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Ukraine Crisis: Political Transformation vs. Security and Migration

Abstract: *International public opinion, especially European one, is focused on the issue of migrants reaching Europe from the Near East. Due to the scale of migration, southern neighborhood draws attention of decision-makers and the public of individual EU member states. For some countries, the number of migrants has become a problem of social nature (e.g. approximately a million migrants reaching Germany in 2015). However, the fact that a war rages on in Donbas, right beyond the EU's eastern border, cannot be disregarded as the conflict fosters further migration problems (internal and international migration).*

Russo-Ukrainian conflict in Donbas has changed the perception of Ukraine's internal situation. The conflict pertains not only to the issue of hard security (e.g. military capabilities), but touches upon soft security as well i.e. in this case, the issue of migration (both international, and one associated with Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs). It is noteworthy that events of the Euromaidan revolution resulted in one of the more violent transformations, not only in the post-Soviet space, but also continental Europe. In addition, Russia's destabilization of eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea undeniably constitute the greatest European security crisis since the Balkan war of 1990s. Undeniably, when faced with economic, military and social problems (e.g. IDPs), Ukraine will not be able to manage the situation on its own without external financial aid.

Keywords: Ukraine crisis, Ukraine's security, migration, Internally Displaced Persons, EU's eastern border

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Introduction

International public opinion, especially European one, is focused on the issue of migrants reaching Europe from the Near East. Due to the scale of migration, southern neighborhood draws attention of decision-makers and the public of individual EU member states. For some countries, the number of migrants has become a problem of social nature (e.g. approximately a million migrants reaching Germany in 2015). However, the fact that a war rages on in Donbas, right beyond the EU's eastern border, cannot be disregarded as the conflict fosters further migration problems (internal and international migration).

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The objective of the present paper is an attempt at viewing Euromaidan events from the perspective of Ukraine's political transformation and the Maidan's aftermath embodied by the migration crisis. As a result of the conflict, Ukraine struggles with a tremendous number of Internally Displaced Persons. In addition, the problem is aggravated by international migration (neighboring countries as the destination) resulting from Ukraine's difficult economic situation. The present paper discusses solely the issue of IDPs resulting from the armed conflict in Donbas. The issue of Ukrainian economic migration, on the other hand, will not be discussed at this time.

1. 'Euromaidan' as an attempt at Ukraine's political transformation

When discussing Ukraine's political transformation, the fact that the essential stage of public verification of independent Ukraine's political system fell on the end of 2004 and 2014, ought to be highlighted. The verification was motivated by new realities experienced by Ukrainian public and state. The reality emerged as a result of the presidential election of 2004 and the subsequent so-called 'Orange Revolution' between 22nd November 2004 and 23rd January 2005, and Viktor Yanukovich's, Ukraine's president at that time, refusal to sign the association agreement with the EU on 21st November 2013, which resulted in the events commonly known as 'the Revolution of Dignity' or 'the Euromaidan Revolution' taking place between 21st November 2013 and 23rd February 2014.

Transition of power in Ukraine, taking place between 2013 and 2014, commonly named ‘the Revolution of Dignity’ and ‘Euromaidan’, was characterized by certain stages of evolution determined by the level of repressive actions undertaken by the government and its security forces. Sociologists examining participants of ‘Euromaidan’ in Kiev distinguished three distinct stages. The first stage was named Maidan-meeting. It occurred in the first half of December 2013, and revolved around protests resulting from the president’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU in Vilnius and brutal battery of defenseless students on the night of 29th/30th November 2013. The end of December is the time of Maidan-camp when protesters took residence in the Maidan of Independence. The government did not undertake wide-scale brutal and aggressive actions at that time. The third stage was the so-called Maidan-Sich (a reference to Zaporizhian Sich). Maidan-Sich witnessed regular clashes between protesters and law enforcement officers and armed forces subordinated to Yanukovych and the government. It should be noted that since the beginning of protests in Ukraine, public opinion and experts, not only in Poland, but in Europe and in the world, expressed keen interest in the problem of social representation of the so-called ‘Euromaidan’. Issues pertaining to the character and purposefulness of actions which were undertaken seemed significant as well. For skeptics, such actions constituted an attempt at overthrowing the existing constitutional order in the country, this time by a radical, pro-European minority of Ukrainian society. They also presented dilemmas pertaining to the scope of social legitimization required for ‘political and moral validity’ of these demonstrations. According to a Ukrainian sociologist, director of ‘Democratic Initiatives Foundation’ – Irina Berezkina, ‘even though the majority of protesters originated from western and central Ukraine, Maidan represented the whole country’. As far as imperatives and motivational objectives of demonstrations are concerned, initially, Euromaidan strived to coerce the government to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. The situation changed essentially with the battery of protesters, defenseless students, by Berkut on the night of 30th November 2013. This turning point transformed pro-European and pro-EU protests into wide-scale anti-government ones. When asked by sociologists about their motivation and objectives, respondents isolated three crucial reasons for participating in protests: brutal repressions against protesters; Yanukovych’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU; and desire to accomplish a qualitative change of life in Ukraine. Therefore, the fact that the main objective and motivation of protesters was not the desire to change the government itself, but rather the way power was exercised, is noteworthy. The association with the EU was considered, on the one hand, as a symbol of democracy and better life, and on the other, as an instrument which would

force political elites to change the way they executed power and foster respect for citizens' fundamental rights. Symptomatically, appeals of key opposition politicians were indicated as reasons for participating in the Maidan very rarely. Maidan's apoliticality, especially in its early stages, has been noted by Wojciech Konończuk and Tadeusz A. Olszański, authors of a publication of Centre for Eastern Studies. Initially, Euromaidan was consciously antiparty in character. In addition, rallies flew the Ukrainian national flag and the flag of the EU exclusively. Originally, there existed two separate Euromaidans, a fact of symbolic significance. The first Maidan was located at the Independence Square, and was organized bottom-up, in an informal manner, by public activists and students. The second Maidan was initiated by leaders of the parliamentary opposition at the European Square. The two Maidans stood only a few hundred meters apart. On 26th November 2013, the two combined into one, or rather 'the opposition's Euromaidan' joined 'Euromaidan of activists and students'. Three key opposition leaders: Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Vitali Klitschko, and Oleh Tyahnybok became the official voice of Euromaidan. However, they never gained full support and trust of protesters. According to authors of the Centre for Eastern Studies' publication, a strong Maidan's leader, who would manifest the same kind of authority as in the case of the Orange Revolution of 2004, was missing. As a consequence, problems in communicating and voicing demonstrators' expectations emerged at specific stages of Euromaidan. To conclude, the fact that the description of Euromaidan, which was based on sociological studies, and its comparison to digital revolutions in the network society outlined by Manuel Castells, allows to consider Euromaidan as representing the whole Ukrainian society, ought to be acknowledged. It enables its diversity, and the common, and at the same time, specific and exceptional, to be captured. In other words, it allows Euromaidan to be perceived as a bottom-up protest which was focused on values rather than on a public or political leader (as opposed to the Orange Revolution of 2004). A decentralized, horizontal structure of the protest, instead of a vertical one, seems significant. Its symbols are manifested in a democratic, virtual, online dimension of the mobilization, and subsequently civil disobedience. What is even more meaningful, is the fact that the driving force behind Euromaidan and its symbols was the young, active, mobile, resourceful and moderate, those with ambitions to become a part of the new Ukrainian middle class, and maybe, prospectively, a part of political and ideological elites of the country.¹

¹ Compare: A. Jekaterynczuk, *Kogo reprezentował kijowski Majdan 2013–2014? Struktura społeczno-demograficzna i kulturowa kijowskiego Euromajdanu w Kijowie, oczekiwania oraz ewolucja. Socjologiczny obraz kijowskiego Majdanu z końca 2013 – początku 2014 roku (Who*

2. Ukraine crisis, NATO and security issues

The war between Ukraine and Russia-supported separatists which rages on since 2014, and the annexation of Crimea in march 2014, resulted in a change of the state of security not only for Ukraine, but also Europe. In other words, the perception of security of both Eastern Europe and Europe in general altered. One may even risk an observation that Ukrainian conflict constitutes a symbolic end of the post-Cold-War international order.² The order stipulated peaceful coexistence of states, integrity of borders and international legal regulations for states' functioning. Moreover, the Russo-Ukrainian war constitutes a challenge for projects aiming at the reintegration of post-Soviet space by Russia. Such projects include e.g. Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

What is more, Russia's aggression on Ukraine resulted in NATO becoming more active as an organization acting with Europe's security in mind. The Warsaw NATO Summit (8-9th July 2016) followed the context of international qualitative changes, both on the southern and eastern flanks of the Alliance. Moreover, the year 2016 may prove to be critical from the point of view of NATO's policy in East-Central Europe. It is associated with NATO participating countries' change of perception as regards security, and changes occurring internationally and threats for NATO members. The accession of Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary in 1999 and Slovakia in 2004 resulted in divisions in Europe being cleared. The Warsaw Summit symbolized changes which emerged in Europe, but also acknowledged Poland's significance as far as the Alliance's security is concerned. In addition, the summit was symbolic due to the fact that it was in Warsaw in 1955 when Warsaw Pact, which divided East-Central Europe into two opposing military camps, was established. It resulted in a bipolar division of the region, and was removed only by the fall of communism in 1989³.

Did the 2013–2014 Kyiv Maidan Represent? The Social, Demographic and Cultural Structure of the Euromaidan Movement in Kyiv, Expectations and Evolution. The Sociological Picture of the Maidan of the End of 2013 and the Beginning of 2014), "Rocznik Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej", Rok 12 (2014), z. 5/2014, pp. 157–179; W. Konończuk, T. Olszański, *Co Maidan mówi o Ukrainie? Diagnoza i perspektywy ukraińskiej polityki (What do the Maidan protests tell us about Ukraine? Diagnosis and prospects for Ukrainian politics)*, "Komentarze OSW", no. 125, <http://www.osw.waw.pl> (last visited 15.01.2017).

² Cf. R. Kupiecki, *Konflikt zbrojny na Ukrainie a bezpieczeństwo europejskie (Armed Conflict in Ukraine and its Security Implications for Europe)*, "Zeszyty Naukowe AON", no. 3(100)/2015, pp. 9–10.

³ Wider: A. Visvizi, T. Stepniewski (eds.), *Poland, the Czech Republic and NATO in Fragile Security Contexts*, "IESW Reports", December 2016.

When analysing the Warsaw NATO Summit communique, the fact that its resolutions are both military (e.g. deployment of a battalion force in Poland and three in the Baltics) and political (emphasis on NATO's internal cohesion, increased expenditures on defence) in character ought to be highlighted. The communique states that 'the greatest responsibility of the Alliance is to protect and defend our territory and our populations against attack, as set out in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. And so renewed emphasis has been placed on deterrence and collective defence. At the same time, NATO must retain its ability to respond to crises beyond its borders, and remain actively engaged in projecting stability and enhancing international security through working with partners and other international organisations'.⁴

The fact that, despite several rounds of peace talks and critical problems with the implementation of agreements (Geneva, Minsk 1, and Minsk 2 agreements), the war in Donbas goes on, which poses a critical challenge for Ukraine's security, ought to be remembered. Peace talks concerning the Donbas issue may be briefly summarized by the following statement: from Geneva to Minsk and onwards. 'The Minsk agreement endures only because a bad peace is better than no peace at all'.⁵ At the beginning of 2017, the conflict rekindled. Therefore, Thomas de Waal rightly observes 'that looks a long way off. All the while, the two regions suffer from conflict, economic collapse, and emigration that will make it even more costly to rehabilitate and administer them in the future'.⁶

3. War in Donbas and Internally Displace Persons (IDPs)

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the armed conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts forced tens of thousands to leave their homes and flee in search of safety and stability. To make matters worse, fighting between Ukrainians and Russia-supported separatists intensified anew at the beginning of 2017. This will surely aggravate the migration issue. As a result of the conflict, some citizens of these regions decided to seek shelter in Russian Federation (their number is estimated at one million) and other neighboring countries. On the other hand, a significant number sought refuge in the Ukrainian-controlled territories.

⁴ Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8–9 July 2016, 9.07.2016, Press Release (2016) 100, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm (last visited 20.01.2017).

⁵ T. de Waal, *Judy Asks: Can the Minsk Agreement Succeed?*, "Strategic Europe", Carnegie Europe, 22.02.2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope> (last visited 4.03.2017).

⁶ *Ibidem*.

Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy (data of 21st June 2016) registered 1,786 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)⁷. The fact that some of them fled to Ukrainian- controlled territories simply to be able to receive pensions, due to formal requirements, introduced by Ukrainian government in November 2014, ought to be noted. All this resulted in the fact that 'since 2015 Ukraine has been among the ten countries with the largest IDP populations worldwide'.⁸ In addition, in the first half of 2016, Ukrainian government revised the number of IDPs qualifying for state aid, and reduced the number to 1,27 million.⁹

Ukrainian authorities face a dire situation as far as IDPs are concerned. On the one hand, the country incurs extensive costs of the Donbas conflict, and on the other, IDPs consume a large portion of state's resources. Lack of finances results in shortages for welfare pensions, adaptation of temporary places of residence. As a consequence, Ukraine is unable to implement any programs for social integration, psychological aid, or employment support. Therefore, the country ought to receive international financial aid. Otherwise, the situation will remain unchanged. Gwendolyn Sass observes that 'their overall number, their territorial spread, and their extreme experiences make displaced people a group that the Ukrainian and Russian national and local governments – as well as the West – need to take into account'.¹⁰

The armed conflict with Russia and the lack of a deliberate and long-term Ukrainian migration policy result in the emergence of highly complicated and complex political and social processes. In addition, Ukraine is facing problems associated with mass economic migration, low rate of natural increase, and economic factors exerting impact upon family-friendly policies, diseases, alcoholism, etc. They all contribute to Ukraine's depopulation, which is progressing rapidly. The chart below, which outlines the population's decline, acknowledges such an observation. At the beginning of 1990s, Ukraine's population amounted to 52 million. As a result of social processes, economic migration, Russia's annexation of Crimea, the war in Donbas, the number of citizens decreased to 42 million.

⁷ *Social Policy Ministry registers 1.786 mln IDPs*, "Interfax Ukraine", 22.06.2016, <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/351907.html> (last visited 20.01.2017).

⁸ G. Sasse, *The Voices of the Displaced in Ukraine and Russia*, „Judy's Dempsey's Strategic Europe”, Carnegie Europe, 13.02.2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope> (last visited 4.03.2017).

⁹ A. Szabaciuk, *Zapomniane ofiary wojny. Osoby wewnątrznie przesiedlone (IDP) na Ukrainie (Forgotten Victims of War. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Ukraine)*, "Studia Europejskie" 2016, no. 3, pp. 61–74.

¹⁰ G. Sasse, *op.cit.*



It is noteworthy that the prevalent trend associated with mass economic migration and the lack of successful social integration programs of IDPs, may be catastrophic for Ukraine's internal stability and cohesion, which may be very disturbing from the point of view of the country's neighbors.¹¹ If Ukraine introduced a program integrating IDPs, the whole country may become united. This could take the form of a successful cultural integration of Ukrainian society, of people coming from east and west of the country. Therefore, the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict may have a significant influence upon Ukraine's consolidation, provided that the country implements a successful integration policy.

Conclusions

It is noteworthy that events of the Euromaidan revolution resulted in one of the more violent transformations, not only in the post-Soviet space, but also continental Europe. In addition, Russia's destabilization of eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea undeniably constitute the greatest European security crisis since the Balkan war of 1990s. Nobody anticipated that, when Yanukovych halted Ukraine's zooming in with the

¹¹ Ibidem.

EU, he would instigate an internal crisis in the country, which resulted in strategic ramifications for the whole continent. When competing for Ukraine with the EU, Russia did not hesitate to apply the so-called hard power. As a consequence, the evolution and development of Ukrainian crisis, including a further Russia-instigated destabilization of other regions, were to depend on Ukraine's acceptance of Russia's demands, which are directly discrepant and asymmetric. A deeper aggravation of Ukraine's dysfunction and dependency seems to be the Federation's critical objective. This seems to be acknowledged by e.g. Russian demands pertaining to a change of Ukraine's political system into a federal one with significant autonomy of eastern and southern oblasts, including their right to sign international agreements. In response to such demands, the West (the EU and USA) decided to mediate the situation in order to de-escalate the conflict in the framework of the so-called Geneva and Normandy formats.¹²

Undeniably, when faced with economic, military and social problems (e.g. IDPs), Ukraine will not be able to manage the situation on its own without external financial aid. Therefore, a good solution to the issue would be to seek ways of utilizing the newly existing possibility of transferring unused funds from other ENP dimensions for the use of the EaP (especially for Ukraine). Moreover, internal political dynamics in the partner countries (Eastern Partnership countries) and growing disappointment with the EU's attitude towards them and decreasing of their engagement in genuine implementation of reforms and integration with the Union. That's why there is need to create a new political narrative about the EaP and the EU's policy towards its eastern neighbours.

Russia's policy towards Ukraine is of vital importance from the point of view of Ukraine's international situation. Russia still poses one of the biggest challenges for the EU's actions in the framework of the EaP. Ultimate goal of Russian policy towards countries of the EaP region is reintegration (Eurasian Economic Union) or at least strengthening its influence, limit ties of the EaP states with the EU, and even to cut it back, if possible. Russia uses various instruments in its policy, including aggressive ones i.e. anti-EU disinformation, political and economic pressure (including economic sanctions), support for local separatist movements and use of military power. It threatens to large degree a stability in the EU's partner

¹² Wider: T. Stepniewski, *Konflikt zbrojny Rosji z Ukrainą i negocjacje pokojowe w Mińsku (Russo-Ukrainian Armed Conflict and Minsk Peace Talk)*, "Studia Europejskie", no. 3(79)/2016, pp. 43–59.

states.¹³ The instability of Ukraine's security will translate into difficulties in introduction of reforms and dealing with the scale of problems. On the one hand, Euromaidan constituted an attempt at a change of Ukraine's political situation, and on the other, was a response to prospects of the country's European integration. Therefore, it seems that, from the perspective of the efficiency of the EU's policy with regards to Ukraine's pro-European future and restricting Russia's neo-imperial policy, cohesion, coherence and unity will play a decisive role as far as these issues are concerned.¹⁴ It ought to be remembered that at present the situation in EaP countries is considerably less stable, with the military and frozen conflicts ongoing in the EU's neighborhood and with growing internal problems in the EU. If the EU is unable to manage its own problems (e.g. Brexit), it will not be interested in problems of its eastern neighborhood. Such state of affairs may result in not only southern but also eastern neighborhood becoming destabilized.

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¹³ R. Sadowski et al., *V4 towards the Eastern Partnership in a new geopolitical context*, Non-published analysis within Think Visegrad (V4 Think-Tank Platform).

¹⁴ See I. Krastev, *How to Avoid Europe's Disintegration*, „New Eastern Europe”, no. 5, September–October 2015, p. 8; also: F. Schimmelfennig, D. Leuffen and B. Rittberger, *The European Union as a system of differentiated integration: interdependence, politicization and differentiation*, „Journal of European Public Policy”, Vol. 22(6)/2015; D. Webber, *How likely is it that the European Union will disintegrate? A critical analysis of competing theoretical perspectives*, „European Journal of International Relations”, Vol. 20 (2)/2014; C. Lord, *Utopia or dystopia? Towards a normative analysis of differentiated integration*, „Journal of European Public Policy”, Vol. 22(6)/2015; S. Fabbrini, *Which European Union? The European Union after the Crisis*, Cambridge 2015.

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