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Sergii Shevtsov

ONTOLOGICAL DRIFT OF CAUSES

Russia's military aggression in Ukraine has given rise to much speculation about its causes and aims. The accessibility of the modern media allows to freely hear the voices of both sides which creates a unique situation in many ways. Among the many theories and hypotheses about the causes and goals of this war, there is no consensus for any of the warring parties. The options and hypotheses expressed differ noticeably from each other even within each of the countries. This article attempts to classify the expressed points of view on the causes and goals of the war for the Russian and Ukrainian sides. It is noted that Russia, having started the war, has a lot more versions than Ukraine. For the Ukrainian side, the war is predominantly perceived through the formula 'we have been attacked and we defend ourselves, our land, and our way of life'. Meanwhile, the question of why Russia carried out the attack is much more difficult. In this article, the author identifies six levels of social existence, into which the suggested versions can be distributed. These six levels are: individual, group, political, ideological, geopolitical, and civilizational. The article suggests that the cause cannot be limited to one level, it is important for the aggressor to justify its actions on all six levels. It is noteworthy that for Russia the economic level is not significant, in fact, most of the Russian war opponents are at this level, while for Ukraine the economic level matters a lot. According to the author of the article, only religion can unite six such different levels. Therefore, he suggests, for Russia, this war is of religious nature although it is not connected with religion and does not have a religious form. The author finds this situation paradoxical and ugly.

Keywords: *Ontology, Russia, social existence, Ukraine, war.*

The situation when two belligerents are practically transparent to each other in the information field is apparently unique and therefore deserves special attention. Never before have two opposing sides of a military conflict been able to receive information about the causes of the war and the course of hostilities simultaneously from different sides, at least in a conflict of such magnitude as Ukraine's opposition to Russian aggression, which began on February 24, 2022. It should also be noted at the same time that if for the Russian side the information of the enemy can still cause some difficulties if it is submitted in Ukrainian, then for any representative of the Ukrainian side, for well-known reasons, understanding the news reports of the Russian side does not present any problem. If we add that in addition to official messages, today it is possible to monitor messages and videos of both sides on social networks, as well as the

publication of some intercepted telephone conversations, then we must admit that in this case we are dealing with an unprecedented situation of information warfare. All this still requires its own reflection, which, it must be admitted, is usually followed by the creation of new forms of weapons for waging wars.

I have a much more limited and modest goal in this article: to systematize the causes and, accordingly, the goals of the ongoing war presented in wide information access. The reasons and goals in this case turn out to be inseparably linked, since we proceed from the position that the goal of hostilities is to eliminate the initial causes that led to the armed conflict. I would like to point out at once that I do not set myself the task of collecting all the statements about the goals of the war (it is hardly possible at all), but I did not even try to collect all the opinions known to me on this subject. I am also not interested in the breadth of this or that position in this case, although this in itself is a very important indicator. At the same time, I do not seek to accurately and verbatim reproduce the statements of various authors about the goals of this war, and therefore I will not name the sources. What interests me is those levels of being on which various people see the causes of the armed confrontation that has arisen. The classification of the indicated statements will be built solely on this principle.

And one more preliminary remark. Although I, as a citizen of Ukraine, have my own position on this war, moreover, I admit in advance that I am biased in this case and my sympathies belong to one of the parties, I removed all evaluative characteristics, primarily terminological ones (emotionally colored nouns, adjectives, verbs), since they do not affect the aspect of the problem that is the subject of my consideration. At the same time, outside the framework of the transformations of the texts I have indicated, I tried to reproduce the logic and argumentation with the utmost strictness and accuracy.

The first level concerns exclusively the existence of isolated individuals. By and large, only one argument should be attributed to this category: this war is the result of a personal order and desire of Russian President V. Putin (nevertheless, this category should include, in addition to just personal desire, personal goals and representing him as president, namely, the confidence that the Ukrainian people are in fact Russian, that the state of Ukraine is an artificial formation, the desire to raise his personal falling rating among the population, the desire to strengthen the international authority of Russia, etc.). I have not heard from anyone and nowhere have I come across the opinion that the only culprit of the war is the President of Ukraine V. Zelensky. I have come across statements regarding US President D. Biden as a person who is personally responsible for the outbreak of war, but analysis requires rejecting such statements for this level. Even opponents of the American president (and supporters generally exclude him personally from the possible causes of the Russian-Ukrainian war) do not

believe that he personally could somehow initiate hostilities (at least, for example, due to his dependence on his apparatus or other state structures of USA). With the President of Russia, the situation is also not so simple.

Along with the point of view that the war is the result of exclusively his personal actions, and he alone is responsible for its occurrence, the opinion is much more common that the president of Russia, as an authoritarian leader, as a practically autocratic ruler, by his willful effort (order) implemented some kind of independent from him the current state of affairs (which covers a variety of structures - from state and public institutions, to conceptual ideas and ideas, or even some impersonal processes, when Putin appears as something like the embodiment of the Hegelian *Weltgeist*). Among the Ukrainians, a simple explanation prevails for themselves: they (Russians) have attacked, they are killing our citizens, destroying our cities and villages, we will fight them, defending ourselves, our relatives, our land, our way of life.

The next level should include views on the causes of the war as the result of a clash of interests between relatively small groups of people. It must be said right away that it is impossible to distinguish here between a group of separate individuals and groups constituting a certain state structure, or groups expressing a certain ideology. In this regard, the causes of the war are seen in the confrontation of various groups (primarily power structures) around the President of Russia, as well as the result of the struggle for influence and power within the closest circle of people around Putin. The main confrontation here is usually called the confrontation between the security forces and the army. I have never heard versions of such a confrontation in the upper strata of the Ukrainian leadership, but in principle such an assumption cannot be ruled out. People often talk about the influence of supporters of Ukrainian nationalism on the government of Ukraine, but here they always avoid naming specific names and structures. Probably the reason for this is that it is hardly possible to unequivocally attribute nationalist ideology to any of the influential figures or structures in Ukraine, and it is difficult to consider those parties or groups that in public opinion are more or less guided by the ideas of Ukrainian nationalism ("Svoboda", Right Sector, etc.) as influential in the government of Ukraine. Rather, here we can mention the political views and positions of individual leaders of the West, primarily part of the administration of D. Biden and the own position of the current US president. Rather, they are more likely to talk about the political views and positions of individual Western leaders, primarily about part of the USA administration and the closest circle of D. Biden's advisers and allies. At the same time, I would like to note that personal or group characteristics are usually assigned only a secondary role.

The third level can be designated as a confrontation between the specific

political and economic interests of both belligerents. This includes the intention directly declared by the President of Russia to carry out the denationalization and demilitarization of Ukraine, to provide a land corridor to Crimea for the Russian Federation, to ensure the safety of the residents of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, to save the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine from harassment by the Ukrainian authorities, and the Russian-speaking population of Bessarabia from Moldova, to save most of the population of Ukraine from the influence of nationalist propaganda (the latter, perhaps, is included in the “denationalization” program, which has not been defined in any way). This should also include ensuring the security of the southwestern borders of the Russian Federation, preventing the so-called Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, as well as Crimea (the latter sounds extremely rare) from attacking by Ukraine. It is also called the preparation of the Ukrainian army for a war against Russia (here even the parades of the Ukrainian army are considered as actions hostile to Russia, while Russian parades are not considered as such; I had to deal with the interpretation of posters and billboards in support of the Ukrainian army like “defend our own” as frankly and openly anti-Russian – which of our own? from whom will we protect?). On the part of Ukraine, the reasons for unleashing the war by Russia are intention of Ukraine and its need to restore the territorial integrity. In addition, Ukraine talks about the need to protect its economic interests from Russian expansion.

The fourth level is singled out as purely ideological one. According to some Russian ideologists, nationalist ideology, which in principle is alien to the majority of Ukrainian citizens, has gained total dominance in Ukraine. But the citizens of Ukraine succumbed to it, so, firstly, it is brilliantly designed and includes all the latest Western technologies and means (although I heard this thesis from many people, I could not find anywhere a specification of exactly what means make the influence of this ideology so strong); the very ideology of Ukrainian nationalism is sometimes stated by the Russian side, but it is done in such a way that if we remove all evaluative and emotionally colored terms from such a presentation, then the content is reduced to the thesis of a higher status (sometimes a higher vocation, purpose, but never with specifying which one) Ukrainian nation. Secondly, the reason for the spread of this ideology lies in the failure of the Ukrainian state, which turned out to be unable to build a historical identity, economy, a military-industrial complex, any national culture, mired in monstrous corruption. As a result, the Ukrainian people are simply zombified by the nationalist ideology, perceive it thoughtlessly and uncritically, and blindly follow their government. (The struggle of political parties in Ukraine, the multi-party parliament and the constant change of presidents should refute such theses about Ukraine as a mono-ideological state, but these facts are cited

beyond any logic as confirmation of state failure, inability to find a unified solution, establish a common order, its inability to implement functions of state building). In contrast to this, state building is asserted as the primordial fate of the Russian people, as the implementation of their unified will, the fate of the Russian people is understood, among other things, as the liberation of Ukraine from occupation by zapadens nationalists.

On the part of Ukraine, the situation is interpreted, of course, in a completely different way: as a result of twenty years of Putin's rule, Russia has not achieved any significant success in terms of the standard of living of its population (leaving Moscow and St. Petersburg out of brackets), nevertheless, in the minds of Russians, Putin is associated with overcoming the shock that they experienced in the 90s – unfair and therefore humiliating privatization, redistribution of property, destruction of the established economic structure of the USSR, disillusionment with the multi-party system, loss of confidence in liberalism associated with the impoverishment of the population and the destruction of the former Soviet social elevators. But instead of solving internal problems, the political leadership of the Russian state turns its attention to foreign policy problems, resulting in a number of military conflicts – in Chechnya, South Ossetia, Crimea, Donbass, Syria, etc. Such a traditional policy of collecting land, characteristic for Russia since the time of the Grand Duchy of Moscow, is approved by society and pushes the government to unleash more and more military conflicts. This should also include the collapse of the traditional ideology based on the thesis of the messianic destiny of Russia – first as the custodian of the only true Orthodox faith, then as the leading country in the struggle for progress and the liberation of people from capitalist and imperialist exploitation by a wealthy minority of the working majority (according to Marxism). Russia, thus, along with the loss of ideology, has lost the ability to give meaning to the lives of its citizens. In other words, Ukraine sees the cause of the war in the inability of Russian citizens to find the meaning of their own existence and their hope to get it from a government that can only offer them military confrontation as such. That is, the war started by the Russian government appears as a search for external enemies that prevent Russians from finding the meaning of their own existence. In addition, Ukrainians consider the reason for the war to be the hatred of Russians for everything Ukrainian, which they tend to regard as incompletely Russian or deliberately distorted (language, culture, history, way of life, etc.).

Here, we are already entering the next (fifth) geopolitical level. At this level, Russia is waging war not with Ukraine, which by itself represents nothing (in the political sense), but against Europe and the United States, which by deceit imposed their ideology on Ukraine under the guise of its nationalist one. This political union of Europe and the United States, united by the so-called liberal

values aimed at the destruction of traditional values – family, faith, traditional morality – puts forward Ukraine as the vanguard of its expansion, using all modern technologies. The purpose of this alliance, according to official Russian propaganda, is the physical destruction of Russia and its citizens, depriving them of their freedom and life. The main instrument of the West in this struggle is NATO aimed at the destruction of Russia. According to this view, Putin is fighting for the destruction of the Americanized world or for its de-Americanization. In contrast, NATO allegedly seeks to deploy its troops in Ukraine, and thereby get as close as possible to the center of Russia, preparing a mortal blow for her. This was justified by the fact that in December Russia received information about NATO plans to deploy 4 military brigades (2 land, 1 sea, 1 air) on the territory of Ukraine, and the air brigade - with the ability to carry nuclear warheads. NATO wanted to agree on this deployment of troops in the summer of 2022 at a meeting of the UN Security Council. Further, by the beginning of next year, they would have provoked a conflict and launched full-scale military operations against Russia with the use of nuclear weapons. That is, NATO planned to unleash the 3rd World War with the use of nuclear weapons against Russia. The accusation against Russia of an unprovoked attack on its part is caused only by resentment due to the destruction of such plans. On the part of Ukraine at this level, the cause of the war is also seen in the confrontation between Russia and the West, Russia's awareness of its own weakness and the impossibility of building an empire without Ukraine, its vulnerability and territorial inferiority (vulnerability when Ukraine switches to the side of the West).

The last (sixth) and highest level of explanation of the causes of the war between Russia and Ukraine known to me can be called civilizational. Here the war takes place not between states, but between civilizations. According to Russia, it defends its own civilizational values that are incompatible with the liberal values of the West, its state sovereignty, which ensures them. Here, the arguments of the geopolitical level are repeated already as civilizational ones: Russia is fighting against liberalism and globalism, the total destruction of culture and the desire of the United States and its allies to establish a monopolar world, spreading its ideology and culture (and in fact the economic and financial interests of a small circle of people) to the whole world. Russia upholds the values of its civilization, and thus strives for a multipolar world, a world of coexistence of various civilizations (while probably not mixing and not influencing each other). In a certain sense, this is a new formulation of the idea of Russia's messianic role. Russian civilization in this regard goes back to ancient times, at least to the period of Kyevan Rus, so Kyiv, although it has lost its significance as a common Slavic center, is still extremely important as part of this civilizational construction. The Western world has exhausted itself, which is emphasized by

the concepts of Fukuyama [Fukuyama 2014; Fukuyama 2018] and the activities of Soros to implement the “open world” of Popper [Popper 1945], while Russia is beginning to acquire its true greatness and realize its destiny, its destiny.

On the part of Ukraine, I do not know the holistic concepts of the civilizational explanation of the war. I only met opinions that the war is for the heritage of Kyevan Rus as a civilizational paradigm (without explaining the details) and that in the event of Russia’s defeat, Kyiv should become the cultural and political center of all Slavs. In conclusion of this review of opinions, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the reasons put forward to explain this war by Russian supporters are much more diverse and multivariate than by Ukraine. Also noteworthy is the lack of an economic level on the part of Russia.

The study of causes reveals the level of the ontological fact of war. At the level of directly observed actions – shelling, bombing, etc. – the fact of war is obvious: the use of weapons by one side leads to the destruction and killing of people on the other side. But war is not simply the use of weapons, but the use of them en masse over time and on a large scale. Reasons are needed for such a use of weapons, and these reasons can affect, as we have seen, different levels of being. The main question is whether it is possible to single out one “critical” level, the one at which war breaks out. The answer cannot be a simple indication of the level of being at which the war can be stopped or at what level it can be ended. In principle, this is possible at any level, if it entails changes in the others. The “height” or “commonality” of a level cannot also be the basis for singling it out as the main one: the projection of a cause from level to level is possible in any direction – both from top to bottom and from bottom to top, as a higher level receives justification from a higher one (for example, “receiving an order”), so a higher level can only be invoked as an excuse (“projection”) for the state of affairs at a lower level. (So a thief or murderer can psychologically explain his actions with a voice “from above”, even if he did not experience anything like that.)

What then says such a multitude of levels? First of all, that none of the levels can be the only real reason. There is only one exception – I fight because I am defending myself from attack. The special status and accuracy of this answer lies in the fact that it does not transfer the cause to another level, but keeps it practically at the same level of directly observable actions; this is a kind of reproduction of the well-known basic scheme of the classical conditioning theory (behaviorism): stimulus-response. The disadvantage of this answer is that it explains the actions of only one side, and not the one that initiated the war.

Transferring the answer to another level always remains problematic, because we do not have exact criteria for establishing links between levels precisely because of their differences in ontology. Nevertheless, this does not

mean that there is no such connection, but it turns out to be extremely difficult to separate a direct connection from an indirect one, and a true connection from a fictional (false) one. The Freudian intention to establish such connections for the individual psyche of a single person shows that an unconditional causal relationship here can only act as a hypothesis with one or another measure of probability. For example, we can explain some of the actions of an individual by his childhood trauma, and even, perhaps, overcome its negative consequences, but we cannot infer from the presence of childhood trauma with accuracy about the future forms of behavior of this individual. But even such a theory fails to explain group behavior, which is war.

The multiplicity of explanations most likely says something else: the cause of the war exists simultaneously at all levels (this is especially true for those citizens of Russia, as the country that started hostilities, who support the war). At none of the levels is it possible to isolate the event that triggered the war (even the emergence of Ukraine as an independent state as a result of the collapse of the USSR can be represented as such an event only in part, since the history of relations between Russia and Ukraine dates back at least to 17th century). Identification of such an event, as mentioned above, is possible only for the reacting side – Ukraine (as a response to the Russian attack). With regard to Russia, it should be assumed that the war to some extent ‘ripened’ at different levels, that is, its entire existence (except for the economic, biospheric, noospheric and cosmic levels) turned out to be permeated with an ever-increasing need for an armed solution to the situation. It must be admitted that this is partly true for Ukraine because of its willingness to defend itself through military action.

Until now, it has not been possible to find out to the end the causes of the war even for wars that have long ended – from the First Punic to the First and Second World Wars. But at the same time, it can be said, based on the experience of analyzing past wars, that always a war, if it was not defensive, turned out to be the result of a deep internal crisis, the way out of which was sought in the destruction of the external enemy. But at the same time we can say, based on the experience of analyzing past wars, that almost always a war, if it was not defensive, turned out to be the result of a deep internal crisis, the way out of which was sought in the direct or indirect defeat of an external enemy. Thus, we can single out those levels of being that experienced a deep crisis in the existence of modern Russia. We can assume the existence of a similar crisis in Ukraine, but since it was not Ukraine that initiated the war, it should be recognized that this crisis, if it took place, was much weaker there. It should be recognized, therefore, that Russia, in its development over the past thirty years, has come to a situation of the deepest crisis at all six levels that are highlighted above. That is, despite

the quite successful economic development (I noted that the Russian side practically did not put forward economic reasons, moreover, Russian financiers and businessmen, as a group, are almost the main opponents of the war), Russia sees no other way to develop itself outside the framework of the war as a civilization, as a geopolitical force, does not see development for its ideology, does not see a political strategy for itself, does not see the possibility of developing the activities of individual state political structures and institutions, and even the personal development of individual citizens. Only this can explain the mass support of the population for the policy of the Russian government.

This conclusion seems to me now monstrous. A huge state, incredibly rich in natural resources, with a significant population is not able to develop in a simple integration with the world community. Both the state itself and the majority of its citizens turned out to be ready to sacrifice the existing standard of living, as if to “give up” their own economy for the sake of solving problems of other levels through war. I see the only analogue of such a state of affairs and, therefore, an explanation: only religion covers all the listed levels, connecting them into one inseparable knot. Then it should be concluded that the current war between Russia and Ukraine for Russia is a religious war. Only during religious wars is such an interlacement of the levels of being possible and an almost complete neglect of one’s own economy (only to ensure war). I mean here the economy of domestic consumption, the economy, as the provision of the standard of living of citizens, and not income from the sale of resources outside. The absence of religion as the driving cause of the war does not change the essence of the matter, since it can only act as a formal ideological shell. The absence of religion as the driving cause of the war does not change the essence of the matter, since it can only act as a formal ideological cover. In essence, Russia is waging a religious war in the 21st century without religion. Therefore, this war is doomed, only religious wars, as you know, are the most fierce and dangerous of wars. They can end either in the defeat of one of the parties, or in the complete exhaustion of both, there is no other stop for them.

Numerous expositions of the causes of the war, therefore, can hardly help us to find its real causes. But they help clarify its ontological status. The ontology of this war, therefore, lies not in the field of living space, nor in the possession of raw materials, nor in the field of vital interests – freedom, equality, etc. This is a war for the right to monopoly possession of the truth and the assertion of one’s status in being. The traditional model of understanding truth and existence in it cannot accept the ongoing changes and turns to war as a last resort. The worst thing about this is that neither the life of an individual, nor the life of even an entire nation weighs anything on such a scale, when on the other side lies the Truth, which includes faith, God, and all values at once. And it doesn’t

matter if it's a delusion or not, since it can only be established with the help of the same truth.

Сергій Шевцов

ОНТОЛОГІЧНЕ ДРЕЙФУВАННЯ ПРИЧИН

Військова агресія Росії в Україні породила безліч припущень щодо її причин та цілей. Наявність сучасних засобів дозволяє вільно чути голоси обох сторін, що багато в чому створює унікальну ситуацію. Серед безлічі теорій і гіпотез про причини і цілі цієї війни немає єдиної думки у жодної із протиборчих сторін. Висловлені варіанти та гіпотези помітно відрізняються одна від одної навіть усередині кожної з країн. У цій статті зроблено спробу класифікувати висловлені погляди на причини та цілі війни для російської та української сторін. Зазначається, що Росія, яка розв'язала війну, пропонує набагато більше версій, ніж Україна. Для української сторони війна переважно сприймається через формулу «на нас напали, і ми захищаємося». Тим часом, питання про те, чому Росія здійснила атаку, набагато складніше. У статті автор виділяє шість рівнів соціального буття, куди можна розподілити запропоновані версії. Ці шість рівнів: індивідуальний, груповий, політичний, ідеологічний, геополітичний та цивілізаційний. У статті робиться висновок про те, що причина не може обмежуватись одним рівнем, агресорові важливо обґрунтувати свої дії на всіх шести рівнях. Примітно, що для Росії економічний рівень не має значення, насправді на цьому рівні є більшість противників війни Росії, тоді як для України економічний рівень має велике значення. На думку автора статті, лише релігія може поєднати шість таких різних рівнів. Тому, припускає він, для Росії ця війна має релігійний характер, хоча вона не пов'язана з релігією і не має релігійної форми. Автор знаходить цю ситуацію парадоксальною та потворною.

Ключові слова: онтологія, Росія, суспільне буття, Україна, війна.

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