

Russian hand in Dutch referendum

Negative result of the future referendum in Netherlands regarding the EU-Ukraine association throws into jeopardy the unity of the European countries, which will be a godsend to V. Putin. Besides, in line with the report compiled by AIVD in 2015, Russia is viewed as one of the most daunting threats, let alone its vigorous activity in Netherlands, which puts in danger the security system of the latter. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12103602/America-to-investigate-Russian-meddling-in-EU.html>)

Ukraine understands that scheduled for April, 6 2016 Dutch referendum pertaining to the foregoing association is not only about Ukraine. The main figures of this referendum are striving for the high places in the governments of their countries as well as the seats in the EU.

“Ukraine failed to come in the right time, in the right place. Unfortunately, such things do happen”, - writes Dmitriy Kuleba, Ukrainian diplomat. (<http://gazeta.zn.ua/international/legenda-i-realnost-gollandskogo-referenduma-.html>)

Kiev doubts that Kremlin initiated the referendum play, however, it is dead sure that Kremlin is a part of this play.

Along with that, a slew of facts stir the thought that misfortune is only one side of a story. The flipside is much more complicated. To start off, originally the day of ratification for the association agreement between the EU and Ukraine was fixed for one day, but afterwards one of the Dutch MPs proposed to reschedule the implementation of the arrangements two weeks later.

The aforementioned offer was easily accepted as long as at first sight it looked that there was need to rush things. Nevertheless, it resulted in the necessity to hold referendum regarding the association (here a question arises about the competence of the Ukrainian embassy in Netherlands and its big-wigs in Kiev).

Apart from that, messages voiced by Dutch politicians fully replicate Russian clichés.

Moreover, the proposal to invite OSCE observers on the referendum bears huge resemblance to the Russian tactics towards legitimization of international processes as long as the Europeans have never fallen back on that mechanism within the EU.

Key players

Considering the experience of Ukraine that has a 2-year record of military and informational battling against Russia’s aggression, the major players to be used by Russia to crash the results of the referendum in Netherlands into dust.

The principal goal is to ensure the support of the politicians and pundits, who already profess a Russian stance against the ratification of the association. This is implemented by Russian diplomats and politicians off the record, but its results have clear-cut shapes in the statements chanted in the mass media.

The first and foremost lobbyist of Russian Federation is a group of people who organized the referendum in Netherlands. i.e. “Committee of the EU citizens”, center for analysis “Forum for Democracy”, and “Party of Freedom”, whose leader G. Vilders maintained the aforementioned initiative.

By the way, “Party of Freedom” is an ally of the French right radical party “National Front” chaired by Maryn LePen. Both these parties are the members of the faction labeled “Europe of nations and freedoms” operating in the European Parliament, which unites European skeptics speaking against the influx of migrants and buttressing the policy pursued by Putin.

Nigel Farage, leader of the British party “UKIP”, promised to come to Netherlands in April in order to support the contestants of the association agreement between the EU and Ukraine, says DW (<http://www.dw.com/uk/%D0%BB%D1%96%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80-ukip-%D0%B0%D0%B3%D1%96%D1%82%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B5-%D1%83->

<http://www.dw.com/ru/%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%B2-%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BD%D1%8B-%D1%81-%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BC-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D1%80%D1%84/a-19077552?maca=rus-facebook-dw>), which caused a public splash even among the Russians living in the other countries (<http://newsru.nl/index.php/ru/world/960-smi>).

Russian embassy in Netherlands works with Russian community. Methods used by Russian diplomats towards compatriots are clearly pictured in the scandal affiliated to Russian diaspora in Spain (<http://www.dw.com/ru/%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%8F%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%B2-%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BD%D1%8B-%D1%81-%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BC-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D1%80%D1%84/a-19077552?maca=rus-facebook-dw>), which caused a public splash even among the Russians living in the other countries (<http://newsru.nl/index.php/ru/world/960-smi>).

Russian diplomats tried to enlist the respective diaspora to political activity: see through Kremlin's lens the war in Ukraine, set up the broadcasts of anti-Ukrainian movies targeted to Russians staying in Netherlands.

In parallel, public opinion is shaped with the help media. Apart from the traditional channels like "Russia Today", SPUTNIK etc., a specific emphasis would be made on the local media conduits.

Local press already contains multiple anti-Ukrainian materials, e.g. blog **GeenStijl** (<http://www.dutchnews.nl/dictionary/geenstijl/>), which became one of the main informational resources voicing against the association of Ukraine and the EU. Apparently, shortly before the exam such kind of propaganda nests are set to mushroom tenfold.

One of the most widely exploited practices is the commercially-imbued enlistment of local journalist to create anti-Ukrainian materials. The most vivid example connected to that is a French-made scandalous movie called "Ukraine. Masks of the Revolution" (<http://www.stopfake.org/en/polish-tv-broadcasts-moreira-s-masks-of-the-revolution-on-maidan-shooting-anniversary/>).

As regards to Netherlands, the latter is going to come up with TV series (<http://www.stopfake.org/v-gollandii-snimut-propagandistskij-serial-protiv-assotsiatsii-s-ukrainoj/>) inspired by famous Dutch columnist Leon de Vinter, who urges the locals to vote against the ratification of association agreement between the EU and Ukraine. The cornerstone of the plot lies with corrupt European Commissioner of Dutch origin trying to help Ukrainian mogul to push Ukraine into the EU family.

Also, AIVD repeatedly pointed out their worries that Russian security services energized their activity in Netherlands (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12103602/America-to-investigate-Russian-meddling-in-EU.html>). These worries are not irrational.

Former FSB operative shed light in his interview on the methods of militant infiltration into Europe (<http://tsn.ua/video/video-novini/scho-mozhe-sprichiniti-spravzhniy-shpigunskiy-vibuh.html>; <http://politua.su/2015/12/10/8099/>), namely for such people Russian security services prepare all papers in advance as well as develop a cover story, for example labeling them as refugees. After a year in their new country they receive necessary means to fulfill assigned missions towards internal destabilization of a respective country.

Netherlands enjoy peace and comfort for now. But radical scenarios cannot be ruled out, because the information groundwork has been already laid down, e.g. <http://www.stopfake.org/nl/fake-het-azov-bataljon-gaat-door-met-het-bedreigen-van-nederland/>, *in* *Russian-* <http://apostrophe.com.ua/news/world/2016-02-03/poyavilos-ocherednoe-feykovok-video-s-yakobyi-boytsami-azova-/48871>) where alleged fighters of AZOV battalion are threatening to make a short shrift of those among Dutch citizens who will give their thumbs-up for Ukraine-EU association. Of course, this video happens to be nothing but sheer fake (<http://www.stopfake.org/nl/anti-nederlands-dreigfilmpje-is-russische-propaganda/>), nevertheless it might be easily used by paid-to-play pro-Russian media provided something wrong takes place in Netherlands.

Dutch security services should also pay attention to Russian activity on its media market, especially during the last two years. Ample examples of big-time Russian purchases of foreign media sources can be found in Serbia and Montenegro, let alone Czech Republic (<https://www.rbc.ua/stylar/kino/cheshskie-druzya-kremlya-vyshel-film-tom-1452431333.html>), where it has recently been discovered that web-site «Eurodenik.cz» is profoundly financed by Russian businessmen (<http://neovlivni.cz/propagandisticky-eurodenik-cz-vlastni-rusti-byznysmeni/>).

Besides, starting from 2015 a pronounced tendency of Russian-employed journalists spreading via Europe has been leaping to an eye. However, it is worth mentioning that they appear in the European states not as grass-root representatives of the 4th power, but as the directors of media companies, web-sites, informational agencies etc. All this significantly contributes to the creation of local Russia-respired media product easily digestible for indigenous population of Europe.

To compliment, a colossal wave of Russian political experts was dispatched to various EU countries, e.g. Natalia Narochnickaya (<http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/24650324.html>), who is quite active in her propagandist activity (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0D--nt-Bst8>).

By the way, in Netherlands lives Vladimir Kornilov, former director of Institute of CIC branch (Russia) situated in Kiev, who is a die-hard champion of the “Russian world” and ideologists of the Ukrainian separatism. In all honesty, he is extremely active on his Facebook page on the topic of the future referendum or MH17 flight tragedy (<http://www.stopfake.org/nl/fake-internationale-experts-houden-kiev-verantwoordelijk-voor-het-neerhalen-van-de-mh17/>), not to mention his vigorous stance in public debates dedicated to the foregoing topic.

Indeed the whole range of the aforementioned methods might be regarded in a way new to Europe, but all of them are time-tested and long-used in Ukraine. Seemingly, the true scope of this problem has been grasped after the latest events in Germany.

In particular, «Süddeutsche Zeitung» » (<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/russland-aufklaerung-nach-moskauer-art-1.2869744>) states that BND takes solid steps to identify KGB-styled methods of “active measures” exploited by the USSR during the Cold War and now professed by modern Russia.

Hot-button issues

Yet Russian information campaign is not in full swing in Netherlands. Instead it prefers to apply the tactics of small steps just to be on the safe side.

In this case they instill the idea in the minds of Dutch people the Ukraine and Ukrainians are bad using for that purpose the notorious downing of MH-17 and painting Ukrainian as a mastermind of that appalling tragedy.

Secondly, the topic of corruption in Ukraine pulls at all stops (<http://www.stopfake.org/gollandskij-blog-nazval-ukrainu-oligarhstanom-i-prizyvaet-bajkotirovat-referendum/>), proclaiming that the Dutch would be forced to cash down for the implementation of reforms in Ukraine. One of the newest tricks is linked to a so called “paid return” of the Ukrainians to their native land in case they are provided with a sum of money equaling to 3450 euro (<https://golospravdy.com/u-gollandii-rozkrili-sxemu-otrimannya-ukraincyami-groshej-za-bizhenstvo/>).

Undoubtedly, the entire scope of that hue and dry is wide from truth. For sure, no later than 2 weeks before the start of the referendum all Dutch media will go crazy, so the only thing to fall back on to avoid being dumbed is to check information carefully through credible media resources, e.g. **StopFake** (<http://www.stopfake.org/nl/home-2/>).

Nevertheless, Dutch people should bear in mind that Russian propaganda seeks no truth, which is perfectly understood if to recall the videos with “a boy crucified by militants” (<http://www.stopfake.org/en/top-5-russian-fake-reports-of-2014/>), or “a girl named Liza, who was raped by the Syrians” (<http://www.stopfake.org/nl/russische-media-noemen-geestelijk-verwarde-duitser-vluchteling/>).