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**THE EUROPEAN UNION'S ACTIVITY IN REGARD
TO THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE BEFORE THE 2014
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

ABSTRACT: Ukraine is the largest country that is included in European Neighborhood Policy. That is why the European Union should spotlight relations with this eastern partner, especially by foreign policy instruments like association agreement. The focus here is on the EU's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis in period from Maidan revolution at the end of 2013, which was occasioned by the rejection of the association agreement with the EU by President Viktor Yanukovich, and to the presidential election in 2014. The main issue is to evaluate the EU's scope to stabilize the political environment in the nearby neighborhood and eliminate threats, which are the results of war between Ukraine and Russia.

KEYWORDS: European Union, Ukraine, European Neighborhood Policy, association agreement, presidential election.

The European Union, as an autonomous participant of international relations, tries to play a role of a continental stabilizer, or a stabilizer of the world security system, which results both from the necessity of securing the interests of the whole organization, and also its individual states, in addition to protecting the organization's character itself. The position and attractiveness of Europe, which can be utilized in order to perform the abovementioned role, and also to express its position in the international system, was built on making the idea of creating a peace and prosperity zone come true and on refraining from enfeebling conflicts (Nye, 2007: 111). The question remains if in today's international relations the idea of such behavior has not altered into political anemia and lack of readiness to undertake any serious steps by the European Union.

These considerations on the Union's participation in the various individual dimensions of the international system are crucial for an appropriate analysis and an attempt to comprehend the present activities or stances of the EU concerning the dramatic events in Ukraine, which is not only the united Europe's neighbour, but also the country whose pro-European aspirations have literally been broken. Assessing the dramatic news on the situation in this country, one can attribute this term not only to the direction of its foreign policy, but also to the manner in which its statehood functions. The question remains if the position and actions undertaken by the EU can contribute to resolving a political stalemate and finding effective solutions for fulfilling the pro-European aspirations of Ukraine.

Speaking generally about the determinants shaping the relations between the EU side and the Ukrainian one (Rydlewska, 2005), one should emphasize their complexity and the extent of their complicated nature.¹ The second decade of the twenty-first century, demonstrated that the real possibility of a comprehensive unification of the Ukrainian market with the European Economic Area, and of consolidating Kiev's political aspirations concerning its integration with the EU, still exists. It refers to the negotiations and signing the Association Agreement between the interested parties, which would be connected with the establishment of a deep and comprehensive free trade zone. However, on 21st November 2013, Kiev's government took a crucial decision about suspending the decision about signing the Association Agreement at the Eastern Partnership summit during the Lithuanian presidency (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 2). The Ukrainian public opinion hoped that President Viktor Yanukovich would ratify it during the Vilnius meeting on 28th November, but it also did not happen. The participants in the talks expressed their optimism that eventually the Agreement would be signed and its conditions would be implemented.²

¹ The comparison that Ukraine is for the Western Europe countries like a suitcase without a handle, because it is hard to carry, but one does not want to get rid of it, is widely repeated. Such sayings perfectly reflected these relations on the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

² *Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, 28-29 November 2013*, Web: 11 April 2014 <http://static.eu2013.lt/uploads/documents/Programos_12/131129%20Vilnius%20Summit%20Declaration.pdf>, p.1;4 The stance of the EU structures to a large extent is based on the statement of the Council of the European Union from 10th December 2012, in which it expressed its willingness to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, when Ukraine would

At the same time, Kiev's streets witnessed a popular movement called later the Euromaidan, which turned from mass demonstrations into an organized political power, which logistically occupied a significant area of the capital and became a factor stimulating the changes in the national authorities. It is worth stressing that the main motivation of the average Ukrainians participating in this event, no matter what their political sympathies and affiliations were, was opposing the establishment and hostile regime, riddled with corruption, taking care of their own interests and acting against the citizens themselves. Additionally, the strong element of stopping the integration with the EU, identified with the mythical Westernization of state structures and high standards of living, or with stimulating the process of multifaceted modernization, emerged. What is significant, in the EU's opinion, was the peaceful nature of the Maidan protest, (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 1–2) which is very important when taking into account the various interpretations and media coverage concerning the events in the centre of Kiev, including using violence by the militiamen and the protesters.³

Speaking about the entire EU Eastern policy, it is worth highlighting that underestimating the Kremlin's behaviour and its attempt to influence Eastern Europe's fate after the collapse of the bilateral system was a mistake. Before the conflict in Georgia, Kevin Ryan, an American journalist, portrayed Moscow's policy as "much barking, little biting."⁴ The Russian President preferred a game of provocation, whose final result was to be a confrontation. The

be able to carry out the terms of this document, see: *Council of European Union, Council conclusions on Ukraine, 3209th Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels*, 10 December 2012, Web 4 June 2014 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/134136.pdf>

³ According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs 16 policemen were killed, see: <http://mvs.gov.ua/mvs/control/main/ru/publish/article/989615>, 30.05.2014. The victims on the protesting side equalled approximately 104 people; it is hard to establish, because there exist various sources, reports on abductions, individual killings, *Cabinet to pay families of Maidan victims 100 living wages each*, Web: 30 may 2014 <http://24tv.ua/home/showSingleNews.do?cabinet_to_pay_families_of_maidan_victims_100_living_wages_each&objectId=426530&lang=en>

⁴ See: Ryan K. "Lots of Bark but Little Bite," *Moscow Times* (Jun. 16 2008 00:00), Web 4 June 2014 <<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/lots-of-bark-but-little-bite/368284.html>>

clear example of such behaviour was influencing Armenia in order to block its signing the Association Agreement with the EU.⁵

The intervention in Crimea and holding the referendum on the status of this area on 16th March 2014 constitutes a quintessence of such a policy. It is worth remembering that the majority of the Tatars supported the integrity of the Ukrainian state, which manifested in boycotting this event by this ethnic group. It is very important for the perception of the falsified results of this pseudo-democratic enterprise, since the Tartar minority made up 12% of the community living on the peninsula (*Amnesty International Public Statement*, 2014: 1). On 3rd March 2014, during its emergency meeting, the Council of the European Union criticized the attack of the Russian military forces, which undermined the sovereignty and integrity of the Ukrainian state. Moreover, the European Council expressed the similar opinion in its statement of 6 March 2014 (European Council, *Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine*, 2014: 1). It was connected with the clear disapproval of the Russian Duma authorizing the utilization of its military forces on the terrain of Ukraine issues on 1 March. What is more, the EU side in its talks with the Russian Federation was supposed to aim at forcing it to respect the agreement concerning stationing the Black Sea Fleet from 1997 (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 3). Of course, there is no denying the rationality of such an approach and such an assessment of the existing conflict by Brussels, but the question remains whether such a negative stance was at all taken into account by the Kremlin in the further planning of its activities. In the author's opinion the style of conducting politics by the Russian policy makers indicates that in their activities they focus on Kiev's steps and the steps of the individual European governments, and not on the general documents, conclusions, etc. crystallized with the delay of the EU forum.

With the initial lack of will to carry out these basic political steps, it was known that the Russian Federation will meticulously aim at fulfilling its own strategic goals with scant regard for the reaction of the international surroundings, i.e. also European structures. That is why the European Union did not recognize the validity of the whole referendum process in Crimea and its results.

⁵ The negotiations concerning this document were already finalized in July 2013; however, Yerevan decided to start closer cooperation with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in August 2013, see: http://eeas.europa.eu/armenia/index_en.htm, 01.06.2014

The basis for such an assessment was clear breaching of the Ukrainian Constitution and the determined efforts to further antagonize the situation inside the EU Eastern neighbour (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 3). The actual annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia was criticized by the European Council on 20th March 2014, which indicates the unambiguous interpretation of the drastic events in the south of Ukraine by the governments of the EU member states. Additionally, the European Commission was to examine the legal implications of such actions by the Russian Federation and prepare immediate economic steps aimed at the annexed peninsula.

In their declarations, the European leaders took into consideration undertaking further negative economic actions directed at the Russian market and entities; of course, if the Kremlin would not stop further destabilization of Ukraine. It is very difficult to determine how severe these actions can be and on what scale, what their real consequences can be and how strong the solidarity of the member in their implementation states will be. What is interesting, in the European Council's opinion, Russia's aggressive activities will result in worsening its multifaceted relations both with the EU and its individual member states (European Council, *Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine*, 2014: 2). Despite the fact that such an assumption is created by a body consisting of the heads of governments and Heads of State of the EU countries, the political practice showed something completely different, casting doubt on the significance of such statements and the essence of shaping EU foreign policy by its members.⁶

Nevertheless, the aspect of the dialogue between Brussels and Kiev, which in fact is responsible for the internal situation and selecting the direction of the Foreign policy, is very important. Arsenij Jaceniuk, the Ukrainian Prime Minister, who after dismissing Yanukovych from his position on 23 February 2014 held the most important office in the country, was a person accepted by the EU bodies (European Council, *Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine*, 2014: 1), which was very important in

⁶ In this aspect, it is important to analyze the relations between the Russian Federation and Germany, which currently are the main driving force of both the Euro zone and of the general European integration. The German Federal Republic is the main trade partner of the Russian side, which apart from the German investments endeavors to absorb the German model of organization and management, which is important for the revival after the collapse of the USSR.

the sphere of the diplomatic relations with this country and for the debate undertaken by Brussels concerning the development of the situation in its Eastern neighbour. Looking further, the EU bodies tried to observe functioning of the Ukrainian institutions such as the Supreme Council of Ukraine. The goal was to determine the political tendencies among the policy makers and to assess how the crisis affects the functioning of the political regime. Moreover, Catherine Ashton's meetings with the representatives of the main political powers on the Ukrainian political scene, such as the leaders of the Party of Regions and the former Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko (*Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the End of her Visit to Ukraine*, 2014: 1), may prove that the European Union endeavoured to play the role of an actual mediator or to formulate a balanced opinion on the existing internal situation of the Eastern neighbour. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that these were classical diplomatic contacts at the highest level, and not probing the situation in the conflict areas.

It was also an attempt to influence the actions of Kiev's government, also in the aspect of the internal affairs. In the EU's opinion, all the activities of the Ukrainian policy makers should serve to enact laws and to strengthen internal structures reinforce the authority of the state. Additionally, it is worth stressing that all the Russian actions are planned so as to destabilize the Western neighbour (*Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the Situation in Eastern Ukraine*, 2014: 1). The Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs maintained contact with the EU structures in order to communicate the emerging problems and suggesting the potential spheres in which the external technical assistance is expected. The subjects of the talks obviously concerned the security dimension and the activities of the Ukrainian security and policing services, i.e. the matters determining the protection of Ukrainian citizens (*Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the End of Her Visit to Ukraine* , 2014: 2).

The EU bodies were aware that the assistance in building stable and lasting social and economic institutions in the Ukrainian state requires multidimensional involvement by experts in the individual areas of this country's political and economic system (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 7). That is why, on 9th April 2014, on the initiative of the European Commission, the support group for the Ukrainian government was established, whose main goal is to assist in all the reforms and decisions required for achieving the stabilization of the whole country (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 5). Looking very critically at the functioning

of such an expert body appointed by the European Union, one can state that in the present situation Ukraine needs military peace forces or allied forces and not EU clerks.

The signing of only the political part of the Association Agreement on 21st March 2014 constituted a significant political fact in the bilateral relations between Brussels and Kiev. Obviously, accepting further terms of the agreement and putting the conditions of the entire Agreement into practice when the sovereign Ukraine will be ready is supposed to be the next step. The intention of carrying out such steps was included in the statement of the European Council of 6th March 2014 (*European Council: Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine*, 2014: 3), so it gained the support of all the heads of governments of the member states, who in reality should aim at creating the political climate conducive to putting such a document into practice. The plan of implementing the Stabilization and Association Agreement was updated during the meeting of the Cooperation Council for the UE and Ukraine on 24th June 2013 (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 2). This indicates how big a shift took place in fulfilling pro-European ambitions of the Eastern neighbour, which had already had a set agenda concerning implementing the final resolutions of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, and then had to defend its statehood and its basic functions in order to still function as an independent international entity. What is more, in Herman von Rompuy's – the President of the European Council – opinion, the signing of the political terms of the Stabilization and Association Agreement should be treated as supporting the Ukrainian geopolitical ambitions (*European Council The President* 1). It was an important act of lending a hand to Kiev's government, giving it international the legitimization in the international arena and showing the significance of the progress of talks concerning the abovementioned agreement. On the other hand, looking at the manner in which Ukraine had to await the possibility of conducting the talks on the Stabilization and Association Agreement granted by Brussels and of the defectiveness of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in terms of stabilizing the existing crisis, the fact of signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement in the limited version may not bear any real consequences.⁷

⁷ The terms of the *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement* from 1994 or the *Action Plan* from 2005 in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy cannot constitute the adequate directions for the current relations between Brussels and Kiev, and outline the necessary frameworks of the reforms.

When assessing the whole Ukrainian political scene, we can observe that the tragedy of the situation mainly results from the lack of possibility to stop shedding the citizens' blood – also of those average citizens who just happen to live in the area of this acute conflict (Emerson, 2014: 1) – by the political leaders. So who and in what manner could cause the wave of violence to cease? Due to the nature of its decision-making process and its characteristic as an international entity, the EU decided to introduce sanctions. The first sign of such actions was the implementation of the personal restrictions on 3rd March 2014, introduced by the Council of the European Union. These restrictions concerned 18 people and were imposed for 12 months on the people who misappropriated the EU assistance funds, which had to be frozen (*EU Freezes Misappropriated Ukrainian State Funds*, 1). It is worth emphasizing that the process of expanding the list of the people affected by EU sanctions is constantly updated and supplemented. In turn, on 17th March 2014, the sanctions banning travel and freezing assets in the territory of the European Union were aimed at 21 people responsible for implementing the aggressive Russian policy against Ukraine. These punishments were then extended and included 12 other policy makers (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 3–4). And then, this list was expanded to 48 people on the basis of the decision of the Foreign Affairs Council of 14 April 2014 (*Council of the European Union, EU Strengthens Sanctions against Actions Undermining Ukraine's Territorial Integrity* 1).

During the Ukrainian crisis, the debate on the sensibility of utilizing the 2nd or 3rd level of sanctions and on the effectiveness closing itself to the Russian Federation, its citizens, its economic entities, etc. is being held. Commentaries appeared that argued if the EU wanted to be perceived as a real geopolitical player, it should rather concentrate on the real actions in the key political areas and on responding to the current events (Blockmans and Gros, 2014: 1). The US government behaved in a similar manner, and while it had earlier introduced the so called “reset” with relations with Russia, but the new existing situation required the reorientation of the current policy on its part.⁸ In practice, it concerned the

⁸ Additionally, the issue of the potential membership of Ukraine to the NATO structures is discussed, see: Goldgeier, J. “The ‘Russia Reset’ Was Already Dead; Now It’s Time for Isolation”: Web: 30 May 2014 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/02/the-russia-reset-was-already-dead-now-its-time-for-isolation/>>

ban on issuing visas, freezing financial assets, and also introducing trade restrictions. In turn, looking at the personal details of the people and entities affected by the sanctions, the CEO of Rosneft, Igor Siechin, or the financial institutions and companies linked with the energy industry (Satell, 2014), so important for the Russian economy, are worth mentioning.

The assessment of the effectiveness of the economic measures aimed against the political interests of the Kremlin should take the characteristics of today's financial structure on a global scale into consideration, as well as the fact if these restrictions will really be felt by the companies and policy makers. It is naïve to claim that the introduction of such sanctions and restrictions could really discourage Putin, or other Russian policy makers, from their aggressive actions. Nevertheless, such measures taken by the international groups are to result in the behaviour incurring the increase of the costs which will finally weaken the Russian economic system, and then its political regime (Satell 2014).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Russia had huge problems with the transformation from the economically backward economy to the economic modernization or the creation of an economic superpower (Matuszewska, 2010: 215). Thus, being cut off from the international financial system will constitute a real problem. As a result, the Russian economic entities had problems with repaying their credits and had to resign from the first public offerings, or had problems with selling their bonds. It translated into the escape of foreign capital and limiting their investments, which must have negatively affected the gross national income. Additionally, in the monetary area, the strong external pressure on the Russian ruble appeared, which caused increased inflation. These problems of the Russian economy also negatively impacted its perception by the credit rating agencies, which resulted in the further outflow of the capital and the relocations of the funds towards the risk analysis (Satell, 2014).

The meeting of the representatives of the USA, Ukraine and Russia held in Geneva on 17th April was the main platform of the international dialogue on the future of the Ukrainian state. The UE was represented by Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In the EU's opinion, her actions should contribute significantly to the stabilization of the acute situation and to the response of the international community to the Ukrainian problem (*EU; US; Ukraine and Russia to meet on 17 April in Geneva* 1). The main subject was

to determine the obligations the involved parties should undertake in order to stabilize the situation in the area of the Eastern neighbour of the united Europe where the military conflict commenced. First of all, it was stated that in order to stop the violence and the use of broadly understood provocations, all the types of paramilitary groups should be disarmed and all the public buildings should be vacated by them, which would made it possible for the state administration to somehow function. Additionally, the necessity of the presence and need for the unrestricted actions of the OSCE observatory mission was emphasized. The mission should be responsible for controlling and monitoring the actions of the involved parties and putting all the Geneva decisions into practice (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 4).

Originally, the OSCE mission was supposed to be accepted both by the Ukrainian government and by the local communities, also in the areas which were in the crisis. What is more, the USA, Russia, and the UE announced their support for the actions of the international envoys and provide their support for them or send their own experts (*Joint Statement*, 2014: 1). However, the practice demonstrated that the Russian side preferred sending the organized military groups to conduct the propaganda actions and the political activists rather than to support any observatory mission. One of the solutions leading to stopping the conflict in the Ukrainian state can be another meeting in Geneva and potentially replacing the OSCE mission with the tripartite peace activities of the USA, Ukraine, and Russia. In a simplified version, the army, the police, etc. would work under three flags, which would increase the legitimization of such forces and improve their functioning in the conflict area Nevertheless, such a solution, presented by the EU Ambassador in Russia, Michael Emerson, could be approved by all the involved parties.⁹ Additionally, carrying out such assumptions would be imperfect due to the size of the area which must be controlled and the willingness of the EU (as the real mediating party) to get involved.

⁹ Looking from a historical point of view, it would be the solution similar to the one functioning in Berlin in 1945, in which the vehicles patrolling the city had American, British, French and Russian signs. Demonstrating the example of the solutions from the occupation after World War II is in this case inadequate, if we compare the behaviour of Hitler and Putin, stimulated by the post-Weimar Republic syndrome, more information on :Johnson, P. "Is Vladimir Putin Another Adolf Hitler?" *Forbes* (16 April 2014): Web. 1 December 2014 <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/currentevents/2014/04/16/is-vladimir-putin-another-adolf-hitler/>>

The statement that the Ukrainian problem required the real stabilizing power without whose activities further dwelling on the identity and position of this country would not be appropriate seems trivial. In Steven Blockmans' and Daniel Gros' opinions, who represent the Center for European Policy Studies, the EU would be able to send its policing mission – EUPM – to the Ukrainian territory. The basis for such a step would be the official invitation from the government in Kiev and the final decision of the Council of the European Union (Blockmans and Gros, 2014: 2). The author relates the opinions of these two experts to highlight the possible EU activities in the problematic territory, reminding the readers that the united Europe had experiences in conducting such operations in different regions of the world, among them in the socially strongly antagonized societies of the Balkan countries such as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Kosovo.¹⁰ So, this is the instrument which is used and can easily obtain international approval, at the same time being the real proof of the EU involvement perceptible by the Ukrainians (Zięba 2011).¹¹

According to *Reuters*, in April 2014 the British, Swedish, and Polish sides together created the document with the suggestion of establishing the abovementioned policing mission in Ukraine, at the same time realizing that the idea of such involvement will be negatively assessed by Moscow. The organization of any coordinated activities on the territory of Ukraine should be based on the support of all the member states and the preparation for the strong criticism from Russia, which will accuse the Western countries of meddling in the Ukrainian internal affairs. In practice, this involvement of the experts was supposed to affect both the decisions of Kiev's government, and also functioning of the troops in the whole of the country. The content of the document prepared by London, Stockholm, and Warsaw was to be consulted with all the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU member states (Emmott and Croft, 2014).

It could be an added value, not only in the sense of the politics at the highest level, but also functioning of such a mission, or

¹⁰ EUPOL Proxima concluded on the territory of Macedonia; EUPM functioning in Bosnia and Herzegovina and EULEX KOSOVO functioning on the territory of Kosovo.

¹¹ Nevertheless, it is worth paying attention to the real determinants of the involvement of the EU countries on the Balkan territory. When describing the activities of the German economic entities in the former Yugoslavia, Eduard Husson used the term; economic soft-imperialism, which reveals one of the reasons of stabilizing this region by the EU countries.

rather reporting from it, would make all the capitals of the member states realize the essence of the Ukrainian conflict. If we look at only at the internal conditions in the EU, then the establishment of such a form of the involvement in the territory of Ukraine would be based on the resolutions of the Helsinki Headline Goal from 2010. One of its main assumptions was creating the possibilities for sending an adequate number of experts to the areas of the priority activities of the The Common Security and Defence Policy and supporting the established missions. Another important intention was creating the logistic and technical base enabling the carrying out of missions properly taking into consideration the necessity of creating an efficient system of public procurement, which in each case is a very challenging assumption when looking at the political reality in which a particular mission must function.¹²

As a counterbalance, it is worth adding that there exists a possibility of introducing the elements of policing cooperation within the OSCE mission, which partly would imitate the Georgian case.¹³ Undoubtedly, the activities in the sphere of the coordinated managing of the borders in cooperation with the Ukrainian border guard (Blockmans and Gros, 2014: 2) could constitute the further area of potential involvement of the EU experts. It is especially important in the case in which we observed that the Eastern border of Ukraine was no obstacle for the flow of the whole military units, equipment and supporting elements. Of course, assessing critically the assumption of commencing such EU activities, one can state that for integrating anything in this case one should have the border. Apart from that, it would be adequate to station the real repelling, or maybe pushing out, military forces here which would eliminate the potential threats and in turn would mean a little borderland war with the participation of the EU member states.

The abovementioned ideas of the grassroots operational and stabilizing involvement of the international community, including the EU side, should not be taken into consideration even in the

¹² In order to get acquainted with all the goals at which the EU aims, it is worth reading this document, which takes into account both the civilian and military dimensions of the Common Security and Defense Policy in practice, see: *Civilian Headline Goal 2010*, available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/Civilian_Headline_Goal_2010.pdf, 28.05.2014

¹³ It is worth remembering that the involvement of the international forces there officially ended on 1st January 2009 and mainly Russia is to blame for it, see: P. Kościński, *Misja OBWE musi opuścić Gruzję*, 23-12-2008, available at: <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/238382.html>, 28.05.2014

theoretical sphere without the full comprehension of the self-propelling cataclysm in Ukraine. Of course, the EU highlighted the necessity of enforcing the law and meting out justice to all the perpetrators of the riots or other acts of violence which took place on the Ukrainian territory. Incidentally, it can be added that the Council of the European Union encouraged Kiev's government to appoint its own representative in the advisory team of the European Council (Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on Ukraine-Foreign Affairs Council Meeting*, 2014: 1). Of course, one can debate how effective the participation in this organization would be in solving the individual aspects of this conflict.

In political practice, the reactions and long-term behaviour of the communities in the east of Ukraine are the most important issue, which results from the total instrumentalization and falsification of the information about such sentiments (Emerson, 2014: 1). One question remains unanswered: will the radical attitudes automatically spread or will they need the further support from Russia? It is worth remembering that in the Lugansk District and in the Donetsk District there is a high percentage of Russian-speaking citizens, from 50% to 60%. In the superficial comparison, Kharkov and Dnipropetrovsk seemed to be areas with the smaller escalation of antagonisms. Therefore, the results of the referenda, of course affected by the utilization of propaganda and mass disinformation, were supposed to demonstrate the discontentment with the activities of the central authorities (Emerson, 2014: 1).

In the aspect of using force in the antagonized areas, one should not forget about the minority living in Ukraine. Due to its axiology and consolidating its activities as the promoter of humanitarian principles, the united Europe criticized the drastic breaching of the human rights, and also the victims from all the socio-political sides and options. Additionally, it appealed to the Ukrainian authorities to protect and respect the basic rights of their citizens (Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on Ukraine Foreign Affairs Council Meeting*, 2014: 1). This assumption gives rise to one paradox, because some part of the citizens of this state openly resigns from the Ukrainian affiliation, choosing the Russian option or trying to create independent separatist centres. The subjects of the ethnic or national minorities and of abiding by the international law are especially important in the Crimean peninsula, where the Tatars were subjected to the process of artificial assimilation from the very beginning of the Russian occupation. This process consisted

of using unambiguous persuasion, or even threats and physical repressions (*Amnesty International Public Statement*, 2014; 1).

Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian transit position for supplying energy raw materials to the whole of Europe makes this country geostrategically significant. The EU side realized that the energetic security, and the reasonable level of prices connected with it – both for citizens and industry – will determine the stabilization of the Eastern neighbour. That is why the EU announced its cooperation with Kiev's government in this area, which was supposed to be based on the financial support for the Ukrainian budget and attempts to diversify the supplies in the long-term perspective (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 5), because otherwise these will only be temporary, short-term activities, similar to anti-crisis ones in their character, and not building any energetic alternative to the Ukrainian state. The EU announced assistance in the form of delivering energy to Ukraine through concentrating on the diversification of the sources of supply, modernizing the energy base and improving energetic transmission infrastructure (*European Council: Statement of the Heads of State or Government on Ukraine*, 2014: 4). Such optimistic assumptions and plans are in fact an answer to the vital interests of the whole of the European Union and its member states concerning the energy issues important both for the economic development and for the standard of living of the citizens in the united Europe. However, apart from the unclear aspects of planning or mentioning the necessity of undertaking such political and economic steps in times of crisis, no sensible EU actions in this area has been undertaken so far, which also results from not fulfilling the conditions included in the treaties. The case mainly concerns the raw materials dependency, which may translate itself to a partial collision in the particular sphere of contacts without any danger of a big-scale conflict (Matuszewska, 2010: 206). It can be simply depicted as exchanging the Cold War between the two blocks with a warm war between the contracting parties. Such diplomatic aspects are especially important when one looks at the tendencies concerning lowering the export of gas to the European countries and shrinking of the crude oil market, which in the future will mean \$100 billion yearly losses for the Russian economy. This constitutes over 5% of this countries GNP, which is very important in relation to the long-term and ambitious plans of Vladimir Putin, who aims at strengthening his country. As it appears, these plans may have very weak foundations (Satell, 2014).

In turn, when talking about the modernization of the energy system in Ukraine, it is worth remembering that the reform of this sector will be based on the principles of the Energy Community, to which this East-European country has belonged since 11th February 2011.¹⁴ One of the real activities increasing the investments in this sector are the activities of the European Investment Bank, which was involved in the project of the pipeline in Ukraine and should be implemented during the next three years. The initial cost of this enterprise amounts to €1.5 billion (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 3). Returning to the current issue of the reverse supplies, the legal basis for such an activity is the agreement about the cooperation between the operators of the Slovakian and Ukrainian transmission systems from December 2013, which finally was not signed. In this case, the European Commission tried to lobby for approving this document and implementing its basic terms. Additionally, creating the possibilities of reverse supplies to Ukraine through Bulgaria and Romania, or also Croatia and Hungary, will be an important issue.

According to the European Commission, initiating a tripartite dialogue of the European Union, the Russian Federation and Ukraine in order to modernize the energy system of Ukraine will be an appropriate step from the middle-term perspective (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 7). The author considers such an approach extremely optimistic or naïve, taking into consideration the condition of the transmission structures there and the huge scale of investments, and also technical and scientific support which must be utilized to effect real repairs and improvements in this sector. What is more, the Russian side experiences similar problems and it does not intend to sponsor such positive changes in its Western neighbour, which in the Russian opinion must stay in the Kremlin's zone of influence. The political reality shows that for making this assumption come true, in its external affairs Russia uses also the trade in and transmission of energy raw materials. It is worth remembering that the Ukrainian economy suffers from high energy consumption, and still feels the results of the errors made during the reprehensible privatization process, which is why the energy sphere there is so easily politicized. Apart from that the pressure exerted by financial or crime spheres, whose goal is

¹⁴ For detailed energy statistics concerning Ukraine see: http://www.energy-community.org/portal/page/portal/ENC_HOME/MEMBERS/PARTIES/UKRAINE, Web:14.05.2014

to control the energy and fuel sectors, must be taken into account. When analyzing these issues from the sphere of external markets, then this tense situation between Russia and Ukraine should not impact on the transfer or the prices of the energy raw materials in the short term perspective. Nevertheless, the intensity of the conflict blocks the prospective thinking about the investments in the development of the energy sector in Eastern Europe or in the Black Sea region. Such was the behaviour of, for example, Royal Dutch Shell, which suspended any activities concerning its oil tenement on the oil field Skifka on the Black Sea, although it does not mean complete losing interest in this area with hydrocarbons (“Key ways to trade oil and gas price movements on Ukraine tension”). The dependencies presented above demonstrate not only the complexity of the conflict between the Ukrainian and Russian sides, but also the challenges to the EU’s own security that it must face.

Continuing the economic theme and the theme of the involvement on the part of the EU, which in its nature is directed at such cooperation or assistance, it is worth stressing that fulfilling all the terms of the Association Agreement, among them the establishment of the complex and deepened free trade zone, will be the priority in the relations between the EU and Ukraine. €11 billion were given to Ukraine for the purpose of stimulating further reforms in the economic and political spheres in accordance with the decision of the European Commission of 5th March 2014. The financial resources are to be gathered from the funds of the EU and international financial institutions in the next few years. Basically, this money should be earmarked for the preparation of the Ukrainian structures to the participation in the abovementioned zone. That is why, on 14th April, the EU side decided to temporarily lift the customs duties for the Ukrainian export, which took place till 23rd April (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 5). Additionally, the EU executive body had another idea, which was the possibility of using the terms of the Association Agreement concerning the transportation of goods – for example, the reduction of tariffs on the basis of the future project of the Council of the European Union about autonomous trade means for Ukraine. Such a short term solution would be a one-sided step of the EU bodies – including the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament – responsible for approval of such political decisions, which could actually influence the Ukrainian economy (*European Commission’s Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 4).

One can, of course, ponder on how the realization of these decisions can really affect the Ukrainian economy, which feels not only danger and destabilization resulting from the political situation, but also suffers from the effects of the international crisis of 2008. According to introductory forecasts, building the free trade zone should result in the reduction of tariffs which will make it possible to save almost €750 million yearly in the companies from the involved sides (*EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, 2013: 4). Additionally, it is worth noticing that the Ukrainian economic entities gained additional €500 million yearly, thanks to the lowered imports obligations on the EU Single Market. Apart from that, the Ukrainian agricultural sector derived benefits from the lowered customs duties on the agricultural products, among them those processed, which brought the profit of €400 million (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 4). Nevertheless, when analyzing the terms concerning the free trade zone, one can notice the asymmetry in the obligations and goals of both the sides, which results from the extremely different levels of the development of the post-Soviet country and the European Union. It is the Eastern neighbour that should benefit from the opening of the EU market through the immediate lifting of the customs duties by the united Europe. In turn, the EU side must be aware that the same step in the economic policy will not be promptly taken by Ukraine.

Apart from the potential building of the common trade area, the current needs of the Ukrainian state and society must be taken into account in the present situation. The policy makers from this country mentioned the sum of \$35 billion which their country would need in the next few years (*Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the End of her Visit to Ukraine*, 2014: 1). Partly as a response to such information, at the beginning of March 2014 the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank planned to earmark €11 billion for Ukraine on a short term basis. According to the EU bodies, this resources should be interpreted as the proof of the active position of the European Union in the efforts to assist its Eastern partner in order to remove its political and economic problems (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 4). When talking about any aid directed to Ukraine, it is theoretically worth separating the short term dimension, concentrating mainly on direct financial support and loans, from the long term activities, including the structural investments changing the economic face of this country. Without determining the right temporal sequence, no government is able

to properly distribute the resources which are in its possession, even if it administrates the entire country, and all the sectors work efficiently, which is not the case in Ukraine. This is why the short term issues that must be finalized immediately include the amounts due and the expenditures which must be paid immediately, and an attempt at complete reduction of the existing deficit. In turn, in the long term perspective, the appropriately planned investments – for example, those available thanks to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank – seem to be the most crucial ones (*Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the End of her Vvisit to Ukraine*, 2014: 2–3). As a result, in the next few years, Ukraine could obtain €1.6 billion from the EU budgeted as microfinance assistance loans, and €1.4 billion as the packet of assistance subsidies. In addition, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank were to earmark €8 billion. It is worth remembering that the Ukrainian side could also use the some of the sum of €3.5 billion available from the Neighborhood Investment Facility (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 7).

The issue of the Ukrainian economy was also discussed during the Geneva summit, at which all the participating sides agreed to secure economic stability of the discussed country and earmark adequate resources for the purpose of effecting the joint decisions (*Joint Statement*, 2014: 2). The practice shows that the EU would be able to address the real assistance aimed at the structural reforms together with the support of the experts. In turn, the Russian Federation is willing to grant substantial loans, which in fact are nothing more than diplomatic usury, completely linking Kiev's decisions geopolitically.

What is interesting, the establishment of the mechanism of coordinating short term donors, working under the auspices of the European Commission, was supposed to be another form of maximizing the effects of the addressed economic assistance. It was connected with the assumption that such a tool of dialogue would constitute the platform serving the purpose of finding the balanced solution to the current Ukrainian problems concerning its further transformation (*European Commission's Support to Ukraine*, 2014: 4). However, the author thinks that such a plan would take part of its identity and position away from the Ukrainian side and its government, who should be responsible for the negotiations with the individual global financial institutions, the reasonable absorption of various kinds of resources, and also the determination of the needs

of its economy, state budget, etc. However, one should remember that the IMF and other global financial institutions have their individual procedures of granting assistance, but they mainly do it on the basis of independent assessment of a situation and on determining how significant resources can be addressed to Ukraine. Although the International Monetary Fund expressed its willingness to commence the dialogue with the new government in Kiev about the various planes of financial aid (*Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the End of her Visit to Ukraine*, 2014: 2–4), but these are the independent decisions of these organizations and the Ukrainian policy makers.

To a large extent, it depends on the actions of the authorities in Kiev and the direction they will choose, what the effects of the absorption of external resources, of conducting the foreign policy and of stabilizing the situation in the whole of the country will be. Nevertheless, the realization of any state reforms in Ukraine and doing it in all the political regions and districts was a real problem (*Joint Statement*, 2014: 2). From the short term perspective, it was quite important, because without preparing the administrative structures in the entire country, the abovementioned assumptions cannot be effected. To the High Representative's mind, the presidential elections held on the 25th May were supposed to be the key moment for the future of Ukraine. It is their course, their campaign style and obtaining social legitimization by the future Head of the State that will decide if implementing the constitutional reforms and solving a number of political and economic problems will be carried out (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 4).

Of course, some doubt could be cast on the sense of holding the presidential elections in the east of Ukraine due to the potential boycott on a grand scale (Emerson, 2014: 1). In the EU's opinion, the presidential elections should be witnessed by the OSCE observers, especially with the participation of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The Ukrainians from all the regions of the country and also the national minorities had to participate in these on equal terms, taking into consideration the international norms concerning the human rights and the civil and political rights, to abide by which Kiev pledged (*Fact Sheet EU-Ukraine Relations Brussels*, 2014: 5). Finally, Petro Poroshenko was the victor in the Ukrainian presidential elections, who already in the first round of voting obtained 54.7% of all cast votes (which amounted to 9.86 million votes) (Interfax-Ukraine "Results of presidential elections published in official press on June 3"). Just after this event, which

generally was conducted smoothly and according to the democratic standards, the Ukrainian side appealed to Russia to recognize the validity of the election results and to cease to destabilize the Eastern regions of Ukraine. In foreign policy, Poroshenko initially planned the meetings with the representatives of Berlin and Washington (Ukraine News One), in order to look for clear support from them – not only for his presidency, but also for the very existence of his state. What is important, as far as the relations of Ukraine with the EU are concerned, the president-elect announced that after swearing him into office he will aim at signing the economic part of the Association Agreement, building the free trade zone (Interfax-Ukraine “Poroshenko is going to sign economic deal with EU immediately after inauguration”). Undoubtedly, such announcements can be treated as an obvious example of sticking to the pro-European geopolitical course by the Ukrainian state after the changes of 2013/2014.¹⁵

However, one should emphasize, that during the summit between the EU and Russia in June 2013, the Kremlin mentioned the issue of the fears and dangers for the Russian interests connected with the establishment of the free trade zone between Ukraine and the EU on the territory of this East European country (Emerson, 2014: 2). Yet the author warns that it is strictly politicized and irrational Russian interpretation of this process liberalizing the trade. The Russian side fears not so much the domination of the entities from the EU countries, as primarily setting the standards making it impossible to use all the illegal economic and political games, in which the entities from the Russian Federation participated. Additionally, it is identical with Moscow’s opinion that the influence of the Western world will not manifest intellectually or morally, but geopolitically, at the same time invading the Russian area (Matuszewska, 2010: 199).

Therefore, Ukrainian issues should be perceived in the sphere of combat for influence between the two opposing integration centers. The EU was interpreted by the observers as a great oasis of stability surrounded by the world destabilization and able to incorporate next European countries, giving them this abovementioned state of peace and modernization. The attractiveness of European structures that were presented as building a “voluntary empire”

¹⁵ The full agreement was finally signed on 27 June 2014, see: Pifer, S. “Poroshenko Signs EU-Ukraine Association Agreement” *Brookings* (June 27, 2014 2:30pm): Web. 12 June 2014 <<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/06/27-poroshenko-signs-eu-ukraine-association-agreement-pifer>>

was indisputable in the past. However, the expansion of this liberal power and its significance lost its strength, and each expansion gave rise to new problems, which had to be dealt with for the sake of the entire integration process. The accession of the Central and East European countries should have resulted in their stabilization and a wide cooperation with the post-Soviet territories; however, such steps undertaken by Brussels has caused animosity with Russia (Kagan, 2009: 27).

The EU, if it finds the political will, should use this flaw or be prepared for such Russia's behaviour, which in the present geopolitical arrangement may assume the role of a "segment empire," trying to utilize all free space in the international system for the realization of its *raison d'état*. It mainly results from the lack of the appropriate tools reinforcing the position on the political scene, which forces the Russian side to wait for emerging opportunities for fighting for its interests, rather than to create its own opportunities (Matuszewska, 2010: 242). One can wonder if such a situation did not happen in the case of the Ukrainian pro-democratic uprising and turning President Yanukowich into a Kremlin tool.

The question remains if the participation of the USA, or NATO, is really necessary for stabilizing the Ukrainian crisis, both in the technological and diplomatic spheres. Posing such questions is connected with the sense of the tripartite dialogue and the position of the EU itself on the international arena, especially in its relations with the closest international surroundings. In addition, the events on the European continent should not be perceived as the separated subsystem of the world order, or rather as one of the elements of games at the level of the world political interdependencies, the example of which can be the attempt of the Western countries to solve the problem with Iran, with which Russia has multifaceted relations (Kagan, 2009: 228).

Summing up, one can reach the extreme conclusion that the Ukrainian issue should constitute an ultimate counterargument against any theses on the cooperation between the EU and Russia in their mutual neighbourhood, unless only creating diplomatic documents, without any reference to the political reality, is taken into account. The whole problem of Europe is finding a place in the geopolitical game in which it could win, but it is blocked by its own mistaken awareness. In turn, Russia wants and has to achieve a victory, but it cannot experience the lack of means to do it. One cannot hide the fact that only an actual military presence in the territory of Ukraine can stop the aggressive actions of the Russian

Federation. Creating unreal conceptions is in fact a pro-Russian activity, because it is that side which is a dynamic player trying to achieve the goals of its foreign policy, even if they are short term or flawed in their conception. It is worth remembering that for the addressees of the external activities of the EU (in this case the Ukrainians) the real effects of the actions and the relevance of the decisions taken by the EU bodies responsible for the international policies were the most important – not the voting procedures and the political steps. Apart from that, all responsibility for their eastern border rests on the Ukrainians, who at the turn of May and June 2014 started to openly fight with the alien forces or the artificially created separatist or terrorist groups. The EU must be ready for the real opening of Ukrainian ambitions, of course while remaining within the frameworks determined during the bilateral meetings or written in the European documents. From the perspective of one's own security, a united Europe must be aware that during the escalation of such conflicts, its real interests, as well as its borders that have still not been trespassed by foreign forces, must withstand the intensification of cross-border dangers. For example, even the weak reaction to the Arab Spring in 2010 showed that the Union is not prepared for the immediate and decisive response to events that could threaten its existence. Without creating such an ability, one will not be able to talk about the concrete results of the EU stance on the crises occurring within the security system.

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