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A step from inter-state war to civil war

Vladimir Platonenko

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If the mess in the Bryansk region is indeed connected to the Russian opposition, no matter which one, it is a small but clear step towards turning an interstate war into a civil war. This does not mean that the “right” side has appeared, whether it has appeared or not is a separate question. It means that the logic of war has begun to change. And with this new logic it will be easier to create the “right side”.

And it is not even that in a war between states the struggle against one of the states is almost universally perceived as a struggle on the side of the other. It is also often the case in civil wars. The point is that in a civil war the sides make different demands than in an inter-state war. If someone in Crimea now says that he is against both the Russian and Ukrainian authorities, everyone will probably assume that he is in favour of Crimea’s independence. Or for its annexation to Turkey. In a civil war, if a person says that he is not happy with either Pupkin or Khrushkin, everyone understands that the person is not happy with the politics or economy of Pupkin and Khrushkin, not with the borders in which they are going to rule.

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It must be said that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between interstate and civil wars — there are almost no “clean” wars in this regard. In the Russian-Ukrainian war a significant part of the Ukrainians support “their” side not only and not so much because it is their own, but because they understand that Russian authorities will treat them more harshly and mercilessly. And that is certainly why many Russians support the Ukrainian side. As an enemy of Putin’s regime. But this is nothing more than an element of the civil war. The “civil component” of the war, so to speak.

Ukraine dislikes the term “civil war” precisely because this phraseology was used by the USSR and later Russian authorities to justify their interventions. “We are not at war with Finland, we are helping the Red Finns against the Whites”. It is interesting that many, if not most of the Vlasovites considered themselves to be participants in a civil war, rather than collaborationists. But now the balance is changing, and who knows, maybe soon the term “civil war” will become loved in Ukraine and hated in the Bunker.

The Russian-Ukrainian mess (I don’t want to use the word “conflict” because of its excessive political correctness) began precisely with the civil war. The revolution of dignity, like all revolutions, was essentially a small civil war. And none other than Putin turned this war into an interstate war by introducing troops into Crimea. Krymnash distracted the citizens of Ukraine from internal strife, and the invasion of mainland Ukraine finally turned the internal conflict into an interstate one. And it is not even just the fact that there are Ichthamnets in the Donbas, although there is that too. The war between the separatists and the Unitarians is also essentially an interstate war.

If in a civil war, people stand up for their beliefs, in an interstate war — for the power of one lord or another. That is why the lords want inter-state wars and hate civil wars so much. That is why the success of Krymnash meant Putin’s victory

not over Ukraine, but above all over his own people. Putin has turned a civil war into a war between nations. And if the war between the peoples now begins to turn into a civil war, the Russian people will have a chance to take revenge.

The people of Ukraine will also benefit from this. Firstly, if the mobilised Russians start shooting at their masters, they will stop shooting at Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. Secondly, the Ukrainian soldiers will finally be able to distract themselves from external strife and deal with internal issues. Which, as experience shows, they deal with far better than the Russians, but from which they have been distracted by the war.

On the other hand, the Ukrainian authorities are not likely to like a return to civil war (even on Russian territory). For reasons of “second.” So I would not be surprised if they try to put a quick end to such antics of Putin’s Russian opponents.

On the other hand, for Putin’s power such a return to internal strife is even scarier. Therefore the Ukrainian authorities’ desire to flick Russia’s nose may outweigh their unwillingness to take risks. Especially since there is no war without risk. So for a while the Ukrainian authorities may even help, or at least not hinder, such moves towards civil war. But when they do, it may turn out to be too late to stop the war becoming a civil war. Let us hope so.