

UKRAINE: STILL HERE AFTER AUTUMN?**By John R. Haines**

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The translation of all Russian and Ukrainian language material is by the author unless otherwise noted. The main article discussed herein is a transcribed oral interview. Thus, the original Russian text is notably idiomatic, and its translation follows in that style.

“The secret of politics? Make a good treaty with Russia.”

- Otto von Bismarck

History, John Padgett observes, is not just the sequential record of events. It is also our narration about that record of events.¹ As we watch history shaped in Ukraine, Western policymakers would be well advised to listen more closely to lesser-heard voices in that emerging narration.

In an interview published on 19 May and little noticed in the West, Simon Uralov² offered an intriguing view of what the next six months might hold for Ukraine. Uralov is a Russian-born, L'viv-educated political analyst focused on “Eurasian integration.” He has worked, according to his biography, on “political and electoral” projects in, among other places, South Ossetia, Transdnistria, Kyiv, and Odessa, where he is based.³ He is chief editor of the journal *Eurasia!* (*Однако. Евразия*). His political orientation is perhaps best summarized by the quotation which appears beneath his byline: “For us, there is no integration other than Eurasia, something accepted in Moscow, Minsk and Astana. Thus is formed the nucleus of the new Union.”⁴ He is described somewhat enigmatically in a Ukrainian language report⁵ as a “New Region analyst,” a presumed oblique reference to *Novorossiya*, the imagined territory fancied by Eurasian Movement irredentists to absorb Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odessa oblasts in a swath extending from Russia westward across the Black Sea's northern littoral to Transdnistria.⁶

Under the disturbing headline “Ukraine may cease to exist in the autumn,”⁷ Uralov predicts the current crisis will come to a “complete end” in December 2014. He begins by saying, “my purpose is to depart from the hysterical and

¹ John F. Padgett (2014). “History, Evolution, and Social Networks.” *Institute for Advanced Study Letter*. (Spring 2014), pp. 1 & 18.

² Russian: Семён Уралов.

³ See: <http://uralov.odnako.org>. Last accessed 22 May 2014.

⁴ «Никакой иной интеграции, кроме евразийской, для нас не существует. Это уже понимают в Москве, Минске и Астане. Значит, ядро нового Союза сформировано»

⁵ <http://www.realt5000.com.ua/news/905182/>. Last accessed 22 May 2014.

⁶ Adrian A. Basora & Aleksandr Fisher (2014). “Putin's Greater Novorossiya: The Dismemberment of Ukraine— Analysis.” *Eurasia Review* (online edition, 5 May 2014). <http://www.eurasiareview.com/05052014-putins-greater-novorossiya-dismemberment-ukraine-analysis/>. Last accessed 22 May 2014.

⁷ «Украина может прекратить своё существование уже осенью.»

http://ruskline.ru/opp/2014/05/19/ukraina_mozhet_prekratit_svoyo_suwestvovanie_uzhe_osenyu/. Last accessed 19 May 2014.

antagonistic analysis of the situation in Ukraine, starting with some needed clarification to several important and sensitive topics.”⁸ He quickly dispatches the recent separatist referendum in eastern Ukraine:

“[W]hile making a check mark on the ballot is certainly cool, its effect is not much different than social activists vainly ‘liking’ White Ribbon pages on Facebook...The referendum was indispensable, but not sufficient [to cause change].”⁹

He notes “resistance commander ‘Igor’ described clearly in his video message the passivity of the local population in Luhansk and Donetsk toward any tangible actions to defend their interests against the junta.”

The reference is to Igor Vsevolodovich Girkin a/k/a “Shooter Igor”¹⁰ or its Russian transliteration, *Igor Strelkov* (Russian: Игорь Стрелков.). Strelkov declared himself military leader of the self-declared Donetsk People’s Republic¹¹ having earlier commanded the Donbas People’s Militia. Uralov refers to Strelkov elsewhere as the “Minister of Defense of the Republic of Donetsk.”¹² Ukrainian authorities allege¹³ Girkin is a Colonel in the Russian Federation Armed Force’s Main Intelligence Directorate¹⁴ (“GRU”) though Girkin himself claims¹⁵ to be a retired officer of the Russian Federal Security Service¹⁶ (“FSB”). According to a recent profile, Girkin “has gone to fight in the Donbas— there, he will certainly die...He is in the position of Che Guevara in Bolivia— everyone thinks events here will unfold like Cuba, but of course, it will be different.”¹⁷

An American analysis disclosed by Wikileaks established, according to Uralov, that the Russian government foresaw the current upheaval in Ukraine as far back as 2008, and was determined to avoid having to decide whether to intervene. Avoiding circumstances that would force this decision—and containing the conflict’s intensity—animates all Russian actions vis-à-vis Ukraine. From this, he concludes, “It is logical to assume that the recent development were not a surprise to the Kremlin, and that we are now in for something even more unpleasant and less nuanced, like a ‘Plan E’.”¹⁸

Uralov’s imagined “Plan E” is premised on three objectives:

- Prevent Ukraine’s entry into NATO.
- Prevent an anti-Russian regime from establishing and consolidating political power in Kyiv, which presupposes excluding all fascist elements from the government.
- Prevent ethnic genocide («геноцид») of Russians in southeastern Ukraine.¹⁹

⁸ «Целью данного материала является отход от кликушества и холодный анализ ситуации на Украине. Начну с необходимых уточнений по нескольким эмоционально важным темам.»

⁹ The unabridged quote is: «хочу сразу сказать, что галочка в бюллетене это конечно круто, но не сильно отличается от хипстерско-белоленточных потуг "снести режим" лайком в фейсбуке... Оттого что ‘лайк’ сделан ручкой в бюллетене, суть не меняется. Референдум был необходимым, но далеко не достаточным действием.» The colloquialism “white ribboners” refers to Russia’s so-called “Bolotnaya movement” of anti-Putin intellectuals and artists who held a series of public protests in 2012. “Bolotnaya” is a reference to Moscow’s Bolotnaya Square, the scene of the first protest.

¹⁰ “Shooter” is a colloquial translation of *Strelkov*, a literal translation of which is “Rifleman”.

¹¹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/rolling_news/2014/05/140512_rm_donetsk_strelkov.shtml. Last accessed 19 May 2014.

¹² Семён Уралов (2014). «Новороссия против хунты.» *Однако. Евразия*. 21 мая 2014. [Simon Uralov (2014). “Novorussia against the junta.” 21 May 2014].

<http://www.odnako.org/blogs/donbassa-vs-kievskiy-evromaydan-dnepropetrovskiy-kaganat-mobilizacionniy-rasklad/>. Last accessed 21 May 2014.

¹³ <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/04/28/7023851/>. Last accessed 19 May 2014.

¹⁴ Russian transl.: *Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye*. Russian: Главное разведывательное управление

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-27211501>. Last accessed 19 May 2014.

¹⁶ Russian transl.: *Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii*. Russian: Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации.

¹⁷ «собирается ехать воевать в Донбасс – там он наверняка погибнет. Он находится в положении Че Гевары в Бولیвиі – все думают, что сейчас все будет как на Кубе, но все, конечно, будет иначе.» Олег Кашин (2014). “Из Крыма в Донбасс: приключения Игоря Стрелкова и Александра Бородея.» [Oleg Kashin. “From Crimea to Donbas: The Adventures of Shooter Igor and Alexander Beard.”]

http://slon.ru/russia/iz_kryma_v_donbass_priklyucheniya_igorya_strelkova_i_aleksandra_borodaya-1099696.xhtml. Last accessed 21 May 2014.

¹⁸ «Логично предположить что такое развитие событий для Кремля не было сюрпризом и что сейчас мы находимся в пусть и неприятном но более-менее проработанном сценарии, что-то вроде ‘плана E’.»

¹⁹ «Плана E»:

Such a course of action would, of course, be entirely consistent with Russia's historic approach to its near abroad,²⁰ protracting the civil conflict²¹ and render Ukraine prostrate while tearing off wedges of territory over which Kyiv has increasingly nominal domain, e.g., Novorossiia, as well as such contested regions as Northern Bukovina, Budzhaka, and Transcarpathia.²²

He downplays the likelihood Russia would launch a full-scale military intervention of Ukraine, citing several reasons: (1) the EU would impose immediate severe economic sanctions, one effect of which would be to drive the EU into recession; (2) the imposition of sanctions would compromise Russia in negotiations with China for a "mega" natural gas contract [subsequently announced on 21 May] particularly with respect to price; and (3) taking direct control of Ukraine would impose a formidable economic burden on Russia.

Uralov highlights Russia's "vulnerability" («уязвимостей») to a number of impending events:

- The aforementioned "mega" natural gas contract with China in late May [note: Russia and China subsequently entered into this deal on 21 May].
- An oil contract with Iran in Summer 2014.
- European Parliament elections on 25 May.
- Now-completed approvals for Gazprom's South Stream pipeline.²³

Several factors complicate these tasks, he notes:

- Transitioning to settle energy transactions in rubles,²⁴ something complicated by long-term contracts that cannot be altered unilaterally.
- Switching to quoting prices on Russian energy markets in rubles, "absolutely hellish work" («это абсолютно адский труд») if for no reason other than no one has done it done before.
- Building a Russian financial clearing (payment) system

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- Не допустить вступления Украины в НАТО.
 - Не допустить установление и стабилизацию на Украине русофобского режима, что предполагает денацификацию.
 - Не допустить геноцид русского населения Юго-Востока.

The term «денацификацию» translates literally as "de-Nazification," and refers to excluding far right and neo-fascist groups such as Svoboda and Pravyi Sektor whose members hold important defense and security posts in the current interim government.

²⁰ This idea is developed in S.C.M. Paine (2012). *The Wars for Asia 1911-1949*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 84.

²¹ I use the term "civil conflict" advisedly rather than copy Uralov's use of "civil war." Here, I find the argument offered by Yevgeny Ikhlov persuasive, viz., that what is happening in Donbas is not a "civil war" to determine Ukraine's future but rather an "inter-communal armed conflict" more like Northern Ireland or Lebanon, here with the intent to establish *Novorossiia* as, at most, part of a federated Ukraine. Ikhlov describes this as "Blanquism," or the seizure of power by armed insurgents who then create mass support for themselves, on the model of Fidel Castro's 26th of July Movement in Cuba. See: «Мятеж ради мятежа.» ("Rebellion for rebellion's sake"). *Kasparov.ru*. [online Russian language version, 21 May 2014]. <http://www.kasparov.ru/material.php?id=537C5E5598D16>. Last accessed 22 May 2014.

²² "Northern Bukovina" is a reference to the western Ukrainian Chernivets'ka oblast, on the border with northern Romania and northern Moldova. "Budzhaka" is a reference to Ukrainian territory south of Odessa that sits between the Black Sea and Moldova above the Danube River, which forms Ukraine's border with Romania. Transcarpathia (Ukrainian transliteration: *Zakarpats'ka Oblast'*) is a multi-ethnic region on Ukraine's western border with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. It is variably called Carpathian Rus (Ukrainian transl.: *Karpats'ka Rus'*), Transcarpathian Rus (Ukrainian transl.: *Zakarpats'ka Rus'*) and Subcarpathian Rus (Ukrainian transl.: *Pidkarpats'ka Rus'*).

²³ «Как расположены по времени ключевые точки наших уязвимостей:

1. Газовый контракт с Китаем - май-июнь, возможно 20-22 мая
2. Нефтяной контракт с Ираном - лето
3. Важно! Выборы в Европарламент, на которых много голосов получают евроскептики-союзнники РФ. После выборов будет собран другой состав Еврокомиссии с которым будет значительно легче работать - 25 мая.
4. Собрание всех нужных документов/разрешений/итд на строительство Южного Потока - 16 мая. справились!»

²⁴ It is noteworthy that the Gazprom-China National Petroleum Corporation energy agreement announced 21 May provides for payment in local currencies, not dollars. See: <http://scgnews.com/russia-china-banking-deal-to-exclude-dollar-in-transactions-symbolic-blow-to-dollar>. Last accessed 22 May 2014.

- Preparing for the eventuality that Western sanctions may force Russia to seek suppliers in Asian.²⁵

Uralov suggests Russia has expended great effort to engage Qatar toward establishing a natural gas cartel (“Forum of Gas Exporting Countries”) to include “Russia, Iran, Qatar, Venezuela, Bolivia and other exporters” that would “control at least 55% of the world’s gas reserves and have significant opportunities to influence energy markets in the EU and Asia.” Regarding Qatar, Uralov said:

“According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Qatari emir said that he appreciates the ‘convincing and coherent regional policy of the Russian Federation,’ something very unexpected of a country seen as a United States ally and an opponent of Russian actions in Syria.”²⁶

He asserts, “The American dream to fill the world with cheap natural gas is a death sentence for Qatar.”²⁷ Absent “ultra-high gas prices,” Uralov continues, “Qatar not only loses its hope of becoming a regional power, it also becomes a corpse.”²⁸

While “no one guarantees everything will turn out” as Russia hopes, he emphasizes the importance of recognizing that Moscow is actively seeking opportunities to gain “strategic advantages in the fight against the United States.”²⁹

Stating “I hope now it is clear why the Kremlin is trying to succeed in Ukraine,” he predicts chaos and near-total economic collapse in Ukraine will force Petro Poroshenko [whom most observers including Uralov expect to be elected Ukraine’s president later this month] to negotiate with Moscow, in which direction Poroshenko will be “pushed” by the European Commission, which needs to ensure stable natural gas supplies.

During the period of these negotiations, Russia must “at a minimum ensure Ukraine’s civil war continues, i.e., support the DPR and the LNR (note: these are acronyms for the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics, respectively) but not too quickly so as to avoid creating new problems.”³⁰ This would “ideally combin[e] a prolonged civil war with aggressive negotiations, with the participation of international observers, something like a 2+4 format, i.e., Poroshenko and Tsarev, plus Russia, the EU, the OSCE, and the United States.”³¹

All these factors create “great opportunities for ‘reformatting’ Ukraine into something corresponding to Russian interests.”³² The United States, claims Uralov, is trying to “avoid this scenario,” which gives it a motive to “quickly escalate the conflict to a ‘hot’ phase, with the application of force and widespread bloodshed.” For its part:

“The Kremlin will try to translate the crisis in Ukraine from the acute to the chronic phase—civil war plus sluggish negotiations amidst Ukraine’s economic collapse. At the same time, the Kremlin will use this time to create favorable conditions for transitioning to sharp conflict with the United States—from delinking from the dollar, working with China, Iran and Qatar; creating the Eurasian

²⁵ «Есть еще аспекты, которые очень важны но к которым сложно приложить четкий график:

1. Переход на расчеты в рублях за энергоносители. Нефть и газ - не картошка, есть долгосрочные контракты которые нельзя переделать в одностороннем порядке, требуется долгая работа по замене на новые плюс изменение текущих.
2. Переход на котирование в рублях цен на энергоносители (на торги в рублях) на российских площадках -- это абсолютно адский труд, хотя бы потому, что никто до сих пор ничего подобного по-настоящему не делал.
3. Собственная платежная система
4. Подготовка импортозамещения или налаживание работы с азиатскими поставщиками (не в авральном режиме).»

Uralov later describes these steps as “untethering from the dollar” [«отвязки от доллара»].

²⁶ «По сообщениям МИД, катарский эмир заявил, что он ценит “убедительную и последовательную региональную политику РФ”, что очень неожиданно для страны, которая вроде бы союзник США и 100%-й оппонент РФ в Сирии.»

²⁷ «американские мечты залить весь мир дешевым газом являются для Катара смертным приговором

²⁸ «Без сверхвысоких цен на газ, Катар не просто теряет надежды на региональное величие, а становится трупом.»

²⁹ «никто не дает гарантий что все получится, но важно видеть что Москва активно ищет возможности получить дополнительные стратегические преимущества в борьбе с США.»

³⁰ «обеспечить как минимум сохранение Украины в состоянии гражданской войны (т.е. поддержка ДНР, ЛНР, но Киев слишком быстро брать не надо дабы не создать себе лишних проблем).»

³¹ «идеале совместить гражданскую войну с затянутыми и вязкими переговорами внутри Украины, с участием международных наблюдателей, что-то вроде формата 2+4, т.е. Порошенко, Царев + РФ, ЕС, ОБСЕ, США.»

³² «большие возможности по реформатированию бывшей Украины в нечто соответствующее интересам РФ.»

Economic Community, and so on.”³³

Uralov predicts a “complete end to the crisis in December 2014,” even sooner if “the U.S. stops trying to exacerbate the situation.”

Uralov’s assessment depends upon his assessment of the respective capabilities of the belligerents. He writes in the journal *Однако. Евразия* that “most importantly, what can and should be analyzed in this case—it is the mobilization capabilities of all parties in Ukraine’s civil war.”³⁴

He continues that “The answer to the question of security and military capabilities lies in the plane of the real legitimacy”³⁵ of the respective sides. Of this, Uralov writes:

“In wartime, legitimacy is expressed in the individual’s decision to take up arms and become a volunteer—that is, to make an informed decision. Real legitimacy—it is something like an oath. In peacetime, such an oath is given through elections—when a citizen gives his vote to another person.”³⁶

Uralov then compares the *Euromaidan*³⁷ movement, which he estimates is supported by no more than 2 million Ukrainians, and “the legitimacy of the 11 May Donbas [note: the term incorporates Ukraine’s Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts] referendum,” in which he claims “about 5 million people” voted. “Accordingly,” he writes, “the mobilization capability of Donbas is significantly higher than for Euromaidan.” “No matter how many elections are held, the Republic of Donbas will recruit volunteers,” he continues, “Who is more united in spirit and purpose, the Donbas militias, or the mercenaries recruited by ‘the Dnepropetrovsk Khanate’³⁸?”

The “mercenaries” reference is to the interim government’s March 2014 reconstitution of Ukraine’s National Guard.³⁹ *Pravyi Sektor* (“Right Sector”) leader Dmytro Yarosh⁴⁰ asserts Russia “will be defeated through the deployment of a large-scale guerrilla warfare on the basis of volunteer units that are already formed in Donbas.” He claimed the Donbas-1 battalion has already been formed from among *Pravyi Sektor* fighters, and that the Donbas-2 and Donbas-3 battalions are forming. *Pravyi Sektor* recently moved its headquarters to Dnepropetrovsk to strengthen “this outpost of Ukrainian statehood at the junction of south and east and prevent the spread of the Kremlin infection,”⁴¹ thus Uralov’s reference to “the Dnepropetrovsk Khanate.” During last Sunday’s presidential candidates’ debate, Yarosh called for “targeted assassinations” of separatist leaders.⁴²

Events on the ground will shortly resolve Uralov’s prescience on whether that “Ukraine may cease to exist in the autumn.” What is clear today is that his rumination of a Russian “Plan E” and its connection to several pivotal

³³ «Кремль будет стараться перевести кризис на Украине из острой фазы в хроническую - гражданскую войну плюс вялотекущие переговоры на фоне экономического коллапса Украины. Одновременно, Кремль будет использовать время для того чтобы создать максимально комфортные условия для перехода в фазу острого противостояния с США - отвязка от доллара, работа с Китаем, Ираном, Катаром, создание Евразэс итд.»

³⁴ «главное, что можно и нужно анализировать в данном случае, — это мобилизационные возможности всех участников гражданской войны на Украине.» See fn(12).

³⁵ The unabridged quote is «Ответ на вопрос о силовых и военных возможностях новых государственных образований на месте бывшей Украины лежит в плоскости реальной легитимности.»

³⁶ «В военное время легитимность выражается в решении взять в руки оружие и стать добровольцем — то есть принять осознанное решение. Реальная легитимность — это что-то вроде присяги. В мирное время такая присяга даётся через выборы — когда гражданин отдаёт свою частичку власти другому человеку.»

³⁷ Uralov and others use the term “Euromaidan” (Ukrainian transl.: *Yevromaidan*. Ukrainian: Євромайдан) as shorthand for the political reform protest movement whose actions contributed to the removal of President Viktor Yanukovich and installation of the current interim government in Kyiv.

³⁸ Uralov writes, “In Dnepropetrovsk and Odessa, all power belongs to the financial and industrial group ‘Privat,’ which is an ally of the Kyiv Euromaidan.”

³⁹ Formally, the National Guard of Ukraine (Ukrainian transl.: *Natsionalna gvardiya Ukrayini*. Ukrainian: Національна гвардія України).

⁴⁰ Yarosh earlier led the paramilitary organization *Tryzub* (Ukrainian: Тризуб), formally the “Stepan Bandera All-Ukrainian Organization ‘Tryzub’” (Ukrainian: Всеукраїнська організація «Тризуб» імені Степана Бандери), which *Pravyi Sektor* co-founded in coalition with several far right and nationalist groups.

⁴¹ “Yarosh: Putin to get guerilla war in Ukraine.” 19 May 2014. http://scgnews.com/s/13358/laP?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter. Last accessed 21 May 2014.

⁴² “Right Sektor Leader Calls for Guerrilla War and Targeted Assassinations in Eastern Ukraine.” 19 May 2014. http://scgnews.com/right-sektor-leader-call-for-guerrilla-war-and-targeted-assassinations-in-eastern-ukraine?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter. Last accessed 21 May 2014.

events in the near-term is worth taking serious note of, especially in light of yesterday's announcement that Russia's Gazprom and the China National Petroleum Corporation concluded a long-term energy supply deal.

Robert Kaplan wrote earlier this week, “[E]ven a world of rival hegemons implies some degree of recognizable order and organization.” What is more difficult to imagine, he continues, “is a world in which nobody is sufficiently in charge anywhere, where formlessness rules, where hierarchy itself has decayed.” Welcome to Ukraine, circa Autumn 2014.

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