PRZEGLĄD ZACHODNI
2013, No. II

JAKUB KORALEWSKI
Poznań

INTERNATIONAL AND GEOPOLITICAL STATUS OF UKRAINE

Ever since Ukraine regained independence in 1991, the country is at the crossroads of civilisations despite efforts of successive political cabinets to pursue a multidirectional foreign policy since the beginning of the 1990s. At present, it is difficult to identify what the orientation of particular political players is, as the authorities of Ukraine declare their interest in both the Asian-Russian direction and friendly relations with Europe. However, the situation is far more complex and in a "geopolitical chaos", noble principles of the "Orange Revolution" got lost. They have been replaced with cold calculations of the broadly understood Party of Regions.

A couple of years ago one could argue that the year 2005 was a caesura in Ukraine's modern history as, initially, "Ukrainian policies were constantly and inevitably Europeanised". Unfortunately, as daily practice has shown, this statement is already outdated. What is worse, some actions of the authorities meet with an unprecedented activity of the opposition, which is more characteristic of "failed states" than of developing democracies. Unfortunately, many decisions taken by Kiev, irrespective of their political colouring and disputes between political fractions, immediately result in an economic downturn that deeply affects average Ukrainians.

In last 20 years, political changes in Ukraine did not have a positive effect on the country's economic stability. The example of Victor Yushchenko, who as Prime Minister was successful in economic affairs, shows that economic processes determine current policies at all levels. The Ukrainian political system is very shaky and increasingly less predictable. In the last two years of Yanukovych's presidency, "Belarusisation" of the Ukrainian political system became apparent as Ukrainian authorities gradually lose touch with the society and the announced reforms meet with protests of citizens only.

An objective observer might notice that particular actions of the authorities are a mixture of increasingly audacious social experiments which only seemingly improve living standards of an average citizen. Sources of this policy can be traced back to Minsk and Moscow. Many western analysts openly argue that the "Makiivka group, part of Donieck Oblast" (hometown of V. Yanukovych) introduces changes that are beneficial for them quicker than it has happened in Russia. The group pays no attention to the foreign public opinion, which is particularly sensitive to such developments.

After Victor Yanukovych was elected President of Ukraine in 2010, it was expected that Ukraine would abruptly turn toward the "East". However, Ukraine's relations with Russia need yet to be regulated, similarly as during the presidency of Leonid Kuchma. The attitude of President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin to Victor Yanukovych is lukewarm at best as the latter is not eager to implement the Kremlin objective to transform Ukraine into an area of Russia's influence.

The recent practice of Ukrainian foreign policy has clearly demonstrated that Russia's classic geopolitical mechanisms slowly, yet steadily, lose impact. The Russian Federation, as the political and cultural successor of the Soviet Union, takes a less rigid stance on many "disputable areas" in bilateral relations which, paradoxically, is conducive to Ukraine's sovereign objectives and improves its image in Western Europe. In recent years (particularly since 2010), Russian authorities have attempted to subtly entice Ukraine to engage in close cooperation by offering it a package of new economic mechanisms of the CIS common economic area. Exploiting the global crisis that has been affecting Ukraine for the last few years, the Kremlin hopes that Ukraine will finally opt for the "Euro-Asian vector" of its development and will dissociate itself from its European ambitions.

The Russian integration project (economy and politics) is intended to restore the power of the Russian Federation in CIS and foresees inclusion of all post-Soviet states in the project structures. Such ambitious high-risk objectives are, nevertheless, already actively implemented. Further integration stages are justified as measures to protect Russia's interests against the deepening crisis, unfair competition of western states and the weakening of the EU's economic foundations.[1]

Putin's Euroasian Union project includes the following elements:

– free trade area within CIS (an appropriate agreement was signed on 18 October 2011),
– customs union within EvrAzEs (Eurasian Economic Community), voluntary membership, has been gradually implemented since 2008,[2]
– common economic area constituted by the Russian Federation, Belarus and Kazakhstan. This project is based on a high number of various bi- and multilateral agreements, majority of which entered into force on 1 January 2012.

What role should Ukraine play in these undertakings? First and foremost, if Moscow persuades Ukraine to engage in any integration project, this will legitimise the Kremlin's actions in the territory of the former Soviet Union and will encourage other states to take similar decisions.[3] Apart from that, a clearly "pro-Russian

---

[1] А. Ирхин, *Россия и США после «холодной войны»: затянувшейся путь к новой международной системе,* in: Этничность и власть, новая геополитическая карта Европы и проблемы безопостности в Черноморьско-Каспийском регионе, Симферополь 2009, pp. 132-142.

[2] www.evrazes.com, The EvrAzEs organisation was established on 10 October 2000 in Astana. Only post-Soviet states are members of the community: Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

[3] Н. Гвоздев, *Движется ли Россия к «цветной революции»?* http://inosmi.ru/politic/20111224/181204593.html, 23.12.2011.

Ukraine" would hinder activities of any opposition groups and this refers also to organisation of other potential "colour revolutions".[4] Pushing the "colourful threat" away from Russia's borders remains the main task of Russian security service and social organisations closely cooperating with the Kremlin.[5] Finally, and probably most importantly, Ukraine, with its population exceeding 40 million people and often compared to France in terms of potential, will be a buffer zone between the EU and the Russian Federation.

The structure of some organisations, the CIS in particular, and large economic projects suggest that Russia aims at establishing a new superstructure in the form of a Euroasian "community" which is to play an important role on the international arena. Authorities of Russia, Belarus and other states believe that they should join forces to rebuild the so-called industrial-technological complex that would surpass its Soviet counterpart in size and power, and would be capable of competing against largest global powers. However, according to experts, even theoretical premises of such a project development raise serious methodological doubts and political concerns.[6] Russia tries to attract former Soviet Union members (especially Ukraine) by offering them an appealing economic project. However, chances of success are slim. The Kremlin seems not to use an ideological criterion which was the foundation of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, negotiations between Russia and other post-Soviet states revealed that they interpret the notion of integration quite differently. The Russian Federation very often equates integration with "full absorption", while the young states that emerged from the ashes of the Soviet Union, despite their warm feelings for Russia, do not want to lose their independence.[7] In this context, true problems which with former Soviet Republics struggle are pushed aside e.g. changes in the attitude to western investments, mechanisms of social aid for citizens and development of private businesses. This type of foreign policy practice employed by the Russian Federation is a satire of former Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko's "geopolitical concept". From the very outset of his term as the head of state, Yushchenko promoted a double path for relations with Russia. He postulated that steady development of economic ties should be accompanied by notable weakening of political ties.[8]

---

[4] *Макфол: для РФ готовили цветную революцию*, statement of US Ambassador to Russia, http://www.memoid.ru/node/Cvetnye_revolyucii_na_postsovetskom_pro-stranstve.

[5] А А. Филатов (2009), *ОДКБ и ЕЭП в качестве гарантов гражданской безопостности Украины,* „Чорноморська Безпека" No. 2(12), p. 55.

[6] С. Толстухов, *Перспективы Евразийского интеграционного проекта. Россия примеряется к мировым экономическим и политическим процессам*, www.ng.ru/courier/2011-1-31/11_perspective.html.

[7] Б. Шапталов (2005), *Русская экспансия: бей первым или погибнеш!,* Москва, pp. 225-226.

[8] В. Кириченко (2009), *Образы России в публичном дискурсе президента Украины В. Ющенка и президента Беларуси А. Лукашенка (сравнителъный аспект),* „Перекрестки, Журнал исследований восточноевропейского пограничья" No. 1-2, p. 251.

In general, Russia's efforts are aimed at deepening the integration of former Soviet republics, including Ukraine. However, Russia neglects to resolve issues most vital in its bilateral relations. A classic example illustrating the above is the delimitation and demarcation of the Russian-Ukrainian land and sea border. According to some Russian political scientists, the reason is that Ukraine will inevitably integrate with the "CIS geopolitical area", which apparently is to happen in the next five years (by 2017). That is why all actions aimed at tightening the Russian-Ukrainian border may, eventually, turn out to be politically and diplomatically unjustified.

The rise to power by the Party of Regions and its leader Victor Yanukovych completely changed priorities of Ukraine's foreign policy. The first profound change in Ukraine-Russia relations was the signing of the agreement on extending the stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea until 2042. The previous agreement signed by Leonid Kuchma foresaw that Russian forces would withdraw from Sevastopol by 2012, but nobody in Ukraine believed that would happen. In short, the extension of the 1997 Russia-Ukraine agreement delays any prospects of Ukraine joining NATO and pushes the US out of the region.[9]

In recent years, US military ships tried to enter the port of Sevastopol but did not succeed due to very emotional protests of local Russians and of Cossack organisations. Interestingly, as Russian military analysts and journalists observe, every time Ukraine cannot reach an agreement on key issues with Moscow, next to the Crimean Peninsula activities of US military vessels increases.[10] More perceptive Russian commentators noted that during the presidency of Victor Yushchenko, also Sevastopol councillors fervently protested against the presence of American ships in the vicinity of Ukraine's maritime coastal areas. During the first two years of Victor Yanukovych's term, the protests lessened markedly and currently US Navy ships have an official consent of Ukrainian authorities to operate in the area. For example, at the end of May 2006, four small vessels of the American fleet arrived at the Feodosiya port (Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine). Activists of the Party of Regions and the People's Opposition Bloc of Natalia Vitrenko quite effectively blocked loading those ships and the return of the crew that had disembarked from the vessels.[11]

Such actions taken by the American administration really irritate Russia. The events described constitute a small fraction of everyday political and social reality in the former Soviet lands, however, what happens at that micro-regional level proves that the rivalry between the United States and the Russian Federation continues. In this case, competing interests intersect in a strategic region (Black Sea).

In the widely understood geopolitical domain, i.e. embracing all political, economic and social actions taken in a given space, one's real influence on activities of particular states and groups of states is most important. Since the beginning of the 21st century, we have been witnessing the emergence of new political zones of

---

[9] С. Ткаченко (2011), *Информационная война против России*, Санкт-Петербург, p. 22.

[10] В. Бовал, *Информационная война против России,* 27 января 2012, http://topwar.ru/10554-amerikanskie-boevye-korabli-u-beregov-kryma-chego-ozhidat.html.

[11] http://lenta.ru/story/feodosia/.

influence, as well as the formation of state and non-state groups capable of exerting pressure that will shape international politics in the coming years. As many experts argue, for a long time Ukraine will be a player whose geopolitical activity will be next to none, and its real impact on shaping its international position will be very limited.[12]

According to many analysts, journalists and observers, President Victor Yanukovych is a most diligent student of the Kremlin and Vladimir Putin himself. Yanukovych "pacifies" opposition activists much faster and in general complies with the law. After 2010 the new government accelerated the implementation of legislative changes, which was not observed earlier. Owners of private businesses are now subject to tight regulations; at the regional level, the Russian language shares the official status with Ukrainian, and issues in Ukraine's relations with its post-Soviet neighbours are gradually reviewed and resolved. The "Putinisation of the Yanukovych regime" – as opponents phrase it – is implemented by the book, which is certainly a surprise to the Kremlin. However, such actions are not leading Ukraine anywhere and its future appears to be increasingly less predictable.

Since 2010, at the initiative of the Party of Regions, a number of issues that were long part of its programme have been resolved. First and foremost, the authorities clamped down on small-size enterprises in a truly Belarusian-Russian style. Those private businesses were perceived as a large potential threat to the group in power. The status of the Russian language was partly regulated.

A major issues was the introduction of a new tax code in autumn 2010, which practically killed small and medium-size enterprises in Ukraine. That activity of Ukrainian authorities led to the Maidan of Entrepreneurs – a rally held on Kyiv's Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti). Thousands of people protested against the new regulations included in the bill drafted by the government of Mykola Azarov, which foresaw extension of competences of tax offices (which already were huge) and of the list of entities obliged to use cash registers.[13] The changes also included limitations on simplified taxation (to natural persons only, i.e. legal entities are not allowed to use that option), increase in land tax and fees for obtaining trade permits. More than 50,000 persons gathered on the central square of the Ukrainian capital and protests spread across the country. People's response to the announcement that their last modest privileges would be taken away from them was both impulsive and strong. According to some members of the Party of Regions, the protests of entrepreneurs were staged by people linked to the party of Yulia Tymoshenko. An MP from Victor Yanukovych's party said that the people at the square had practically no idea about what was going on, very often they were persons that did not pursue any business activity, etc.[14] The event was allegedly funded by foreign "sponsors".

---

[12] А. Дынкин, В. Барановский (ed.) (2009), *Россия и мир: 2010, экономика и внешняя политика. Ежегодный прогноз*, Москва, pp. 142-143.

[13] Protests of entrepreneurs in Ukraine, 27.11.2010, http://www.twojaeuropa.pl/2197/protesty-przedsiebiorcow-na-ukrainie.

[14] Регионал рассказал, кто „оплачивал" Майдан предпринимателей, 01.12.2010, http://news.liga.net/news/politics/501881-regional-rasskazal-kto-oplachival-maydan-predprinimateley.htm.

The very patriotic part the Ukrainian society considered the new status of the Russian language, especially at the regional level, to be another most important problem. In Ukraine, there are several regions where the Ukrainian language has dominated, also in Soviet times. For all post-Soviet states (maybe except for Belarus), having their national language (other than Russian) is basic for legitimising the country's statehood, especially at the international arena. The language issue applies especially to people born after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Russian language skills gradually worsen among young citizens of the Baltic states and the same applies to other former Soviet republics. This trend has been noticed by the Kremlin and led to a new language policy of the Russian Federation which consists in a rich educational offer addressed to former Soviet republics.

After a long struggle, on 3 July 2012, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the Principles of State Language Policy Act which allows for Russian to be recognised as an official minority language in Ukraine.[15] At the beginning of August 2012, Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych signed the Act and Russian is step by step granted the status of a minority language by local authorities of regions where the number of Russian-speaking citizens exceeds 10%. Since the new Act entered into force, Russian has been recognised as an official minority language by authorities of Luhansk, Sevastopol, Donetsk and Odessa.[16] Sittings of local councils at which decisions based on the new Act were taken became a target of Ukrainian nationalists who tried to prevent adoption of new provisions. For example, in Sumy, protesters forced their way into the Town Hall and broke up the sitting.[17] At present, the issue of practical adoption of the Act continues to be hot and many commentators accuse the government of giving up an essential element of Ukraine's sovereignty during Ukraine's political and social crisis. However, in the opinion of supporters of the Party of Regions, the decision of the Supreme Council of Ukraine and its signing by President Yanukovych were simply the fulfilment of an election promise long delayed. In September 2004, Victor Yanukovych, who was Ukraine's Prime Minister at the time, announced that the status of Russian and Ukrainian languages would be equal.[18] For the Russian Federation, raising the status of Russian in Ukraine is a great success that paves the way for further actions strengthening the status of the Russian language in the territory of the former Soviet Union. This symbolic victory of the Kremlin in such a delicate matter as the levelling of the status of Russian and Ukrainian in some regions of Ukraine was probably a turning point in Russia's strategy to restore Moscow's influence in key former Soviet republics since 1991.

---

[15] *Парламент Украины одобрил скандальный закон о русском языке* http://mir24.tv/news/politics/5190843, 03.07.2012.

[16] *Националисты не смогли сорвать голосование по русскому языку в Харькове* 20.08.2012, http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=884316&tid=98474.

[17] Независимая газета: Украина превращается в Гуляйполе, 22.08.2012, http://podrobnosti.ua/outeropinion/2012/08/22/853744.html

[18] V. Kulyk (2009), *Language policies and language attitudes in post-orange Ukraine, in: Language policy and language situation in Ukraine. Analysis and recommendations*, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 24-25.

POLISH INTEGRATION PROJECT

In popular opinion, relations between Poland and Ukraine are quite complicated. Poland keeps declaring it protects Ukraine's interests in Europe and is the advocate of Ukraine's efforts to join the European Union. That "strategic partnership for the poor" entails many question marks, especially about real intentions of Ukrainian authorities. Despite many summits and public declarations of friendly relations, since 2005, Poland-Ukraine relations have been downgrading, and since 2010 they have been threatened by the "soft Belarusian syndrome". That trend can only be reverted if one of the parties involved consents to continue the dialogue without referring to their current internal policies.

In last 20 years, it became clear that the "Jagiellonian" foreign policy revised by Jerzy Giedroyc and Ludwik Mieroszewski in Paris in the 1960s, was practically a complete failure. It supported sovereignty of Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus and was pursued by successive governments of the Republic of Poland.[19] Despite the efforts of successive governments, social activists, diplomats and scholars, it proved impossible to build a foundation of a strong and effective Eastern policy, which was an objective declared on numerous occasions after 1991. In 2004, when Poland became an EU Member State, it turned out that efforts invested in establishing the eastern EU buffer zone consisting of independent Belarus and Ukraine failed completely.

Poland was the first CEE country to sign the Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Cooperation with Ukraine. Unfortunately, the agreement was implemented only at a small extent. In 1992-1993, Ukraine was practically isolated at the international arena, and its efforts to enter the so-called Visegrad Group met with Poland's reluctance. According to some Ukrainian analysts, at the time Ukraine wanted to cut off from its "Soviet heritage" to accelerate its integration with the EU.[20] In fact, it was not until Leonid Kuchma rose to power in 1994 that relations between Ukraine and the West were stabilised (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nations). That is why one should take into consideration Ukraine's lack of trust toward Polish initiatives concerning the "East". They might have been enthusiastically welcomed but their implementation has left much room for improvement.

Poland, as a dynamically developing CEE country and an EU Member State (since 2004), had, paradoxically, little to offer to Ukraine. This applies to the broadly understood geopolitical security and safeguarding Ukraine's interests in Europe in particular. In this context it needs to be underlined that the year 2004 was probably the last when so many new members could join the European community.[21]

---

[19] Ю. Мерошевский, *«Польский комплекс» России и территории УЛБ*, www.inosmi.ru/ stories/05/05/083450/221519.html.

[20] www.oldrass.ru/politics/kontur/20010123.html.

[21] А. Ирхин (2010), *Интеграционная политика Польши в отношении постсоветского пространства: историческая традиция и моделирование будущего развитя*, in: „Науковий висник" No. 19 (120), Одесский державный университет, p. 80.

It needs to be remembered that many Ukrainian political and economic elites consider cooperation with Poland is a "necessary evil" and are sceptical about Polish proposals. Ukrainians remember that the idea that the old Polish Eastern Borderlands are "Polish territories under temporary Ukrainian occupation" is not totally dead and some fear that Poland may reclaim Lviv. When analysing Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Russian relations, one might get the impression that the latter translate into practical actions and may evoke less concern among a large part of the Ukrainian society than Poland-Ukraine relations.[22]

The Eastern Partnership initiated by Poland arouses serious concerns among politicians both in Moscow and Kiev. According to some, Polish support for Ukraine's European ambitions may do more harm than good. They claim that the Polish initiative, after a closer inspection, is "empty" when it comes to its contents and exposes Poland's false conviction that it has a mission to fulfil in the "East".[23] Secondly, the EU and Ukraine belong to different civilisations and this hampers the needed cooperation, especially if the past is an issue. In fact, Polish elites do not have much to offer to the independent Ukrainian state and their influence on the political situation in Ukraine remains limited.

Since 1991, the Russian Federation, the United States and the European Union are the international players most relevant to Ukraine. EU Member States such as Poland, Germany and France are relevant but less than the EU. Many countries of the so-called "old" Europe identify former Soviet republics such as Ukraine and Belarus with Russian civilisation. According to Ukrainian geopoliticians, two players - the United States and the European Union - are responsible for quality international relations. Unfortunately, it is hard to assess the real power of the Russian Federation in this system as Russia's assets in post-Soviet republics are huge and Russia can directly influence situation there.

Recently (since 2010), relations between Kiev and Moscow have been warmer. In June 2012, presidents of Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on the delimitation of the maritime border between the two countries in the Kerch Strait.[24] One day earlier, the parties agreed to speed up negotiations on the delimitation of maritime borders in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and on the Tuzla Island status. Disputes concerning demarcation of the border in those attractive areas started in the 1990s. After 2010, the Victor Yanukovych administration finally managed to reach

---

[22] *Интервью Джорджа Фридмана польской газете «Rzeczpospolita»*, www.inosmi.ru/stories/05/09/02/3453/245577.html.

[23] А. Ирхин (2011)*, Геополитические циклы Евразии и национальные интересы Украины,* Севастополь, pp. 154-161; see also his: *Формирования империй, как фактор влияния на систему международных отношений,* in: Ю. Бабинов (ed.) *(*2011), *Христианство и ислам – диалог культур и цивилизаций*, Симферополь, p. 30, and: *Постсоветское пространство: геополитические параметры и методология моделирования интеграционных процессов,* in: Ученые записки ТНУ, серия политические науки, Т. 22(61), 2009.

[24] *Россия отдала Украине Тузлу в обмен на «право ключа» в Керченскиом проливе*, 2012-07-13, http://ukranews.com/ru/news/ukraine/2012/07/13/74549.

a compromise on those issues. (Interestingly, in 1998, a Russian scholar and former distinguished KGB officer wrote a brochure in which he argued that Russia's right to control the Kerch Strait was fully justified.[25]) The Tuzla Island or Split is a sandy islet in the middle of the Strait of Kerch. There, to the end of 2003, Russia started to build a dam from the Russian mainland to the Tuzla Island which in the early 20th century was connected to mainland of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Ukraine protested. The conflict resounded so loudly that during the election campaign to the Duma in 2003, the issue was publicised by Dmitry Rogozin of the "Motherland" party. However, the firm stance of Kiev halted the construction for almost 10 years. The dispute was resolved in July 2012.

Although the issue of Tuzla seems to be minor, its resolution was a breakthrough in Russia-Ukraine relations. The dispute actually concerned the administrative border of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Ukraine argued that the island belonged to its so-called internal part. Russia argued that in the Soviet Union internal maritime borders were not precisely delineated and that maritime borders are but "conventional" and thus all parties concerned can use the waters freely.[26]

Finally, Russia consented to transfer control over Tuzla to Ukraine, in return for the so-called "key right", i.e. the right of the Russian fleet to a free and undisturbed passage through the Kerch Strait.[27]

Paradoxically, that event bolstered the image of the Ukrainian administration in the EU and, especially, helped Ukraine's efforts to integrate with NATO structures. One ought to bear in mind that one of the conditions of tightening Ukraine-NATO and Ukraine-EU relations is the necessity to resolve border disputes by applicant countries. At the same time, Russian analysts believe that the agreement signed is a next step in the process of integrating Ukraine with the CIS geopolitical area. A Russian MP has underlined that quite recently Ukraine signed an agreement on humanitarian aid within the CIS, and the next logical step would be to join the CIS customs union and the CIS free trade area.[28] Actually, many Ukrainian politicians believe that any initiative of the CIS integration should have positive effects on an average resident in the fallen Empire. For them, the European Union sets the example of unrestricted movement of people, capital, goods and labour resources.[29]

The Common Economic Space project (Russian: *ЕЭП*) for the Eurasian Economic Community aims at integrating the territory of the former Soviet Union and is supported by Russian authorities. As quoted above Aleksander Irhin claims,

---

[25] А. Травников (1998), *Коса Тузла: перечисленная территория.* Краснодар.

[26] *Украина и Россия договорились о делимитации Керченского пролива*, 13.07.2012, http://seafarersjournal.com/seanews/ukraina-i-rossiya-podpisali-dogovor-o-delimitacii-kerchenskogo-proliva.html.

[27] *Путин уступил Украине Тузлу в обмен на керченский «ключ»*, 13.07.2012, http://politics.comments.ua/2012/07/13/349581/putin-ustupil-ukraine-tuzlu.html.

[28] *Эксперт: Договор о границах - ключевой момент в отношениях двух стран,* 13.07.2012, http://rian.com.ua/politics/20120713/79115400.html.

[29] А. Чешмит (2004), *Государственная власть и политическое участье,* Киев.

Ukraine's reluctance to join the CES is the main obstacle to the project full implementation.[30] According to other researchers, the CES might bring benefits to both parties in a long term, one of the reasons being the natural ethnic and linguistic closeness and common post-Soviet heritage.[31] Other Ukrainian scholars argue that in a longer run, the CES project is an alternative to Ukraine's European ambitions. It is an alternative which does not entail breaching democratic standards and any universal modern principles of common operations of states.

Currently, the CES project is in the stage of a "permanent standstill" and there is not much hope that anything changes in the coming years.

The present global crisis is conducive to Russian geopolitical initiatives of integration, especially economic ones. Ukrainian authorities, which to an extent are hostage to the influential oligarch lobby, are inclined to reactivate Ukraine's economic ties with the entire territory of the former Soviet Union. It is expected that this process will deepen in the nearest future. All initiatives of EU Member States supporting the "European gravity" of Ukraine are seriously delayed and rather unfeasible in the coming years. Maybe in 15 or 20 years, when Ukraine finally develops its model of alternative social and economic development and effectively fights omnipresent corruption, a "new European opening" will take place.

Most important regional problems in Ukraine are the issue of independence of particular regions and its division into east and west which is regularly raised by western analysts. More than 11 million citizens of Ukraine are ethnic Russians and for years they have been perceived as a "delay-action bomb".[32] Apart from that, it is not clear how many Ukrainian citizens have Russian passports. The case of South Ossetia, where over 90% of citizens have had their Russian passports for years, is a relevant warning of potential threat to Ukraine.

Russia's region-oriented foreign policy in the CIS, especially in Ukraine, has been a quite successful alternative in the Kremlin's activities in the entire post-Soviet territory. However, as it is region-oriented, it is a proof that various pro-integration actions of Russian authorities have failed, especially in relation to Ukraine.[33] The concept of Ukraine serving as a buffer zone between the West and the East, promoted in the 1990s, remains valid today and revoked due to Ukraine's chronic political instability. Many western politicians (European and American) have hoped that Ukrainian authorities would know better and eventually define their interest orientation.[34]

---

[30] А. Ирхин, *Геополитические циклы...* s. 116.

[31] Ю. Пахомов, Ю. Павленко (ed.) (2007), *Цивилизацённая структура современного мира. 3 Т.*, Киев.

[32] R. Solchanyk (1993), *Regionalismus und Nationalismus in der Ukraine*, in: *Ukraine: Gegenwart und Geschichte eines neuen Staates*, Baden-Baden, p. 249.

[33] S. Spahn, *Staatliche Unabhängigkeit – das Ende der ostslawischen Gemeinschaft? Die Außenpolitik Russlands gegenüber der Ukraine und Belarus seit 1991*, in: *Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa*, Hamburg, 2011, p. 11.

[34] M. Schunemann, *Die sicherheitspolitische Zwischenlage der Ukraine – Chancen und Risiken*, in: S. Bock, M. Schunemann (eds) (1997), *Die Ukraine in der europäischen Sicherheitsarchitektur*, Baden-Baden, p. 13.

Attempts to stabilise the legal and international status of Ukraine remain a hardly feasible "political dream", mainly due to the huge Kremlin's influence east of the Dnieper.

Lately, Ukraine improved its international image in the area of democratic institutions. Starting with 2007, successive parliamentary and presidential elections were declared free of serious violations. That is why some Ukrainians believe that they are subjected to "preventive ostracism" which stems from Ukraine's history more than from the current political situation.[35]

Recently, difficulties in approaching Ukraine are closely related to the unclear orientation of Kiev's foreign policy and its tough stance on opposition in domestic affairs. Last two years of Victor Yanukovych's presidential term buried all hopes for closer cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union, and countries like Poland.

The straw that broke the camel's back in EU-Ukraine relations was the issue of Yulia Tymoshenko. Tymoshenko, a former Prime Minister of Ukraine, has been held in custody since August 2011. She has become a symbol of the struggle between the Ukrainian government and the opposition that has recently adopted a boldly pro-European approach. Both in Ukraine and across the globe, it is believed that the imprisonment and conviction of Yulia Tymoshenko have been but an act of political vengeance by the new authorities and a final attempt to eliminate a dangerous political rival. The way the trial was prepared ensured that one accusation of many would work to lock Tymoshenko in prison for a long time. Disputes concern the fact that the 31-year-old judge had little experience and the hearings were held in scandalous conditions, e.g. in rooms without air-conditioning.

Paradoxically, the present Ukrainian authorities are capable of giving in only in one area which is ethnic policy at the regional level. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC), where a large part of the society is constituted by Muslims – Crimean Tatars – is a perfect example here.

Representatives of the Tatar minority readily exploit all weaknesses of Ukrainian authorities to attain their goals. They do not refrain from submitting official complaints to international organisations and foreign diplomatic outposts. For example, in autumn 2012, Crimean Tatars planned an International Tatar Forum with participation of important diplomats accredited to Ukraine, social activists, and politicians. Mustafa Jemilev, Chairman of the Mejlis, has very good contacts with EU and US ambassadors. When the new Prime Minister of the ARC, Anatoly Mogiliov, launched a clearly anti-Tatar policy, Jemilev complained at over twenty embassies in person. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was very surprised with calls from various diplomats asking about the religious and social situation of Tatars. Actions taken by the leader of Crimean Tatars proved effective. Already in spring 2011, former head of the Crimean government Vasily Dzharty invited Mustafa Jemilev to a meeting. During a series of talks which followed, it was agreed that:

---

[35] W. Templin (2008), *Farbenspiele – die Ukraine nach der Revolution in Orange,* Osnabrück, p. 275.

– the Crimean Tatars would be granted a firm and final consent to build their new central mosque in Simferopol. Warranties to that effect were put on paper and signed. This was preceded by a 15-year-long deadlock during which no agreement could be reached even with the involvement of top level authorities in Kiev. In March 2011, the cornerstone of the new mosque was laid. The ceremony was attended by Vasily Dzharty and Mustafa Jemilev.
– the Tatars would refrain from illegal settlement in the territory of the ARC and occupied plots would be returned or their ownership rights clarified, depending on the area, property rights, legal and territorial situation, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing from examples discussed, it can be concluded that the internal policy of present Ukrainian authorities has strong external connotations favourable to particular interest groups. The new authorities have been implementing controversial political, social and economic projects for over two years now (since 2010) and are prone to engage in a dialogue only if it does not threaten Ukraine's internal stability.

Ever since Ukraine regained independence in 1991, it keeps seeking its path in foreign policy, which seems to be the greatest challenge for the emerging Ukrainian elite. What is characteristic of the emerging politics of post-Soviet republics is the uneven transformation of key segments of political life, which may delay every aspect of Ukraine's integration with Europe. Ukrainian authorities manage to resolve social, economic and ethnic issues at the level of regions but their effectiveness in handling foreign policy issues keeps decreasing. Whether we like it or not, we have to accept that the Russian Federation increasingly "embraces" Ukraine and, as recent months have shown, this is the most probable scenario for Ukraine. In this case, even actions taken by countries friendly to the authorities in Kiev do not produce tangible results. At the same time, Russia takes every opportunity to exploit each political and economic weakness of its smaller neighbour. The Kremlin's initiatives (i.e. the free trade zone and the Customs Union) look very attractive from Ukraine's perspective, however, Kiev will have to pay a high price including a loss of political independence. Should it happen, Ukraine will bury its ambitions of tightening its relations with the EU in the nearest decades.

ABSTRACT

The article offers an analysis of the state of the Ukrainian foreign policy with special emphasis on the period following the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005. The present authorities of Ukraine face a difficult choice of the model of transformation for the whole country, particularly in the context of its civilisation development. Russian economic initiatives are a very attractive alternative to the activity of the European Union. The Ukrainian society no longer believes in the assertions of European enthusiasts about a fast political and economic integration with western countries. Paradoxically, domestic

activities of the administration serve Ukraine's international position better than its complicated and rather chaotic foreign policy. The present authorities in Kiev implement the policy of accomplished facts especially in provincial areas and seem to be increasingly interested in the Russian offer. The authorities in Kiev have long been aware that a clear choice of one of the options of development would permanently bar its alternative. However, it should be kept in mind that the Ukrainian political establishment is unable to foresee the consequences of a "final decision" and does not have a vision of a long-term development of Ukraine's foreign relations.



OUR PUBLICATIONS

INSTITUTE FOR WESTERN AFFAIRS
ul. Mostowa 27, 61-854 Poznań, Poland
phone: +48 61 852 28 54
fax: +48 61 852 49 05
e-mail: wydawnictwo@iz.poznan.pl

Stosunki gospodarcze miedzy Polską a Niemcami 20 lat po zjednoczeniu

[Polish-German Economic Relations
20 Years after German Reunification]

Piotr Kalka, Editor

Studium Niemcoznawcze No. 88, abstract in English
ISBN 978-83-61736-32-5
Poznań 2012, pp. 199.

This volume of the "The Federal Republic of Germany 20 Years after Reunification. Politics – Economy – Society" series is dedicated to economic issues in an attempt at summarising Polish-German cooperation in this field in the years 1990-2010.

As Germany is Poland's most important economic partner, there is a constant need for monitoring trends in their bilateral cooperation and assessing changes that result from both internal and external conditionalities. Authors of this publication analyse financial transfers in the balance of payments to provide deep insight into Polish-German economic relations, the progress made in selected fields of cooperation such as foreign trade, migration of labour force and relations in the border zone. The latter is particularly interesting due to the history of the Polish-German borderlands, their economic and cultural diversity, varying local awareness, and long marginalisation of those regions. These are often decisive for barriers to cross-border cooperation and specificity of cross-border relations. The authors: Ilona Romiszewska, Piotr Kalka, Tomasz Budnikowski and Zbigniew Świątkowski, analyse Polish-German economic cooperation in the light of the balance of payments, trade exchange between Poland and Germany, migration of manpower, and the Polish-German cross-border economic cooperation.