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UKRAINIAN ISSUES IN GEOPOLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

ABSTRACT: Ukrainian lands in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been in proximity of great geopolitical changes several times. During that time the Ukrainian nation – due to various factors – encountered a number of "windows of opportunity" for achieving the realization of dreams about independence and national sovereignty. The author identified in the period considered four "general moments," of which two have been completed successfully. The first of these occurred in 1990–1991, when for the first time in modern history, Ukrainians managed to achieve a lasting and relatively stable independence. The second of the "moments" – still unresolved – are events that began in the late autumn of 2013. The process, called "Revolution of Dignity", represents a new quality in the history of the Ukrainian nation, therefore, that the Ukrainians have to defend the status quo (independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty, etc.) but not to seek to achieve an independent being. The analysis leads to the conclusion that the ability of Ukrainians to achieve and maintain independence is largely a function of the relative power of the Russian state as measured with respect to the shape and quality of international relations.

KEYWORDS: Ukraine, geopolitics, geostrategy, Russia, Maidan, war, security complex

Ukraine's geopolitical importance in the modern scientific reflection and views, which can be described as "colloquial," seems to be pretty obvious (Moczulski, 2010: 312). The country, located in the basin of the Dnieper River, with wide access to the Black Sea, an important human and economic potential, and above all, being a special keystone between "East" and "West," has been predestined to play an important geopolitical role (Al-Rodhan, 2009: 18–19). Perhaps these factors decided about quite evident in the past century phenomenon, the essence of which may be the formulated as the assertion that Ukrainian lands and affairs were gener-

ally regarded as the object of the game between the global powers (Moczulski 1999: 707–708). Ukrainian efforts to conclude aspirations for subjectivity were relatively rare and only rather briefly had a chance of appearing in world politics. These unique situations were associated with deep turbulence in the international configuration/model of the distribution of power, which could occur as a result of the struggle/war on an enormous scale. In the twentieth century this "window of opportunity" appeared mainly during and after the First World War. During another collective conflict – the Second World War, the Ukrainian lands in effect only slightly marked the occurrence of opportunities for their own independent existence. It was primarily due to the fact that the Soviet Union achieved the status of a superpower. This justifies a conclusion that the great military conflicts created a chance for Ukraine only when they led to a significant weakening (or temporarily collapse) the possibility of Russia's geopolitical influence. The turn of the 80's and 90's of the twentieth century is an emphatic confirmation of this observation. The disintegration of the Soviet (Russian) empire and related geopolitical impotence was not the result of an open armed struggle, however, it led to the effective use of the arising opportunities for the implementation of political, national and state identity Ukraine (D. Arel, B. A. Ruble, 2006: 227–229). It is worth highlighting that all three cited attempts (after all, even during the Second World War Ukrainian nationalist elites made some effort to achieve a state or quasi-state identity) were calculated to achieve the effect of the entrance to the geopolitical game on the principles of being an independent and sovereign player.

The nature of the events which took place in Ukraine in the 2013 and 2014 was definitely different. First of all, the Ukrainian state was sovereign, so in terms of international law and order one cannot talk about "the struggle for independence," but rather about its defense. In addition, it should it should be noted that the geopolitical processes, particularly related to the flows of power in the world, the quality of particular centers and the directions of the change were very dynamic and turbulent in that time (Al-Rodhan, 2009: 93–94). It would be a truism to say that the world at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century is far different from the world at the end of the previous century (Brzeziński, 2007: kindle edition), however, it is necessary to capture these differences, particularly in the context of Ukrainian lands. The main factor influencing was the realization of the postulate of subjectivity of Ukraine (perhaps the first time from the

settlement of Pereyaslav). It is reasonable, therefore, to emphasize that the turn of the century was marked by a more effective coming out of the Russian State from a period of time referred to as "the Troubles" (*Smuta*), which was characterized, on the one hand, by internal weakness, but mainly in the field of deep impotence of the international game. "Putin's" Russia is a country that dynamically and successfully has returned to the group of major players in the world, both in the individual as well as collective formulas (even in a heavily promoted, but still a bit "spectral" concept of BRIC or BRICS). It can be assumed that the process of coming out from the geopolitical collapse of the Russian Federation has intensified in response to the "color revolutions" in the former Soviet Union – "Rose" in Georgia (2003), "Orange" in Ukraine (2004–2005), and "Tulip" in Kyrgyzstan (2005). The first two especially proved to be dangerous from the perspective of the Kremlin, as they led to a profound geopolitical reorientation of foreign policy regarding Georgia and Ukraine (Olchawa, 2009: 117). The Russian Federation took a strongly negative position against these changes. Of course one cannot recognize that, until 2003, the Russian Federation favorably looked at emancipation trends in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The lack of decisive action and rather modest tools held by the Kremlin were results of self-conscious of relatively weakness rather. On the other hand, Georgian and Ukrainian aspirations were considered in Russia as formulated within acceptable limits. The situation was changed in 1999–2004 due to the admission countries from Central Europe to NATO and the European Union (Wilson, 2005: 21). As a result, the "strategic culture" of the West came into direct contact with the boundaries of the area defined by the Russian Federation in the mid-90s of the twentieth century as strategically important "near abroad" (Cordesman, Al-Rodhan, 2006: 112) (Shoemaker, 2014: 90). It was a significant fact that since 2001 the United States – properly seen as the main actor in organizing the security architecture of the transatlantic space – were involved initially in wars in Afghanistan (since 2001) and Iraq (since 2003). Since 2009, the foreign policy of the United States, through the announcement of the "reset" in relations with the Russian Federation and "Asiatic Pivot," transferred the center of gravity from European theater to Asian issues. It has opened a lot of space for the activity of Russian politics. In fact, this period can be moved to the mid-2008, when the US Congress was dominated since 2007 by Democrats (110 seats), and was strongly supported by the growing chances of Barack Obama to became the

next President of the United States. Those factors allowed Russian strategists to assume a possibility of deep revalue in the foreign policy of the United States in the close future (Olchawa, 2009: 183). Necessary tools for the new and active policy of the Russian Federation were secured due to the high prices of energy and lucrative arms contracts. It is also worth noting that in the first case, Russia led a fairly open policy calculated to monopolize certain markets, or at least their domination. It was possible according to an aggressive policy in the energetic markets, as well as events in the world (the "Arab spring," the war in Syria, and so on.) That situation is still maintained, ensuring the Federation has effective tools for activities designed to rebuild their geopolitical zone of influence. It seems that the process was started about 1999 (although, as mentioned, some attempts were made earlier – but were not successfully completed due to the relative weakness). Since 2008, the "gathering of the Russian lands" entered into a much more intensive phase (Al-Rodhan, 2009: 111). The Caucasian war of the 2008, however, made it clear that the use of armed force for the realization of geopolitical objectives in specific regions does not entail unacceptable political costs. Far more – the full geopolitical success was reached by Moscow politicians only after some time. Replacing the cadres of Georgia led the state – as it seems – to resignation from pro-Western course. The ongoing game in 2013–2014 towards the geopolitical future of Ukraine is another piece of Russian actions that result is to be the redefinition of geopolitical space in the Eurasian region.

The uniqueness of the recent situation in Ukraine in comparison with previous (twentieth-century) openings of "windows of opportunity" should not obscure the existence of a certain continuity in geopolitical trends. Even more, the current situation should be seen as firmly rooted in the contexts of the past and referring to them (Burdzy, 1995: 39).

Ukraine in Geopolitical Concepts in the Years 1917–1945

For a long period modern geopolitics – from the appearance of such reflection in contemporary political thought – was dominated by Europeans and European issues (Moczulski, 2010: 72). This resulted directly from the situation of the architecture of international relations and the world's politics on a macro scale in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. The United States

based on its own (incidentally, geopolitical) doctrine, persisted in durable splendid isolation, as Asian countries were the subject of the political game, or just woke up to the power. Europe, therefore, remained the only active center for the formulation of political thought with global aspirations, or those of supra-regional dimension. This phenomenon should also be associated with the fact, being acknowledged by many researchers, of the menial and ancillary role of geopolitics as a tool for the description and projection of the political situation at the level of decision-making. The ancillary can also be seen in the sphere of motivation (and hence ideology) of the major world powers (Moczulski, 2010: 393). At the turn of the century, Europe seemed to be, and actually was, the center of creation and the point of the reference of the main mega-trends in world politics. The scope of relations between the European powers determined the overall state of tension in international relations (Moczulski, 2010: 253–254).

The Russo-Japanese War was an exception, but even then, this competition was perceived as an element representing the position of the Russian Empire in a European game. It can also be said that the defeat in the war restored full Russia's interest in European issues. These few remarks, though do not exhaust the problem, unless they sufficiently explain the phenomenon of the Europe-centric nature of geopolitics – at least until the end of the 1930's (Jean, 2004: 47).

Another, no less important consideration ought to be made, which is that, although the region of the Central and Eastern Europe was not the theater of immediate struggle, it was a keystone of geopolitical thinking in this period (Moczulski, 2010: 83). Crises and conflicts that took place before 1914 should be seen as peripheral clash or actions undertaken for the purpose of increasing the potential in the face of the expected confrontation in the main theater – Central and Eastern Europe. It will not be an exaggeration to say that modern European politics (and thus the world) began after 1871. After that moment, European centers of power were finally created and began to struggle for power in a certain political dimension. Since this time goes back to deep German-French antagonism, which dominated European politics for several decades. While the conflict between the Republic of France and the German Empire had a dominant meaning, whereas strategic decisions in the European melting pot were conditioned by the quality of the relationship on the axis between Berlin & St. Petersburg (Moczulski, 2010: 502–505). Close cooperation or alliance between the

empires, would generate the political quality, which would not compete any other European power. In turn, a sharp conflict – at least at first glance – would block potential German aggression to the West. Such a chain of relationships dominated European geopolitical thinking for more than a half century. It also clearly exhibited the importance of the Central European region, as the area of the clash of interests or area of possible cooperation. Quite soon one more element came to the calculation: in the case of open German-Russian conflict, the area of Central and Eastern Europe would be the scene of warfare, waged by the two giants (Moczulski, 2010: 519). Thus, the research on the nature of geographical conditions as well as the study of a complex mosaic of ethno-cultural and political took on a special significance (Dima, 2010: 8–9).

One of the first coherent and comprehensive geopolitical concepts was formulated at the threshold of the twentieth century by Swedish geographer and Germanophile, Rudolf Kjellén. Although the Professor of Gothenburg and Uppsala, first was dealing with cases of the political and cultural condition of a state (Moczulski, 2010: 7–9), he later focused on the conditions of the Western European chain of dependencies (Kjellén, 1915). After all, the ongoing events of the Great War the East Europe region caught his attention. Kjellén claimed that the German-Russian borderland (whether it is better to speak about Slavo-Germanic *limes*) was a natural theater of clashes (Moczulski, 2010: 508–509). It was a significant factor determining the nature of both areas – on the one hand, the industrial center with limited raw materials and permanent import demand, from the other: lands rich in raw materials – primarily food (Ukraine) and the infrastructure unable to process and consume them. Kjellén's assumption that the "border" conflict between Russia and Germany had a much broader context – it had vested interests across the globe, was also important. In the general scope of his geopolitical reflection, the geographer recognized the naturalness of the existence of three 'pan-regions': American, German, and Japanese (Moczulski, 2010: 591–520). The *sine qua non* condition for the realization of this model in his opinion (regard to contemporary reality it is difficult to disagree with this view) was victorious war against Russia, which he saw as a part of a global war. In such conditions, the CEE region would be, on the one hand, "the prize," and on the other hand, the main theater of war. Reflection related to the Kjellén's concept, but also present in almost the entire reflection on contemporary politics should be raised here: international relations often have been seen at the level of "great

space" (Powers), and their shape as the result of the game between them. It has naturally led to reductionist assumptions in terms of the number of subjects in the ongoing political game (Jean, 2004: 97–101). The "strongest organisms" were surviving at the expense of smaller and weaker ones. In such an intellectual atmosphere the position of the regions had to be brought at most to play the role of the object or area of clashes. This fascination of Darwinism was also evident in the views of the other "geopolitician" of the turn of the century, Friedrich Ratzel. The ground for his deliberations was the thesis of the naturalness of conflicts and clashes between political territorial organisms (states). Ratzel acknowledged a tendency to expand their areas of ownership and influence in the spatial dimension (Raumsinn) as an inherent feature of international politics. The international environment of the game was considered as a "zero-sum," where profits naturally determined the size of losses of the opponent (Moczulski, 2010: 8). In Ratzel's concept, Central Europe and its structure became both the center and the reason for expansion. Ratzel pointed out that the fact of the overpopulation of Germany, unprecedented anywhere else in the region, naturally tended to expand and extend the living space. Commenting the significance of the geographical factor for the behavior of nations, he remarked that "in Africa, Germans and French are not as hostile to each other as in Europe." Another reflection – basic for Europe – was the naturalness of the phenomenon of variation of political borders, which in his opinion were marked by the stigma of artificiality. Axes of communication and boundaries generated in this way played much greater role in the relations between states. The boundaries, therefore, for Ratzel were a function (or effect) of the movement in international relations. Taking for consideration a dynamic of the borders the feature of territoriality of participants in the international game should be considered as naturally variable. On the other hand, the German thinker perceived attachment of states to their ownership, what made the conflicts between nation-states a regular part of the world order.

A novelty in comparison to other concepts relating to international issues, posting Germany in the limelight, was a postulate of direct expansion due the vector along the south direction – and therefore, to the Balkans and Turkey. The Central European region took on a new dimension, yielding to the extension of the Southern dimension. It is tempting to reflect that, for Ratzel, the southern parts of Europe constituted a sort of "geopolitical vacuum" marked by a clash of different influences, but which was not finally

"developed." The traditional direction of German expansion – East – also was present in the concepts of the German geographer. He recognized, however, as a better tool for realization of geopolitical objectives on this direction a wide spectrum of economic measures (soft economic expansion). For the first time in modern geopolitics, the political thought of Friedrich Ratzel so clearly outlined the relationship between the objective and the costs of implementation of the goals. Ratzel had not renounced the concept of conquering the East – but he considered an account of profits or losses (Moczulski, 2010: 498–499). These estimates led him to believe the strategic direction of the Balkans would be less expensive and – in the long term – more promising. One can risk saying that Ratzel only creatively developed the structure proposed by Kjellen – through expansion into the Balkans and Turkey to achieve control over the Black Sea straits and thus economically subjugate Russia. He returned to the thinking about Central and Eastern Europe in terms of the subject of international games between the superpowers.

The works by Kjellen and Ratzel reflected the international tension, which ultimately led to the outbreak of the Great War. In the discourses from the period the need to focus on the problems of Central Europe was evident. Expression of two researchers cited above, as well as many others pointed to the fact that this region was in the focus of international relations theorists (Moczulski, 2010: 502). It resulted in the development of the concept of Mitteleuropa, which – although originally German – dominated the thinking of the fate of continental Europe in the conceptions developed in other countries. It will be natural to draw attention to special interest, which those questions raised in the UK. The idea of Mitteleuropa was inextricably linked with the figures of Friedrich Neumann and Ernst Jäckh (Wolff-Powęska, 2000: 217–220). Of course, their ideas were heavily contaminated with the rhetoric of war, however, the image that emerged from them was characterized by a coherent geopolitical vision. The starting point was the observation of conflict in continental Europe, or more precisely in its central part, between three major political programs: English, Russian and German. Vector, which was the resultant of these three forces directed towards the south (the Balkans and the Black Sea straits), but still remained connected with the initial field of clash – the areas of south of the Baltic Sea. The proposal, which pulled out of the above assumptions contained the call for efforts to build a "great space" (strongly argued by Ratzel). Europe remained impaired because of the competition between natural centers of power, such as Russia,

the British Empire and the United States. Perceptions of Central Europe in the terms of "territorial poverty" and exposition of the huge population density gave complementary arguments in favor of expansion and construction of a new geopolitical quality under German hegemony, which should be called a "European great space" with a power center located in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and today's Central and Eastern Europe. It is worth emphasizing, that concepts of Mitteleuropa were not based on assumptions of direct conquest. These solutions were impractical due to the homogeneous national character of the German state, whether in relation to the Habsburg Empire to the inability of increasing the number of full-fledged entities in dualistic monarchy. The solution – especially expressed by Neumann in the pages of "Mitteleuropa" (Wolff-Powęska, 2000: 216), was to create a network of quasi-independent states, entirely dependent on the center of power in Berlin (Reginia-Zacharski, 2004: 98–101). Finally, the goal to be achieved on the basis of "gravitation" was actually addiction the whole of Central Europe – mainly in the southern dimension. German successes such as the seizure of the Polish Kingdom (and the Act of November 5, 1916.), two peace treaties signed at Brest-Litovsk in 1918 (with the Ukrainian People's Republic and a month later with Bolshevik Russia), and at the end with Romania (May of 1918) seemed to create the possibility of the realization of these intentions. The first peace of Brest seemed to be the moment when the Ukrainian question for the first time appeared as a geopolitical phenomenon (Wheeler-Bennet, 1968: passim).

The breakdown of the Great Powers of continental Europe made the concepts gained in importance recognizing the important role the so called "Members of the sea world" – the United Kingdom and the United States. In particular, the first state has become the land on which they grew a concept, which dominated during the interwar geopolitical structures (actually it is present geopolitical discourse today). This state of affairs was relatively easy to explain. Countries of the former "central block" had not even started to lick their wounds after defeat in a global conflict. France, at best, opted for maintaining the great anti-German coalition – often "geopolitical" reflection generated at the ground boiled down to use phrase: *Boche salaire* (Reginia-Zacharski, 2004: 209). With respect to the United States, the situation was slightly more complex. The two major trends clashed on American soil. On the one hand, the Democrats and US President Woodrow Wilson spearheaded global thinking rooted in the paradigm of political idealism, whose "embodiment"

was to be the League of Nations (Sierpowski, 2000: 98). At the other end, Republicans were declaring the need to return to isolationism under the conditions of the Monroe Doctrine, in the current time based on the military and strategic considerations – mainly, Admiral Mahan.

The British found themselves in a defensive position. Back in January 1919, the situation has forced diplomacy of the His Majesty's Government to come up with a common front with the United States to the idea of the League of Nations. Immediately after completion of the Paris Peace Conference the British, probably, to their surprise, found themselves in the position of the main defenders of the league system. Thus, the British acted in a role much less comfortable for them, due to the fact that in 1920 the US Congress rejected the ratification of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which thus meant a deprivation of one of the five main pillars. It could therefore been not surprising that recurrent political views, referring to realistic paradigms, received a large dose of sympathy among British policy makers. One of the major geopolitical schools, also influential in the contemporary world, emerged from the concept of John Halford Mackinder. Geopolitical foundations of the model were outlined before the outbreak of the Great War in the speech and article from 1904 titled "The Geographical Pivot of History" (Mackinder, 1942: passim). The core of belief of the British geographer was made in the convincement of existing of the objective center of political power, which he initially called a "pivot area." These areas were to be laid in the depths of the Eurasian continental mass, coinciding roughly with the sovereignty of the Romanov Empire. The axis of the Mackinder's concept became a theorem about the existence of a conflict between civilizations of Land and Sea (Mackinder, 1942:). The world for the most of the time was determined by the continental center of power, however, technological development has caused (or rather allowed) the creation of a new center of power, which should be called transoceanic. Mackinder localized this new quality in the "outer crescent" – an arc extending along the left edge of the Atlantic, the northern areas of South America, southern Africa, Australia and the Pacific. According to Mackinder, there was the tension resulting from the clash of global influences between the centers of power and that defined the dynamics of global change. It is worth of noting that, sketched structures occupied a prominent place another element – the "inner crescent," comprising Western Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and South East Asia (Mackinder, 1942: 24). This area was

to be by Mackinder both the stake, as well as the area where the fight was conducted. Importantly, Ukraine was placed by the British in geocultural Europe and in parts of demonstrating the ability of state-building (Mackinder, 1981: 118). It is worth noting that the main determinant in this case remained physical geography – especially the great rivers. The eastern "border" of Europe was marked by the basin of the Volga and the Don.

Characteristically, the region of Central and Eastern Europe was unlisted by Mackinder as a political factor, took up to the fact that the area has not acted as an entity (even as an object) international games. The British Empire among its principles at this time had placed Europe on one of the last positions. The abovementioned part of the continent was not really present in the English political thought. But the time had come.

The important factor in the initial Mackinder's concept was drawing attention to Europe as an entity of the global game. The global approach opened a new discourse in geopolitics. Another novelty was an indication of the complementarity of the "pan-regions" in the world (Mackinder, 1942: 98). Relations between them were first shown by the British geographer, as a dynamic environment with the potential of constant change. One can venture the thesis that in Mackinder's concept for the first a tendency to manifest "history" in terms of intercontinental play games based on the principles of interdependence appeared, which today would be defined as a model of the interaction network.

The end of the Great War and the need to build a new world was not without influence on the design concept of Mackinder. One can probably even say that the conditions that followed 1918 were, on the one hand, the challenge, and on the other hand, created a "training ground" for the possibility to put into practice the political reasons stemming from geopolitical objectives. In these interesting times Mackinder undertook to modify his earlier views. The result was announced in 1919, in "Democratic Ideals and Reality" (Mackinder, 1942: passim). The starting point was the inclusion of appearance in the geopolitics of a new quality – the new states of Central and Eastern Europe. The core concept of the conviction has been done, which still sounds like a canon in geopolitics: "*Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island controls the world*" (Mackinder, 1942: 194). While the location of the center of the potency of global power did not change significantly compared to earlier views of Mackinder, is actually the Central Europe had

become a "tip of the balance" in the concept from 1919 (Petersen, 2011: 17). The region was a natural link between the potential and the technological possibilities of its use – between Russia and Germany. Such thinking in a political reflection of the British was not a specific novelty. Even during the Great War in the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office emphasized the threat to the balance of world power, which may had resulted from a possible merger of the two geopolitical regions and their potentials (Reginia-Zacharski, 2004: 300). Both the Bolshevik Revolution and the result of the Great War slid a threat. Some events such as the signing the Treaty of Rapallo (1922) argued the validity of such concerns.

Mackinder's concept took on a new dimension, and the opinion of particular importance the Central European region received the new justification (Moczulski, 2010: 499). The tenure conflict between "civilizations of the sea" and "peoples of the land" seemed to be permanently present in the concepts of the British geographer. However, it has to be accepted that, in contrast to the modern Russian supporters of the idea of Eurasia (Petersen, 2011: 97), Mackinder did not mark any firm boundaries East and West. According to him, lines that ran between Western and Eastern Europe due to the dynamic structure of international relations, had a naturally variable character. It seems reasonable to notice that, in 1919, Mackinder was in Central and Eastern Europe and observed the area which he saw as a line of the distinction (Mackinder, 1942: 188). Hence, he repeatedly expressed an opinion of importance of the region. The result of competition for this part of the world had decisive meaning for the position of Europe in the whole global structure. In short, the fate of Central and Eastern Europe was going to decide the character – "land" or "sea," for the entire continent.

While in the conceptual phase of "building of the New Europe" might seem to be based on the concepts of John H. Mackinder, the realities of international policy and issues of "balance of power" became the keys to the new world and European order designed in Paris in 1919 (Rommer, 1988: passim). In practice, Central and Eastern Europe were not ruled by anyone. Located between Russia/USSR and Germany, they remained relatively weak, and were called mainly by British politicians – but after all, not only – "season" states. In general, the implementation of the British policy of "balance of power" on the continent can be explained by the rivalry between London and Paris. No one can deny the validity of the theses,

however, it should be realized that in the contemporary geopolitical situation extension of sovereignty over the region of interest was not feasible for any of the Western powers. The implementation of such a postulate of the prevailing realities could only be achieved with significant presence of the military factor. Neither France nor the United Kingdom, however, at this time had the executive capabilities, as they did not show the necessary political will, as they concerned the region of Central Europe.

In the 1920's and 1930's, geopolitical thought was being dominated by German concepts, which found its fullest expression in the works of the Munich Institute of Geopolitics and especially views of Karl Haushofer. He remained a great supporter of organizing the world in large areas of strategic interaction, which he called "pan-regions." Central and Central-Eastern Europe was in the European pan-region, the essence of which was the German-Russian cooperation, and actually a combination of the potentials of both (Gray, 1987: 187). In this way, a huge continental power, which can be called Eurasia, would be created. The core factor shaping the thought Haushofer was that the experience of the First World War, strengthening the convincement about the importance of historical coexistence of Germany and Russia (Moczulski, 2010: 19). Haushofer recognized that the reasons for the war, which caused the disaster of both Empires, remained bilateral unreasonably and adversely constructed alliances. Haushofer acknowledged that the optimal course of events would be peacefully developed cooperation and creation of a new geopolitical quality. The absence of the possibility of such a scenario allowed for solution to power – the conquest of Germany by Russia, or (which of course was preferred) of Russia by Germany (Gray, 1987: 158). The realization of these opportunities seemed to be possible in the light of the signing of the Rapallo Accord in April 1922, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Hitler-Stalin) in August 1939. The German-Soviet War, which began in 1941 shattered the implementation of these concepts. A separate issue is to assess the possibility of their fulfillment, when one consider that both parties treated mutual alliances as *ad hoc* solutions, calculated to develop a better position before the final confrontation. For these, a primary consideration is the fact that none of the adopted scenarios anticipated any geopolitical role for the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and did not respect their aspirations. The geopolitical rivalry of the giants was based mainly on the dogma of the concentration of the power. Taking into account the

aspirations to independence of smaller nations did not fall within the possible scenarios.

This confirms the considerations reported in the introduction, according to which Ukrainian aspirations to independency could find their own "window of opportunity" stamping in situations of the drastic decline in the power of the main regional players – mainly Russia (then the Soviet Union) and, to a lesser extent, Germany. The years of 1917–1945 fully confirm this account. Supported by Germany (and, to a lesser extent, Austria-Hungary) Ukrainian nationalist movement and affords for the independence turned out in 1918 to be illusory. The government of Pavlo Skoropadsky, in practice, brought the German occupation (Reginia-Zacharski, 2004: 91). After Germany's defeat in World War I, it was pretty soon established that Ukrainians were not able to defend their statehood. Pressured on one side by the Anton Denikin and the Armed Forces of South Russia (Previously, the Volunteer Army), and on the other by Bolshevik forces, the Ukrainians finally were defeated. An attempt to transfer the idea of Ukrainian statehood to the left banks of the Zbruch River, implemented in 1920, and based on Polish military capabilities ended in another defeat for Ataman Symon Petliura. The counter-offensive of Bolshevik troops very seriously threatened the very survival of the Polish Republic (Reginia-Zacharski, 2004: 255). The involvement of other powers – France and Great Britain – during this period it is difficult to be seen as serious. Besides, the Ukrainian card itself was considered by politicians of both Western powers solely in terms of playing it in the political relations with other, more significant players. But this does not mean that the Ukrainian lands were considered to be negligible. The political analysis of the years 1917–1923 strongly emphasized the qualities of Ukrainian lands, both from the short and medium perspectives (e.g. calling the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, as "bread-peace"), as well as strategic. In the opinion of George Nathaniel Curzon, Mackinder, and even Jozef Pilsudski, Russia without Ukraine would be returned to in her history and geopolitical meaning to the seventeenth century. It seemed that for quite a long time Russia's power on the Baltic Sea was significantly weakened. The independence of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and especially Poland and Finland in the north, resulted in a significant weakening of Russian influence. Any "loss" of Ukraine would create a similar situation in the south, cutting off Russia from the vast Black Sea coast. Loss in maritime policy in the opinion of the Curzon, in a quick way would lead to falling of Russia among the key players in world politics, and

would be the factor for deepening a degenerative trends and – as a result – the probability of decay (Reginia-Zacharski, 2004: 249). The conclusion drawn from this line of thinking was based on the belief that no Russian authorities could agree on such a solution, and each will seek to prevent such scenario, thereby positioning itself as extremely hostile to ideas of Ukrainian independence. Almost identical conclusions could be drawn from a conversation between Mackinder and Pilsudski held in Warsaw, in the autumn of 1919. Pilsudski, announcing future Polish military activity in the direction of Ukraine, presented it as an action to weaken Russia, and as a result to strengthen the geopolitical position of Poland. The British Commissioner recognized the legitimacy of such reasoning, although was quite pessimistic about Polish (or Polish-Ukrainian) opportunities. Mackinder was rather in favor to promote the concept of supporting a "white Russian" option. Ultimately, the struggle for the geopolitical shape of the region was resolved in the years 1921–1923 to disadvantage of Ukrainian aspirations. Ukrainian lands were in several political organisms. The lion's share accounted for the Bolshevik Russia, and since 1922, the Soviet Union. It seems that one of the main reasons for this development of affairs was the lack of ability of self-identification of Ukrainians themselves as a nation-state. With the relative weakness of the external factors they were not able to fully exploit the quite impressive potential. The conclusion of the State Union between Western Ukraine (*Halychyna*) and the Ukrainian People's Republic in January 1919 from the very beginning had remained only on paper. Finally, it could be emphasized that with some exceptions (Poland), policy makers, and above all, societies and nations were tired of struggles and atrocities of war, so the West was not ready to accept any costs for remodeling the geopolitical shape of Eastern Europe. There is a noticeable decrease in its permanent influence in 1919 and 1920 about the need to "calm" may indicate the fact that the first trade treaties with Bolshevik Russia were concluded by the "western world" a few days after the signing the peace treaty in Riga. As a result of these factors Ukrainian lands east of the river Zbruch for a few decades were (with the exception of a brief period of German occupation) in the hands of the Soviet Union (Reginia-Zacharski, 2004: 325).

Another armed conflict, which swept through Europe in 1939–1945, despite the hopes of some Ukrainian circles, did not open any "window of opportunity" for the idea of an independent Ukraine. As soon as in 1939, almost all the lands which Ukrainians previously

aspired came under Soviet control (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 178). It is also worth noting that Soviet occupation prompted some political circles from Dnieper basin to create an unusual concept, having resulted in the recognition of the "Independence Day of Ukraine" – 17th September, the day the Soviet attacked the Polish lands. Finally, the result of the Second World War, reinforcing the global status of the Soviet Union, brought a significant change in the geopolitical architecture – all Ukrainian lands came under one dominion, but of course there was no question of independence. Although Soviet diplomacy managed to achieve some "facade" settlement, such as finding the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic as one of the founding members of the United Nations with its own representation in the General Assembly, those moves were dictated by the strategic interests of the Soviet Union. The border of the USSR was established on the so called "Curzon Line," south leaned against the Izmail region, previously belonging to Romania. The agreement between the Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Republic on 29th June 1945, transferred the Carpathian Ruthenia to the USSR. At the same time the Soviet forces conducted a brutal and widespread action to combat the pro-independence movement in Ukraine (Marples, 2002: 146, 179–182).

The Decline of the "Cold War" and the Emergence of an Independent Ukrainian State

The period of 1945–1991 actually did not bring significant changes to the geopolitical situation of the Ukrainian lands. Dependence on the Kremlin was to became deeper and deeper – it is worth recalling that the Kiev Military District was the biggest, strongest, and best-equipped administrative strategic unit of the USSR (Brzeziński, 2007: k.e.). In the 1960s, on the 300th anniversary of the signing of the Pereyaslav Contract, the USSR included the Crimean peninsula. However, in reality, for the Soviet Union this did not really matter, but in a strategic dimension significantly raised the meaning of the sub-region, which became a major element of the Black Sea. The closeness of the Kerch Strait, which largely determines the interception of communications of the Azov Sea to the Black Sea, should be emphasized (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 469). And finally, there was a question of a naval base in Sevastopol, which can be described as basic "window on the world" in the

region in the military dimension. As it has been mentioned earlier, in the period of the Soviet Union the importance of such a redefinition of Crimea "belonging" remained illusory, as it posed a political potential, which after 1991 became a real and significant factor in determining the model of distribution of power in the region (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 448–449). The last decade of the existence of the USSR marked the noticeable revival of the Ukrainian issue, primarily in the field of internal Soviet relations. In fact, even in 1970's, following the Helsinki Accords, Ukrainians began the process of national redefinition (Brzeziński, 2007: k.e.). They were trying to take advantage of the provisions of the Constitution of the USSR in the late 1970's to justify the secessionist aspirations.

Some geopolitical concepts from the time of the Cold War properly "bypassed" the Ukrainian issue, treating it (and the territory of Ukraine) as a component of the Soviet question in general (Gray, 1987: 169–171). In his *Geography and Politics in a World Divided*, Saul B. Cohen placed the region of Central and Eastern Europe (including Ukraine) in the Eurasian Continental World, and more specifically in the part of the Heartland and Eastern Europe, with permanent Soviet domination over the region (Cohen, 1973: 83–84). In his later works, however, Cohen pointed out the importance of Ukraine to the strategic interests of Russia (Cohen, 2003: 216). He recognized that in the Soviet period, this issue remained "dormant" (Cohen, 2009: 214–215). In his views of the 1960s, Cohen saw potential of changes in geopolitical systems, recognizing this sphere as characterized by "explosive" dynamic.

The very first symptoms of the collapse of the USSR in the 1980s and 1990s were strongly marked in the Ukraine. The significance of this "movement" was even more important towards the fact that the challenges appearing on the political horizon led to the creation of a "tactical" (if not "operational") cooperation between the dissidents, often strongly raising aspirations for independence and nationalist views and the Ukrainian communist activists. In trying to explain this exotic "alliance," one cannot ignore the importance of motivation, marked by the desire to express their own identity, deeply rooted in the Ukrainian elites of different provenance (Burdzy, 1995: 111). However, it seems that its main component was the belief of the end of a geopolitical formula and the desire to define the new activity in shaping the political and economic reality. The August Declaration of Independence (1991) was adopted in the face of a possibility of the civil war, which appeared in connection with the "Yanayev *coup d'état*" (Gupta, 2010: 154–155).

A referendum on independence held in December was, on the one hand, a consequence of this step, but also a response to the actual disintegration of the Soviet Union structures (Burdzy, 1995: 113).

It can also be assumed that among the Ukrainians there lasted a kind of "race" in which the Communist elites with Leonid Kravchuk at the head were about to "step ahead" and to define trends of the changes. Controlling a political process after emancipation of Ukraine gave a chance for ultimately political (and even physical) survival.

In the terms of foreign affairs the course taken by the Ukrainian decision-makers can also be seen as a kind of "preemptive move." From the perspective of the evident failure of Gorbachev's concept of Union of Sovereign Republics and the declaration of independence taken by the majority of the Soviet republics, in 8th December 1991 in Wiskule, representatives from Russia (Boris Yeltsin), Ukraine (Leonid Kravchuk), and Belarus (Stanislau Shushkevich) signed the agreement appointing to the life the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Russia and the Commonwealth, 1997: passim). Soon after, on 21st December in Almaty, the subsequent Soviet republics acceded to CIS (Gupta, 2010: 71–73). It can be assumed that the process of defining CIS in geographic dimension lasted until 1993, when the position of Georgia and Azerbaijan was finally clarified (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 389). It soon turned out that the actual role of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the concepts of co-creating states was not commonly accepted (Russia and the Commonwealth, 1997: passim). By the mid-1990s, it was clear that Russia recognized the CIS as a platform for the reintegration of the post-Soviet area. The 1993 was the key – Russia adopted Constitution of the Federation, began the first Chechen war, which was a clear signal that attempts to further depletion of its territory as a result of irredentistism would met with a firm and brutal response (Eberhardt, 1996: 207). In the autumn in Moscow, with use of tank guns the "debate" over the shape of the system of the Russian Federation was settled – the presidential model had won. Two years later – in 1995 – Russia was in a different situation. All armed conflicts ongoing in the former Soviet Union had been "frozen" (in one case, Tajikistan, there was a real and lasting solution), a regime of Alexander Lukashenko was installed in Belarus, representing the course for rapprochement with Russia, which was reflected in the signing of the agreement on the creation of the Union of Russia and Belarus, and later the Union State (Jaworsky, 1995: passim). In Georgia, after the fall of Zviad Gamzachurdia, as a result of the

civil war, the new president Eduard Shevardnadze also called for a tightening of cooperation with the Russian Federation. Georgia was under pressure of three "frozen" conflicts – in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara (in the first two, incidentally, as "peacekeepers" stationed Russian soldiers) (Jaworsky, 1995:). The XIV Army, later transformed formally Operational Group of Russian Forces played similar role in the detachment of Transnistria (also called Trans-Dniestr or Transdniestria) from Moldova (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 221–222). Similar examples of tools to maintain the effect can be multiplied. From the Kremlin's perspective, three Baltic republics – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – seemed to be "lost," although for the latter two Russian minority in size between 1/4 and 1/3 have posed quite a significant destructive potential for the future (Eberhardt, 1996: 191–192).

In such a situation it is not surprising that in the mid-1990s in the Russian Federation quite clearly articulated tendencies "re-integration" emerged. The political expression of those tendencies was the decree of President Yeltsin, in whose words about the "near abroad" were used (Buzan, Waever, 2004: 418–420). Influential Russian newspapers and magazines commonly made reference to "when the Soviet Union will be resurrected" (Petersen, 2011: 79–80). In the middle of the 1990's, Nursultan Nazarbayev announced a project of creation of the East European (Eurasian) Union (Libman, Vinokurov, 2012: 186–188). It would be naive to assume that the conception was the product of original thinking of the President of Kyrgyzstan. It should rather be seen as explicated concepts emerging in the Kremlin. Since then the increasing popularity of the concepts of Eurasia can be observed, represented by Alexander Dugin (Sykulski, 2013: 353). They were particularly marked by geopolitical vision and a large dose of mysticism, however, formed as a base for the formulation of specific political programs (Russia and the Commonwealth, 1997: passim).

From this perspective, the initiatives of deepening and widening integration within the Commonwealth of Independent States can be seen as a soft scenario of the "gathering of the Russian (actually post-Soviet) lands" (Łomiński, 1997: 19). From the beginning of the creation of the CIS and its institutions Ukrainians tried to keep the distance from such scenarios (Buzan, Waever, 2004: 419). It was mainly accented in the military cooperation dimension – Ukraine was rather assertive to the "Tashkent Pact." Ukrainians the longest, until 1994, tried to play the "nuclear card" (Eberhardt, 1996: 12–13).

In this gameplay, Ukrainian authorities managed to achieve a half of the success in the form of a Budapest Memorandum from December 1994 (Olchawa, 2009: 355), in which Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom guaranteed the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine in exchange for the transfer of nuclear arsenals into the hands of Russia and the resignation of the (admittedly dubious) nuclear status and accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear (Burdzy, 1995: 88). The most complex and difficult issue in geostrategic relations with the Russian Federation remained the question of the status of the naval base in Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet (Eberhardt, 1996: 215–216). In 1997, both states came together to settle these matters by 2017, and as a result of the signing, there was an agreement on the division of the fleet and lease part of the city for twenty years (Russia and the Commonwealth, 1997: passim). The two countries signed the documents defining their relationship with NATO in 1997 (Pavliuk, 1999: 85–86). In the case of Ukraine, it was a document setting out the principles of the Distinctive Partnership. Simultaneously Ukraine was strongly involved in regional initiatives, alternative to the Russian vision of reintegration. The most important was the establishment in 1996 the Organization for Democracy and Development, which from next year to function as GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) – a multi-faceted consultative forum bringing together countries with a less than favorable relations with Russia. This political formula was in 1999 extended to Uzbekistan (GUAM became GUUAM). It is also worth of noting that just this year illustrated the serious crisis in the functioning of the CIS. The Treaty on Collective Security of CIS – founding the "Tashkent system" (Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan and since 1993 – Georgia and Belarus) was contained in the May of 1992 (Russia and the Commonwealth, 1997: 7–8). After the expiry of the five years of existence, in April 1999 only six countries (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan) decided to prolong the cooperation (Protocol to extend the Treaty on Collective Security CIS) (Russia and the Commonwealth, 1997: passim).

In the dimension of foreign policy the Ukrainian decision-makers sought to pursue a policy based on the rather nebulous concept of "multi-vector." The core of the doctrine was the assumption that it was possible and preferred to maintain equal relations with all international actors – individual as well as collective. Thus, the

Ukrainian "opening to the West" (European Union and, to a lesser extent, NATO), was accompanied by the desire to maintain good relations with Russia and other regional initiatives (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 389). It seems that the Ukrainians opted for entering into the integration processes in different directions so "shallow" that it would not limit the possibilities of action on the other theaters. A test for such trends was the attitude to the CIS. Ukraine treated the organization as a formula for a "velvet divorce." The management of the post-Soviet "bankruptcy estate" substantially constituted a great challenge; therefore this function of the CIS seemed to be quite natural. But pretty soon it became clear that restricting the organization's mission to the only sphere did not get the acceptance of Russia. Operations in a multi-vector formula were possible only in a situation where none of the real or potential centers of power of global or regional program did not formulate a policy in counter to Ukrainian plans. In other words, the "multi-vector" could be realized only under conditions of weakness or lack of interest for Ukraine from those centers. It would seem that Russia immersed in a deep internal crisis was not able to block Ukrainian pro-Western aspirations (Buzan, Waever, 2004: 417). Europe and the United States were far from sending clear signals to Ukraine, recognizing that supporting pro-Western policy of this country would be read in Russia as a hostile action. "West" (primarily the European Union), set to "building friendly and non-confrontational" relations with the Kremlin at all costs and to avoid of drawing scenarios of events that could trigger negative Russian reactions (Buzan, Waever, 2004: 418). At the beginning of this century, it was not uncommon to find declarations of the EU officials, like Romano Prodi, stating that "the Ukraine will never access to the EU" (Samokhvalov, 2007: 17). According to a possible strengthening of Ukraine's cooperation with NATO and eventual accession to the Alliance it should be noted that – apart from the obvious reluctance of the Russian Federation – the deep shadow laid on the possibilities of achieving those goals (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 411). First, until 2017, a part of the Ukrainian state of particular strategic importance (Sevastopol) remained outside of its authority. Secondly, research conducted in the Ukraine public opinion, shown that as long as the prospect of the EU membership has enjoyed considerable popularity, NATO was seen as an opponent and the strengthening cooperation with the Alliance as way to aggregate deterioration in relations with Russia (Samokhvalov, 2007: 17–18).

Ukraine and Russia after the "Orange Revolution" – Growing Tension

It seemed that the Orange Revolution permanently changed the orientation of Ukraine to being pro-Western (Wilson, 2005: 176). The formal dimension of such a "reformatting" could provide even a total and final rejection by the state ruled by Viktor Yushchenko, and the concept of the Common Economic Space, which led to its collapse in 2006. Ukrainian-Russian relations deteriorated even during the "Revolution" and after that looked like that would not soon to be improve. A new prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, played an interesting role in relations with the Russian Federation (Samokhvalov, 2007: 19). On the one hand, she was seen as an icon of assertiveness towards Russia, and even anti-Russian, on the other hand, she was the driving force behind the building of new economic spheres. Pretty soon there was to begin the process of decomposition of the "orange" camp, which in the next five years – after the imposition of the effects of the deteriorating state of the economy – lost a significant amount social capital received at the turn of 2004/2005. The Ukrainian-Russian relations was also shadowed (and perhaps primarily) by the gas-related issues that have also not been an easy subject (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 456). The increase of the tension occurred by the spring of 2005, when Gazprom tried to lead to raise gas prices for Ukraine to $160, paid per 1000 m^3. In response, Kiev raised the price for transit of Russian gas. Conflict (hereinafter "gas war") (Ebel, 2009: 9–10), escalated throughout 2005. In December, to stiffen the positions (Gazprom called for an increase the price of gas to the level of $220–230 per 1000 cubic meters, while Kiev was willing to pay $80), the Russians announced the suspension of gas supplies to Ukraine on the 1st January, 2006, which became a reality. The resumption of supplies and transit through Ukraine admittedly came after four days, when on the 4th January a preliminary agreement was signed by Russia and Ukraine, but the first edition of the "gas war" was revealed by the fact that the energy crises had at least regional significance (Ebel, 2009: 44). More than a dozen European countries have seen decreases in the supply of "blue fuel" range from a dozen to more than 40%. As the culmination of the crisis fell on the middle of winter, some reactions of the countries affected directly and indirectly by its consequences were nervous. The majority of affected governments and societies were hostile to the authorities

in Kiev. Further openings of the Ukrainian-Russian "gas conflict" followed in subsequent years – fall 2007 and winter 2008. It seemed that in November of 2008, a lasting settlement was achieved. In fact, a long-term arrangement between Gazprom and Naftogaz was signed. It did not take long – at the end of the year, the conflict entered into a new phase, the sharpest and most painful of all. On 1st January 2009, Gazprom completely blocked the supply of gas to Ukraine, while ensuring that continuity of supply for European countries which were dependent on transit through Ukraine was to be maintained. Six days later it was proved to be untrue. Reducing the gas pressure in transmission infrastructure led to significant declines – some European countries even longer receive raw Russian, other recorded declines in the level of 70–90%. The Slovak authorities have decided about the implementing a state of emergency for the economy. The European Union, despite attempts to mediate between Ukraine and Russia for 9th January, was not able to control the situation (Wilson, 2005: 171). Only after 10 days of acute crisis, an agreement was signed in Moscow, which has reduced tension and at least temporarily ensured the stability of supply (Ebel, 2009: 12–13).

It is difficult to fully assess the consequences of this crisis for the economy of Ukraine. In the opinion of some analysts, there is even the term "disaster" (Wilson, 2005: 158–159). In the political dimension, one can talk about the price the "orange" suffered for the balance of the years 2005–2009. The presidential elections (first round in January, the second February of 2010) were won by Viktor Yanukovych. The second round, which faced Yulia Tymoshenko gave a result of 48.95% to 45.47% (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 304–305). These results complemented the image of the "end of the Orange Revolution," and clearly dominated by the Party of Regions. That meant a reactivation of pro-Russian tendencies in Ukraine, although the new government still declared the readiness for implementation of scenarios of "soft integration" with the European Union. This time was also marked by a significant change – December 9, 2010, in Moscow, the presidents of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko and Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the Declaration on the Establishment of the Single Economic Space (SES) and the agreement on the rules for the functioning of this structure. SES had become operational from 1st January 2012 and, according to the Russian announcement, was to lead to the establishment of the common market (the four freedoms: flow of goods, services, capital, and labor) on the model of the European

Communities. The first signs of a desire for inclusion into the formula soon appeared from the new authorities of Ukrainian state. Due to previous trends, the start of accession negotiations by the Ukrainians to SES would be tantamount to freezing in the direction of European integration policy (Cooper, 2013: 24–26).

In 2010, new provisions for the Black Sea Fleet base in Sevastopol were defined. According to the agreement signed on 21st April 2010, in Kharkov, duration of stationing of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation in the Crimea was extended after 2017 by 25 years, until 2042 with an option to extend it for a further five years. In strategic terms, it meant a permanent placement of Ukraine in the Russian area of influence. It's difficult to imagine the deepening cooperation with NATO in the situation of "limited sovereignty" of a part of the country. Of course, these factors accounted for foreground determinants defining the geopolitical position of Ukraine, but it should be considered that the general change in the region occurred after the Caucasian war of August 2008. Russia then made it clear that when faced with a deep geopolitical redefinition it would not hesitate to use military force. In addition, the price that the Russian state has paid for the use of troops against the integrity and independence of the sovereign state has proved to be negligible. In fact, from this period comes pretty grim joke that the reward for the strike in the direction of Tbilisi by the Russian 58 Army will be awarded by an excursion to Crimea. An agreement held in Moscow, announced as a great success of the French Presidency of the EU, was honored by the Kremlin in part, for which again the Russian Federation did not suffer any consequences or punishment. In 2009, the new American administration led by Barack Obama announced a "reset" in relations with Russia, declaring at the same time moving American geopolitical priorities into the Far East. It seemed that the world has entered the era of the new geopolitical order. American policy since the 1940s was based on the paradigm of the "Peninsular power" (Rimmland) proposed by Nicolas Spykman (Spykman, 2008: 177). The core of the postulate – a strong presence in Europe, has been profoundly redefined. In addition, between 2008 and 2010 "a coalition of Central European nations," built largely on the basis of a group of countries whose leaders were present in Tbilisi in August 2008 on the appeal of the Polish President, was under the process of dismantling (Chodakiewicz, 2012: 534). The death of Lech Kaczynski was a visible end of the project, as was illustrated by a list of participants in the funeral.

Another factor on the international scene appeared – the Eastern Partnership. Initiated in 2008, formally launched at a summit in Prague in May the following year, the Partnership assumed closer EU cooperation with Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Although, from the very beginning, the economic dimension of the relationship was exposed, the initiative has undoubtedly also had an important political meaning (Szczerbiak, 2012: 104). The initiator and *spiritus movens* of the project has been the Republic of Poland, enjoying the support of a Sweden. They gave some geopolitical overtones to the Eastern Partnership, especially by articulating the principle of communitarianism at the regional interests. The hopes reported in Warsaw and Stockholm to transform this initiative into a defined EU policy failed. Regardless of these observations it should be emphasized that the Partnership established a fairly permanent platform for maintaining an open dialogue with the option of integration. The breakthrough was to be a Partnership summit, which was scheduled for the end of November 2013 in Vilnius.

The period of years 2010–2013 can be described towards Ukraine as an attempt to return to the concept of "multi-vector" in its foreign policy. Its implementation, however, ultimately proved to be impossible. The main reason was the significant tightening poles of power – above all Russia. After the war against Georgia the Russian Federation was repeatedly sending signals that it would not allow any moves or transformations of its own strategic boundaries of influence. Despite the declared willingness to deepen cooperation with the European Union authorities in Kiev were aware of the growing pressure from the Kremlin and tried to avoid decisive solutions. Some evidence of this can be the mentioned forcing of Ukraine to extend the contract towards the Black Sea Fleet earlier than it would as a result from the adoption of the 1997 agenda. Russia used other spoilers. In addition to the gas and oil as tools of pressure on Kiev, the Crimean issue returned. The problem of the peninsula mostly inhabited by Russian-speaking population and people clearly declaring the Russian nationality was often put among the "hot" issues in bilateral relations (Dima, 2010: 17). Any pro-Western inclinations of Ukrainian society became the object of attack of the forces concentrated on the Eastern Ukraine, with particular emphasis on the Donbass region. The public attitudes in addition to the complex of ethnic issues were affected by constantly deteriorating economic situation. It particularly concerned the huge state's economic sector. In 2013, Ukraine had to repay about

$10 billion of debt. As a result, the Ukrainian foreign exchange reserves declined from 31.8 billion dollars in early 2012 to approx. $20 billion at the end of 2013, and as a consequence of the difficult financial situation of the country have generated unsolvable problems with the settlement of payments in the public sector and the expected withdrawal of the necessary reforms. By the end of 2013, Ukraine failed to properly implement any of the projects for the prospect of independence from Russian energy supplies. Traditionally, the tension in this area was enlarged in the winter and autumn months.

A significant part of Ukrainian society desired opportunities to improve their living standards, the economic situation and the functioning of the state which have been seen as possible from the perspective of association with the European Union. Negotiations on this subject started already in 2007, but the initialing of the agreement was not until five years later. In 2012, the position of the EU decision-makers, however, made the signing appropriate accords impossible. This matter was postponed to the third summit of Eastern Partnership and warranted by the progress in reforms in the three sectors – implementing progress on political and economic reforms, ensuring the democratic standards of the electoral system, and stopping of the persecution of political opponents. This last issue in 2013 took a particularly severe course in keeping in custody and penal colony former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who became a symbol of political persecution. Despite the enthusiasm and hopes connected with the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, the Ukrainian position was not clear. Yet on the 21st of November the Ukrainian government decided to "suspend preparations for signing the Association Agreement," justifying it by the interests of national security. Anyway signals that Kiev may withdraw from the Association Agreement began to appear a few weeks earlier. The fiasco of the process of associating of Ukraine with the European Union, however, caused some surprise for the European political elites, which could be explained by a weak orientation in the seriousness of Russian pressure on torpedoing any pro-Western aspirations of Ukraine. Russian threat of sanctions, as well as entry into a much more "assertive" standards toward Kiev economic and financial policies, on the other hand, were balanced with the promises of economic support in case of suspension of the pro-European course. This politics fell on fertile ground in Ukraine. Viktor Yanukovych in the perspective of presidential elections to take place in 2015 decided to take course to immediate and *ad hoc* leverage the Ukrainian economy. From this

perspective, the Russian offer was characterized by a usability and functionality (Shoemaker, 2014: 288–289).

Russia, as written above, after achieving success in the "near abroad" in the form of suppressing almost all of the emancipatory movements in the region could not agree for any signs of erosion its own geostrategic zone.[1] At the third summit of the Eastern Partnership, only Moldova and Georgia decided about the initial Association Agreements with the EU. Armenia was considered to be more likely to fall in line with Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus (a customs union within the Common Economic Space). Yanukovych's decision actually was a breakthrough in the EU's eastern policy, and the Vilnius summit brought feelings of failure and disappointment.

While the reaction of the concerned countries was predictable, the events in Kiev, as well as their development were a real surprise. Yet on the 21st November at the Independence Square serious protests began against postponing the signing of the agreement with the EU. From the 24th November, opposition groups joined to the protest – primarily Batkivshchyna (Fatherland), UDAR, and Svoboda (Freedom). Attempts to force the authorities to suppress "Євромайдан" resulted on 30th November in the eruption of conflict on an unpredictable scale – at the peak on the Maidan 800,000 people gathered. The movement affected also some other cities, in large part from the radical western Ukraine. In mid-December, the issue of signing an association agreement seemed a foregone conclusion. Yanukovych's team announced a definitive move away from this concept, and the authorities of the European Union withdrew from the project of returning to negotiations. At the beginning of 2014, the situation around Євромайдан significantly tightened, turning into an almost regular fight for the heart of the capital. Clashes and attempts of takeover the power by opponents of the government occurred in many towns in western and central Ukraine. Throughout January and a part of February, tension grew and the mediation efforts undertaken by representatives of the EU did not bring any significant results. Some attempts to solve the crisis, taken by the political forces in Ukraine, remained equally fruitless. Political leaders of the opposition – Vitaly Klitschko, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and Oleh Tiahnybok became the faces of the protest. But one cannot ignore

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[1] Even Georgia, since October 2012 under Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili and since the autumn of 2013 under President Giorgi Margvelashvili, has not been seen as reluctant towards Russia.

the fact that in late January and February 2014, the Євромайдан grew into an independent political force, and any findings, which were made in the formula government/political opposition had to be verified on the Maidan.

Євромайдан and the Aftermath

The second half of February was characterized by a tightening of the positions, which resulted with escalation of the fighting and increased number of victims. The peak of the tension occurred between 18th and 22nd of February. The regime forces took the assault of crushing the Maidan – within a day and a half according to official data dozen people were killed in Kiev. A few hours of "truce" did not led to any findings and on the 20th February fighting erupted in the capital again – the Ministry of Health reported that during the clashes that day 75 people were killed and 567 were injured. The other areas of the country at that time were refusing the obedience to the regime; barricades were formed in many cities and the new administration was spontaneously created by the local initiatives. In Kiev, negotiations between Yanukovych and the envoys of the EU – the foreign ministers of Germany, France, and Poland were in progress. Negotiating positions were supported by the announcement of personal and general restrictions, and sanctions containing freezing foreign accounts of the officials and a ban on arms trade with Ukraine. A short time earlier sanctions were imposed by the United States and Canada. On the 21st February, a breakthrough in talks between opposition, EU diplomats, and President Yanukovych was achieved. After all-night negotiations, some important provisions were adopted: limitation of the rights of the President to those from the Constitution of 2004, the creation of a new government within 10 days and early presidential elections that would be held no later than in December 2014. The agreement did not stand the test of time – the mood in the city went much further than the agreed conditions; in many parts of the state mandate of the president and the government was finally rejected. In such a situation the night of 21th and 22nd February, Yanukovych with a group of closest collaborators decided to flee, first to the east of Ukraine, then to Russia. On 22nd February, Viktor Yanukovych was dismissed from his post, and Oleksandr Turchynov was appointed as the interim head of state the next day. Three days later, a new government was

established, with Arseniy Yatsenyuk as Prime Minister. In spite of that, it seemed that the revolution enjoyed the ultimate success, the country was in a disastrous situation. It soon turned out that the new authorities had to face the next challenge, which was irredentism and Russian aggression. The first blow went to the Crimea. In regard to this region, Russia used a specific strategy of war, leading the aggression in sometimes called, for lack of a better term, in a "subliminal" way. The activities consisted, on the one hand, the support of local elements hostile to the Ukrainian state, as well as providing military equipment and trained soldiers, who, however, did not use any of the Russian state emblems, as well as carefully hid their identity. Accompanied by parallel intensive Russian propaganda and diplomatic activity aimed at showing a total lack of links of the Russian Federation with the events on the peninsula. Admittedly, ethno-social conditions definitely favored contesting and deconstruction of Ukrainian sovereignty over Crimea. The vast majority of its inhabitants are ethnically Russian, having a Russian identity and consciousness (Arel, Ruble, 2006: 117). The Russian military presence in the Black Sea bases and the special status of Sevastopol had also great importance. Ukrainian forces finally, after the turmoil and crisis, the current form of statehood and political system in the Crimea, found themselves in a precarious situation. This can partly be explained by disloyalty to the Ukrainian state of the part of the population and a large group of military. Another factor was that for various reasons the new Ukrainian authorities have not decided on taking a firm stand against the forces supporting the detachment of the Crimea. For a similar, though slightly more complex reasons Western countries did not react in definite manner. Even during the Crimean crisis in some Western countries (mainly Germany) in the media quite often appeared voices questioning the legitimacy of the Ukrainian rights to Crimea, both in terms of historical and legal arguments, as well as geopolitical conditions. From the 25th February, the situation in Crimea looked worse. In growing numbers well-armed and trained people whose uniforms were devoid of any markings were dispatching from Russia to the peninsula. Although there was little doubt about the fact that they were Russian soldiers, FR authorities claimed that Russia had no involvement in this crisis. During conferences Putin sought to ridicule both the presence of the Ukrainian state in the Crimea, as well as Western countries involvement. Some attempts to carry out on-site inspections, undertaken primarily under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, proved

to be ineffective. International observers were not allowed to enter to the territory of the peninsula. Meanwhile, on the spot unmarked Russian units took over additional objects of strategic importance (on the 28th February Belbek airport in Sevastopol and border outposts around the city were occupied). The Ukrainian authorities claimed that up to the beginning of March the number of Russian soldiers in the Crimea reached about 6000, eight military transport aircraft Il-76, ten helicopters Mi-8 and Mi-24 and about 30 armored vehicles BTR-80. Parallel action in other parts of the peninsula resulted by taking over the Ukrainian military bases and vessels. The position of the Russian Federation expressed was on the 1st March 2014, when the Commission of Defense and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, and later the entire Federation Council unanimously adopted an appeal to the President to use of the Russian armed forces on the territory of Ukraine. Protests of the "international community" remained quite weak, and did not brought any measurable effects. The process of "swallowing" of the Crimea was continued. According to Ukrainian estimates on the 7th March numbers of Russian forces in the Crimea exceeded 30,000. From mid-March through the Kerch Strait from the Russian soil by the ferry connection significant quantities of heavy military equipment, raw materials (fuels) as well as elements of the energy infrastructure were constantly being delivered.

On the 16th March irredentists held a "referendum" in the area of the Crimean peninsula. According to the "official" results 96.77% of voters were in favor of the reunification of the Crimea with Russia. The turnout was projected at over 80%. The Verkhovna Rada of the Crimea adopted a resolution on the independence of the Crimea with the support of 85 deputies. The next steps were relatively easy to predict – the announcement of the creation of the Republic of Crimea and the transformation of local autonomic authorities into the State Council of the Republic of Crimea. Five days later, Vladimir Putin signed the act of ratification of the Treaty on the Adoption of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and annexation was thus completed. For many analysts, a very probable scenario after the annexation of Crimea by Russia was the extension of the Russian aggression to specific regions of Ukraine bordering the peninsula from the north. This was due to two reasons – first, it seemed a natural desire to create a land corridor between the Crimea and the Federation, on the other hand – the lack of security for the vitally important supplies by land (Crimea depended from the north even to the extent of drinking water), caused quite

a difficult estimate as to the cost of logistical support of a "new Russian territory." It might seem that the fate of the "Mariupol corridor" and the Kherson circuit were a foregone conclusion. However, a few weeks before the presidential elections announced for the 25th of May, in Donbass (Donetsk and Lugansk) revealed less clearly supported initially, then almost openly by Russia, forces of "separatists" (irredentists – more precisely) started the riot. In practice, they consisted of the Russian saboteurs, local leaders of the Russian minority and certainly sizeable in the size of the criminal element. About the 20th of May, in practice, these forces took control of significant areas of Donbass – first of all the major cities. A few days before the election, the Ukrainian authorities have begun "anti-terrorist action," which has been in fact a counteroffensive in the direction of Lugansk and Donetsk. Heavy fighting with growing involvement of Russian military entered into a chronic phase. In late August and early September irredentist forces opened another front – the attack was conducted by Novoazovsk in the direction of Mariupol. It seemed as a returning the scenario predicted in March. At this phase of the conflict, there has been undeniable evidence of the involvement of regular combat units of the Russian army. Reactions of the European Union and NATO remained (and remain) inappropriately weak in relation to the threat. The North Atlantic Alliance Summit held in September in Newport, Wales, did not bring virtually anything concrete. Undoubtedly, the warm welcome of President Petro Poroshenko could not replace the unequivocal statements of support and announcement direct aid. The European Union was even more naive – a truce in eastern Ukraine achieved in Minsk, became the pretext for the announcement of the withdrawal of sanctions against Russia. As for the ceasefire – it is not a secret that its conclusion was not to work out a firm and durable compromise. On the one hand, Ukrainian forces have been exhausted and unable to conduct serious military operation. Another aim was the desire to free soldiers closed in the encirclement near Ilovaisk. In the political dimension Poroshenko tried to make an impression in Newport that he is not a leader of the country in a deep defensive. The Russian side did not respect the truce, leading rocket fire on selected objects, and developing offensive intended to achieve a permanent foothold on the Sea of Azov, which was confirmed by the Ukrainian sources on 10th of September (Komsomolske was taken between the 6th and 9th of September, and therefore during the after signing the "ceasefire agreement"). The direction and the intensity of further military operations by forces of the Russian

Federation with the cooperation with them rebels remains an open issue. It seems that the minimum scenario is to create a permanent land corridor to Crimea and the possible extension of facilities for the peninsula to Kherson. Although there are no data on the costs incurred by Russia towards absorption and management of the peninsula, they must be considerable. Lowering these through a permanent land connection seems to be a "logistical priority." A maximalist variant on the southern direction can assume an advance to the west, resulting in the cut off Ukraine from the Black Sea, and finally getting to Transnistria. In the short term, the second scenario does not seem to be easy for two reasons. The first is its high cost-absorption, both in financial terms as well (actually mostly) the political. Secondly, the creation of such seaside "belt" would result in forming the area susceptible to impact Ukrainian forces and activities for destabilization, which would generate significant costs. It seems that from the Russian perspective the condition to achieve the maximal outcome (the corridor to Transnistria) would be destroying, or at least a radical weakening of the Ukrainian center of power and Ukrainian military capabilities. Even the breakdown of the regular forces of the Ukrainian state would not guarantee peace in such a "belt." Therefore, achieving the decomposition of the Ukrainian state seems to be the best solution for Russian strategists. The concepts of "federalization" – officially proclaimed by irredentists from Donetsk and Lugansk, serve this purpose and will be supported by the Russian Federation. It is worth noting that since the first half of September in the Russian narration and media significantly often guests the term "Noworossija" (New Russia), which shows the ideological layer of Russian geostrategic intentions.

On the basis of Russian doctrinal and strategic documents of the last several years one can note a strong increase of the importance of coercive and strictly strength attitudes. The nature of the reform of the armed forces of the Russian Federation allows, assuming that the plans of building flexible but a strong recourse of military tools designate the way of achieving political goals. Modern amphibious assault vessels "Mistral," contracted in France, are one rationale for requesting intention to secure the Russian Federation free and wide access to the Black Sea. The possibility of the revision of the 2010 agreement towards Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet base in Crimea, which after the "victory of EuroMaidan" could be predicted, was one of the major themes of the Kremlin decision about the necessity of detachment of the peninsula from the

Ukrainian state. Organizing and supporting the insurgency in the eastern Ukraine and the transfer of activities to the northern coast of the Sea of Azov is to some extent a consequence of the decisions.

If the above inferences are correct, the probability of escalation of objectives and moves of Russian politics should be seen as extremely high. The quite sluggish responses of the European Union and NATO countries do not seem to be sufficient to stop the aggression. On the other hand, sanctions against Russia and retaliate actions triggered a chain of actions and reactions by opening the potential for escalation of international tension.

The one of the possible scenarios is the continuation of the aggression and "playing" for erosion of the Ukrainian state. The aim of Russian Federation, actually already present among the strategic options, could be Republic of Moldova, or at least create a "corridor" to Transnistria. Then Ukraine would lose not only access to the Black Sea, but also control over the mouths of the rivers Dniester and Southern Boh. Russia would also control the mouth of the Dniester. The geopolitical and strategic benefits arising from such a scenario are obvious for the Russian Federation. But again, its implementation and consolidation would only be possible with the destruction of the Ukrainian statehood. It is also worth noting that in this perspective, Russia's activity in the direction of the Baltic (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) should be perceived as an informational "diversion," calculated on a temporary distraction from the real course of action. From the short or medium perspective – at least. Coming back to the coast of the Baltic Sea could be the next step.

Conclusions

Considering Ukrainian issues in the context of the game of powers in "time" and "space" it is tempting to make a general account. Since 1654, any chance of implementation of Ukrainian aspirations for independence and sovereignty are primarily the function of the ability to maintain "Russia far from Ukraine." As for the trend is actually little doubt: for centuries optimal from the perspective of Moscow (or St. Petersburg) scenario was to keep land in the basins of the Dnieper and Boh under direct control. Any "softening," "autonomy," "federation" or any other formulas dependence resulted only from the reduction or absence of the possibility of achieving full set of goals by the Russian center (Buzan, Waever, 2004: 422).

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