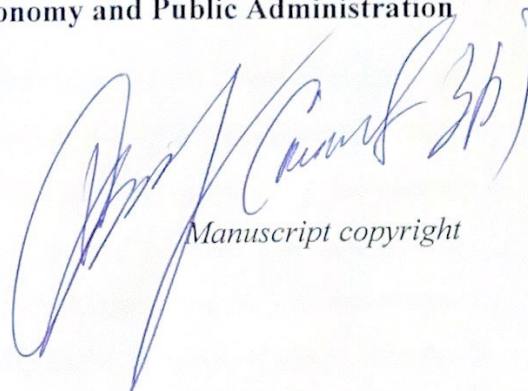


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**Geopolitical dimension of the "Crimean issue"
in the Context of National Security of Russia**

**Annotation
to the Candidate of Political Science Thesis**

Specialty 5.5.4. – International relations, global and regional issues

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The relevance of the dissertation research topic.

The relevance of the topic is determined, *firstly*, by the need for a deep and detailed analysis of external threats to Russia's national security in the context of the geopolitical conflict over Crimea. After the "parade of sovereignties" and gaining independence by the newly independent states, relations between Russia and Western countries went through several periods of revival and rapprochement, separated by periods of noticeable cooling. At the present moment, most of the experts agree in defining the current nature of Russia's relations with the West as a new stage of the Cold War. Multiple complications arising within the geopolitical situation on the southern "outskirts" of Eurasia (Syria, Turkey, etc.) lead to the aggravation of the state of the "Crimean issue": as a result, Crimea becomes the western tip of the southwestern "geopolitical front". The United States, through NATO and its new allies from among the post-Soviet states, seek to expand its geopolitical positions on a global and regional scale (the policy of President Trump in this context is seen only as a slight deviation from the general line of American foreign policy). This was evidenced by the active policy of the North Atlantic Alliance and of the United States in the Baltics, Moldova, Ukraine, and so on. These circumstances constitute a threat to the national security of the Russian state.

Secondly, the Russian Federation, as the legal successor (successor state) of the USSR, for objective reasons, cannot give up the role of a superpower (although this category is absent in the strategic documents of the Russian Federation) and takes consistent steps to preserve and strengthen this role. One of these steps was return of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian state. At the same time, the legal aspect of the step taken by the Russian political leadership remains unclear, causing controversy in the political and expert environment in Russia and abroad. Accusations of violating international law against Russia became the starting point for the implementation of policies that undermine the national security of the state. These circumstances were taken into account in the content of the amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation adopted by the all-Russian voting in 2020 in the part related to foreign policy activities. Thus, the dichotomy of the foundations of international law and the national interests of a single subject of the world politics gives rise to crisis situations that form the

landscape of a new geopolitical reality. The latter issue is of extreme relevance for modern political science research.

Thirdly, the Russian Federation and the collective West, viewed from the position of achieving geopolitical interests in Eurasia, act in fact on a competitive basis, which, however, implies situational cooperation (which really takes place despite the hot phase of information confrontation), and the emergence of contradictions, as well, that can lead to open military-political conflicts. Thus, there is an urgent need to analyze the ongoing processes within the framework of the "Crimean issue" and to predict various situations of their development in order to develop measures to neutralize the negative consequences of the change in the military-political situation in the Azov-Black Sea region.

Fourthly, the relevance of the research topic is determined by the need to analyze the real geopolitical significance of Crimea, the positions of key geopolitical actors in the region, to study internal and external resources fueling the geopolitical conflict in the Azov-Black Sea region in order to develop and implement measures aimed at resolving the "Crimean issue" taking into account national interests of the Russian Federation.

Fifthly, it is determined by the need for a comprehensive study of the content of technologies and tools used to implement the geopolitical confrontation in the Azov-Black Sea region. Understanding the "mechanics" by which geopolitical pressure on Russia is implemented, and predicting its transformation, the emergence of new approaches and tools would make it possible to effectively counter Russia's geopolitical opponents and ensure an effective foreign policy of the state in order to ensure national security.

The problematic situation within researched topic, at resolve of which the current dissertation research is directed, can be characterized as follows: modern international relations are characterized by the presence of a dichotomy between political and international legal aspects. This contradiction comes appears in almost any geopolitical operations, becoming the cause of conflict interactions between geopolitical subjects. Since the contradiction between political and legal elements within the framework of the modern international relations system is insoluble, the prevalence of law or geopolitical interests is determined mainly by the power

component, which results in destabilization in the field of security (international and national) and imbalance in the international system.

The scientific task to be solved by this study is as follows: to find a solution to the "Crimean issue" as an attribute of the geopolitical conflict, as well as conflict situations similar to it, in the geopolitical plane, using the potential of those factors whose influence is underestimated in the modern theory of international relations in the context of the contradiction between the political and international legal components of the system of international relations and the increasing factor of power.

The object of the dissertation research is the geopolitical conflict over Crimea ("the Crimean issue").

The subject of the dissertation research is the existing experience and possible ways to resolve the "Crimean issue" in order to ensure the national security of the Russian Federation.

Purpose and objectives of the dissertation research. The purpose of this study is to develop a relevant working mechanism to resolve the "Crimean issue", to determine the possibilities and directions for Russia's policy in the Azov-Black Sea region to ensure the national security of the Russian Federation.

The purpose of the current research determines following research tasks that are to be solved:

1. Assessment by means of critical analysis of the "Crimean issue" as a problem of international relations, based on the experience of theoretical interpretations of the problem.
2. Determine the geopolitical significance of Crimea for ensuring international and national security.
3. Describe the political and legal aspects of the entry of the Crimean Peninsula and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation.
4. Determine the significance of the "Crimean issue" in the context of ensuring the national interests and national security of modern Russia, the formation of a "security space" along the perimeter of Russian borders.

5. To identify the positions of key geopolitical actors on the "Crimean issue", the level and nature of the involvement of each of the geopolitical actors in regional processes, the degree of direct or indirect participation in the conflict, the main contradictions and possible points of convergence of their interests.

6. Analyze and characterize the specifics of the technologies and tools used by the actors in the geopolitical confrontation within the framework of the "Crimean issue".

7. Determine the significance of the factor of the civilizational identity of the Crimean population in the geostrategy of Russia.

8. To provide a critical assessment of the ways proposed by modern researchers to resolve the "Crimean issue" and develop a mechanism for resolving the "Crimean issue" taking into account the national interests of Russia, ways to improve the policy of the Russian Federation in the field of ensuring national security in the Black Sea direction and in the Crimea, in particular, taking into account the factor civilizational identity of the Crimean population and the nature of existing threats at the global and regional levels.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the dissertation is defined by principles of historicism, scientific character and objectivity; theoretical principles of political science, traditional political science methods - comparative method, retrospective method, structural and functional analysis, situational analysis, scenario analysis, modeling; general scientific methods - analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction, observation, analysis of documents, etc.

The study is based on modern scientific approaches towards the development of international politics, international relations and security: geopolitical theory (Makkinder H., Mahan A., Schmitt K., Triar J., Savitsky P., Ilyin I., Semenov Tyan-Shansky V. , Dugin A., Gadzhiev K. et al.), national security theory (Prokhozhev A., Pozdnyakov A. et al.), systems theory (Bertalanffy L., Easton D., Luman N., Parsons T. Deutsch K. , Anokhin P.), civilizational theory (Toynbee A., Danilevsky N., Leontiev N., Huntington S., Panarin A. et al.), the concept of identity in the study of politics (Bourdieu P., Diligensky G., Tilly C. , Drobizheva L., Semenenko I., Guboglo M. and others).

The dissertation research consists of three sequentially implemented stages.

At the first stage of the study, the place of the "Crimean issue" as a problem in modern international relations was determined from the perspective of historical, conflictological, sociological, geopolitical campaigns, the theory of international relations, etc. At this stage political essence of the "Crimean issue", which should be seen as a challenge to stability, international security and Russia's national security, was determined, based on the comparative analysis of the abovementioned perspectives. The use of a geopolitical approach allowed to determine the significance of Crimea as a key geopolitical point in the Eastern Hemisphere, and the "Crimean issue" - as a factor in ensuring international and national security.

At the second stage, the use of system analysis, structural and functional analysis, the provisions of the theory of national security and the theory of geopolitics, the retrospective method, a number of general scientific methods made it possible to determine and characterize the political, legal and geopolitical dimension of the "Crimean issue" in the context of ensuring the national interests and national security of modern Russia. Through a systemic and situational analysis, the positions of key geopolitical actors on the "Crimean issue" were determined. The use of such a combination of methods made it possible to come to the conclusion that it is necessary to develop a new tool and new mechanisms of geopolitical influence for the successful resolution of the "Crimean issue" in the new conditions of the functioning complex and super-complex systems.

At the third stage, through a combination of systemic, structural-functional, comparative analysis, the specifics of the technologies and tools of geopolitical confrontation used by international actors in the framework of the "Crimean issue" were determined, and the need to find a new mechanism to resolve it was identified. The provisions of the theory of geopolitics, the civilizational approach and the concept of identity made it possible to consider the possibility of using the factor of civilizational identity for a favorable resolution of the "Crimean issue", taking into account Russian national interests based on empirical data. The modeling method made it possible to present a simulation model of the mechanism of geopolitical influence on the conflict around Crimea (a model for resolving the "Crimean issue"). Four scenarios were proposed for resolving the "Crimean issue" using a situational analysis and specific practical recommendations for the implementation of national interests and

ensuring the national security of Russia, taking into account the identified resource of the civilizational identity of the Crimean population.

Empirical basis of the research. The following groups of sources are identified as the empirical basis of this study.

The first group of sources, containing a significant amount of information about the nature and intensity of the geopolitical conflict over Crimea, was formed by international and national legislation, open access materials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Security Council of the Russian Federation, presented on official websites. This group formed the factual basis of the sections of the study.

The second group of sources on contemporary issues within the framework of the “Crimean issue” includes materials contained in the Internet versions of various Russian and foreign media, information and analytical agencies: interviews with senior officials, heads of ministries and departments, comments on world and regional events presented by prominent Russian scientists and experts, policy experts in the Azov-Black Sea region, information and analytical materials.

The third group of sources consists of expert interviews obtained during the conversations of the author of the dissertation directly on the territory of Crimea with Russian diplomats, military, scientists, public figures, and representatives of business community.

Finally, *the fourth group* of sources consisted of office documentation, statistical data, the results of sociological research, and the author's own calculations.

The indicated parameters of the empirical base of the study made it possible to carry out an effective verification of the results obtained in the framework of this scientific qualification work.

Provisions submitted for thesis defence:

1. The unresolved state of the “Crimean issue” is a challenge to international security and national security of Russia, and a resolution mechanism developed on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical conflict environment and factors affecting it can become a model for political practices for resolving conflicts around disputed territories.

2. The contradictions between the people's right to self-determination and the principle of the territorial integrity of states in international law within conditions of the new world order create the opportunity for major geopolitical players to freely choose between two models - "legitimate actions" and "implementation of national interests". The possibility of free choice is formed by the force field of the geopolitical player and is based on the "right of the strong".

3. Control over the Crimean Peninsula, as a geopolitical point, provides geopolitical superiority in the Eastern Hemisphere and is an important factor in ensuring international and national security. The successful resolution of the "Crimean issue" will allow closing the "security perimeter" of the Russian state and freeing up resources for the implementation of national interests outside this "perimeter", for example, in the Near and Middle East, which will make it possible to significantly advance towards the formation of a "security space" along the perimeter of Russian borders. "Crimean issue" has become an indicator by which one can judge with a high degree of accuracy the level of Russia's subjectivity in world politics.

4. The linear influence of the subjects of the system of international relations on Russia in order to return the Crimean Peninsula under the legal and political control of Ukraine (more precisely, the geopolitical control of the West) does not take into account the whole variety of external and internal factors influencing geopolitical processes in the region and at the global level. The resolution of the geopolitical conflict and the international legitimation of the act of reunification of Crimea with Russia using the old tools in the new conditions of the functioning complex and super-complex systems is impossible. To resolve the "Crimean issue" geopolitical mechanisms should be involved, which take into account new factors. The technologies and tools of geopolitical confrontation within the framework of the "Crimean issue" are universal, but the effectiveness and success of their use depends on the resources and capabilities available to the geopolitical actor.

5. The presence in Crimea of the civilizational identity of Russia-Eurasia should become a criterion and one of the basic conditions for resolving the "Crimean issue" in the format of recognizing the Russian ownership of the peninsula. Taking into account the fact that the coincidence of a number of identities in the subject can cause a "synergistic effect" that can significantly influence the geopolitical processes in the region, it is necessary to consider the

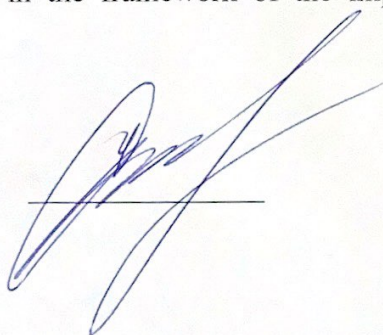
phenomenon of civilizational identity of the Crimean population as a factor favorable for the implementation of Russia's national interests in resolving the "Crimean issue", an instrument aimed at legitimization of the act of reunification of Crimea with Russia, for which it is expedient to conceptualize it and introduce it as a significant element in the strategic planning documents of the Russian Federation. The use of the concept of civilizational identity of the Crimean population (as a tool) in the mechanism for resolving the "Crimean issue" will allow one to ignore the existence of a contradiction in international law between the people's right to self-determination and the principle of territorial integrity and, in general, the dichotomy of law and politics in a geopolitical conflict. The use of such geopolitical tools in foreign and domestic policy can favorably influence the satisfaction of Russian national interests in the process of resolving the "Crimean issue" (legitimization of the Russian ownership of Crimea, etc.), strengthen the role of Russia in the region and in the world, and also have a favorable effect on ensuring its national security and international security in general.

Research hypothesis. Based on the geopolitical approach, this study proposes as a hypothesis a mechanism for resolving the "Crimean issue", which determines the content of interstate relations between Russia and Western countries, based, on the one hand, on ignoring the dichotomy of law and politics in the geopolitical conflict, and on the other hand, on the assumption that the mechanism for resolving the "Crimean issue" lies not in the legal and political planes, but in the geopolitical one, and is complex in terms of its action in the internal and external directions.

The theoretical significance of the results of the dissertation research lies in the fact that they provide a holistic scientific understanding of the specific features of the "Crimean issue", which has become an attribute of the geopolitical conflict between Russia and the collective West. Significance of the research is also demonstrated in the possibilities of resolving it with political tools at the level of tactics and strategy, identified in the framework of the study, in order to ensure international security, national security, the realization of Russia's national interests, its stable and progressive development. The mechanism of geopolitical influence on the conflict proposed in the research (the model for resolving the "Crimean issue") can be recommended as a theoretical basis for resolving the "Crimean issue",

consolidating Russian geopolitical influence in the Azov-Black Sea region in order to ensure national and international security, as well as methodological and an applied base of international practice in resolving the problems of disputed territories.

The practical significance of the dissertation research lies in the possibility of using its results in the activities of state bodies responsible for the formation and implementation of the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation and the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, as well as the stabilization of relations between Russia and Western countries, regional states, forecasting the development of the situation in the Northern Black Sea region, overcoming contradictions arising from the collision of Russian national interests with the national interests of Western countries, as well as the contradictions that exist in Russian society regarding the "Crimean issue". In particular, state and public structures can use the conceptualization of the category of "civilizational identity" proposed in the work as a geopolitical tool, taking the appropriate place in the strategic documents of the Russian Federation (in the section "Priorities of the Russian Federation in solving global problems" of the Concept of Russian Foreign Policy, in the Strategy national security), becoming a kind of attractor for the formation of a new focus in the discourse on the "Crimean issue" in Russia and abroad, etc. The conducted research can be used in the process of teaching students and students of educational institutions, specialized courses for employees of ministries and departments of the Russian Federation dealing with the problems of public management and ensuring the national security of Russia in the framework of the implementation of Russia's practical geopolitics in Eurasia.



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