemned the actions of this state. A little more than a third of supporters of Yu. Tymoshenko and V. Lytvyn also worsened their attitude towards the northeastern neighbor (Posle voiny v Gruzii, 2008). At the same time, more than half of Yu. Tymoshenko’s voters did not change their attitude, as did a third of supporters of V. Yushchenko and A. Yatseniuk (Posle voiny v Gruzii, 2008).

**The Conclusion.** The Ukrainian political community was divided in its vision of the aggressor in the Russo-Georgian war and in general assessment of the events of the “five-day war”. The then President of Ukraine, V. Yushchenko, as well as pro-presidential political forces, expressed unquestionable support for M. Saakashvili. V. Yushchenko drew the public’s attention to the fact that assessments of the conflict in the Ukrainian information space, de facto, were identical to those that sounded in the Russian mass media. The chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine A. Yatseniuk expressed his own assessment of the Russian-Georgian armed conflict, who was concerned by the fact that the situation in South Ossetia was far from a local bilateral military conflict. The Ukrainian opposition, primarily the Party of Regions, the Communist Party of Ukraine, deliberately hushed up the dangers and geopolitical challenges of the Russo-Georgian war for Ukraine. Communist leader P. Symonenko generally considered it necessary to open a criminal case on the fact of illegal supply of Ukrainian weapons to Georgia. The Parliament of Ukraine tried to express its own position on the issue of the Russian-Georgian

war. People's deputies prepared several resolutions in which they tried to express their vision of events in Georgia. None of these resolutions received a sufficient number of votes for adoption (five resolutions were initiated by deputies from the coalition (“Our Ukraine – People's Self-Defense”, “Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko”), two more by opposition deputies (Party of Regions, Communist Party of Ukraine).

The Prospects of The Further Research is the analysis of the prospects for the settlement of “frozen conflicts” in the post-Soviet space against the background of the decline of the geopolitical influence of the Russian Federation on the states of the former socialist camp at the beginning of the 21st century.

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