

The implications of the conflict in Ukraine on regional security

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Abstract

My paper deals with a very important topic for the current security environment. In the context of regional security, the civil war in Ukraine has consequences in the economic, political and military area. Starting from an ethnic tension, the situation got complicated and generated changes on the global political scene. If the war extends to other countries too, the whole humanity would be affected. Besides the strained relations between the EU and NATO with Russia, the dispute has made millions of victims and alerted the entire region, which had to provide financial help to Ukraine.

Key Words: *rebels, Russia, military, conflict, Ukraine, EU, sanctions.*

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"In an objective sense, security refers to the absence of threats to acquired values and in the subjective one, to the absence of fear that such values will be attacked."

Arnold Wolfers, 1962

I. The concept of regional security

Shortly, security can be defined as the absence of danger, the lack of threats to fundamental values or even as a guarantee of future welfare (Pâlșoiu, 2010: 7). But we are talking about a complex and also controversial concept that has preoccupied humanity since its inception and has evolved considerably in recent decades. Given these considerations, many experts in the fields of International Relations, Geopolitics and Security Studies analyzed and explained it from different perspectives. But we can't forget that the term in question is multidimensional, which means that risks and threats have overcome military barriers to penetrate other sectors. So now we can talk about many types of security: political, social, societal, cultural, ecological, cybernetic, legal etc. Besides this aspect, the multi-level of security is also reflected in the level in which it has implications: national, regional or international.

In this case, our attention goes to the regional dimension. But what do we mean by regional security? Regional security, called also continental security, requires that states from a specific geographic area are safe of "any aggression, act of force or threat of force in relations between them, any attempt on their national independence and sovereignty or territorial integrity"(Pâlșoiu, 2010: 125).

Theoretically speaking the region of Europe is safe, if there is no threat to the independence, sovereignty or territorial integrity of its member states. In addition, the European Security Strategy

from 2003 also emphasizes the following challenges: proliferation of mass destruction weapons, international terrorism, organized crime, cyber and energy security risks and climate changes (European Security Strategy, 2003: 11-14). The most convincing examples in this sense are represented by the terrorist attacks and the danger of activation of some conflicts considered frozen as those in Transnistria, South Ossetia, Chechnya and Karabakh, but especially the expansion of the war in Ukraine. In my opinion, these are the most important risks to the stability of the European continent because they are more dynamic and more dangerous than the others. In addition, regional conflicts may even lead to terrorism, degenerate into extremism and also feeds organized crime and proliferation of mass destruction weapons (Pâlșoiu, 2010: 226). In terms of building an organization the European security literature gives us information that has started a multistage security system which works on the principle of cooperation between the following international organizations: European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations (Pâlșoiu, 2010: 221).

II. Introduction to the issue

The powder keg of Europe or the burner conflict taking place today is the civil war in Ukraine. The special issue of this state is Crimea which, just two years ago, I read that it was "on the verge of an ethnic explosion maintained by Russia" (Brzezinski, 1995: 290). Today, we can say that this tension broke and its effects extend including countries located close to. But what is the history of this controversial territory? Why is it so played? It is important to know that Crimea belonged to Russia in the period 1783-1954, being annexed by the Tsarist Empire following the victory against the Ottoman troops. But given the

indisputable Russian imperialist trends, the curiosity is heading in a new direction. How this area did come to Ukraine? History shows the day of February 27, 1954 as decisive in this process of big “generosity”. This is the day when the Russian newspaper Pravda published information about a decree approved by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of USSR, according to which Nikita Khrushchev decided the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian Republic (Danilov, 2014). But what are the real intentions that lie behind this act?

In the media circulated the following two reasons, which, in my opinion, are just official pretexts:

- The transfer was a "noble act of the Russian people" in order to commemorate three centuries of Tsarist Empire unification with Ukraine;
- The transfer was necessary because of the "territorial proximity of Crimea to Ukraine, the common points of their economies and their close agricultural and cultural links" (Lupşor, 2014).

Although at first view these are sufficient reasons to believe in the Soviet indulgence, rigorous analysis dismantles them categorically. First, 1954 really marks 300 years since the Treaty of Pereislav, but it was not the union itself, but a step towards its realization. From here it deduces that this theme was exaggerated. Secondly, the justification of the transfer through the territorial, cultural, economic and ethnic tight relations between the two is also overrated. Crimea is located near the Ukraine, but is also at a short distance from Russia. In addition, economic and infrastructural ties with Ukraine are less important than the cultural links with the Soviets. Moreover, Crimean population in 1954 was 75% Russian, only 25% were Ukrainians. Tatars who

had lived in that territory until 1944 were deported by Stalin to Central Asia, seeking an ethnic cleansing.

Once identified the pretexts, it is necessary to research the real reasons that lie behind the assignment. Certainly the main purpose of Nikita Khrushchev was not to make an act of charity, but rather to ensure for long-term the strengthening of Ukraine's Soviet control. The strategy used was extremely effective. Over 850 000 Soviet ethnics were encouraged to move to the territory ceded to Ukraine such as the percentage of Russian minority to grow and gradually shape a region which identify more and more with Russia.

In addition to the national interest, Khrushchev also took care of the personal side. He saw the transfer as a political tool through which he should obtain Ukrainian elites' help in the fight against the new Prime Minister, Malenkov. Currently we note that "noble act" did 61 years ago return against Ukraine, just for Russia to consolidate its control over this territory. So the official reasons communicated at that time were only lies used to hide the true negative intentions. Following the clarification of the transfer process is important to see the general course of Russian policy so far (Lupşor, 2014).

On December 8, 1991, at the end of the meeting that took place in the forest Belojevska, the leaders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine found its dissolution and decided to create the Commonwealth of Independent States (Lucinschi, 1998:10). Many analysts consider this event as important as the collapse of the Tsarist Empire, cataloguing CSI as ineffective and incapable of assuming a preeminent role on the international political stage (Buga, 2007:171).

Russia's political and economic chaos ended in March 2000 with the appointment of Vladimir Putin as president. Since then that state began to reassert his work as a great power. Initially

Russia participated at the G-8 work and also collaborated for a while with both NATO and the EU. But gradually the desire to regain a former status increased and relations with the West became strained again. The refusal to respect the obligations assumed under the Treaty on conventional armaments in Europe is the Soviet response to the US decision to locate in the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania elements of the missile shield. This action is a clear evidence that Russia is now aware that his politically and military power has greatly increased.

The conflict in Crimea is another demonstration of power and inordinate ambition of the Soviets. This region has a significant geostrategic importance in terms of defending the southern borders of Russia and the CIS, being a "buffer" space between the Eurasian world and the West. And as Nikita Khrushchev had been premeditated, it was time to return it to the Motherland. The fragility of Ukraine was represented mainly by pro-Russian secessionist movement. The Yushchenko regime desires to join NATO and the EU has fuelled tensions between western and south eastern. First Ukrainian nationalists aspired to full independence from Moscow and get closer cooperation relations with the West; on the other hand, the Russophones advocated embedding the political, economic and security structures of the CIS.

In this context, the announcement from November 21, 2013 that the government in Kiev "suspended the negotiations for the Association Agreement with the EU citing reasons of national security and the intention to return to privileged economic relations with CIS member states" have rise to pro-European protests. Soon they were turned into an anti-government revolution which the press called the "Euromaidan movement". It led to the departure of President Viktor Yanukovich from power on 22 February 2014 (Racheru, 2014). This is the moment

when the internal situation of Ukraine started to change considerably. A specialized definition of crisis shows that it "represents a radical change in the national or international situation, characterized by the existence of direct threats to security objectives, interests and fundamental values of the parties involved in a conflict" (Manolache, 2004:11). In these circumstances, it can be said that the situation which is the subject of this study can be rightly called crisis.

But the fire that triggered the explosion of the powder keg was the repeal of the law on foundations of state policy in the field of languages. On February 23, 2014, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine has given permission for Russian to become a regional language in 13 of the 27 administrative regions of Ukraine. In this manner several languages used in Ukraine, including Romanian, were officially removed from service. During a trip made in 1993 in Central Asia and Georgia, Zbigniew Brzezinski signaled complaints from political leaders in these regions according to which Moscow used Russian colonists as a pretext to intervene in those areas (Brzezinski, 1995: 284). The same tactic was used by President Vladimir Putin to justify the presence of Russian troops, unmarked what's right, in the territory of Crimea.

Based on the aid application of the Crimean Prime Minister, Sergei Aksionov, the leader of Moscow urged on March 1 and obtained in the same day the consent of the Russian Parliament to intervene with armed forces in Ukraine, although this happened since February 23. Once the permission was obtained, the Russian military forces that have headquarters in Sevastopol and the pro-Russian separatists took control of all the political, economic and infrastructure centres from Crimea. Meanwhile, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City Council decided to hold a referendum on the status of the region. Although the referendum was declared

invalid by the United Nations Security Council, the inevitable occurred. Crimean referendum on the accession to the Russian Federation was held on 16 February 2014 and the turnout was 83% of those who benefited from this law. Of these, approximately 97% were in favour of the annexation, which is why in February Russia integrated the Federal District Crimea.

Although we might be tempted to believe that military tensions have ended, given that the region was annexed, so the goal was achieved, they continued. Despite NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen warned that further escalation would have as immediate effect the international isolation of Moscow, Putin maintained its troops in Ukraine, considering that it has the strategic right to keep them there. Moreover, according to a report presented by UN Deputy Secretary-General on Human Rights, Ivan Simonovic, the army fighting between Ukrainian and pro-Russians rebels in eastern Ukraine has led to 423 deaths in the period 15 April-20 June 2014.

Early elections from 25 May were required. The new president, Petro Poroshenko, elected with over 56% of the vote signed the Association Agreement with the European Union on 27 June. This action has intensified the wave of violence. Donetsk and Lugansk were the most affected cities since their separation was insistently required. Besides shootouts there was also hostage taking by both sides. It had to be signed a ceasefire agreement in Minsk, Belarus, on September 5 for the situation to mitigate and 146 prisoners to be freed.

Ukrainians could not properly celebrate the fragile peace agreement because as soon as the rebels resumed hostilities, using heavy artillery and attacked a residential district of Donetsk. The attacks were more aggressive and the number of victims grew day by day, so Poroshenko has proposed a bill that contained a series of compromises that he was willing to make in order to stabilize

the situation. While the proposal provided for a special status of self-government of the two disputed territories, this was not fully satisfying for the separatists.

Given the circumstances, on September 20 there was signed a new ceasefire agreement with the hope that the two parties to the dispute would withdraw its weapons beyond the front line, thus respecting the demilitarized provided. The separatists did not meet the provisions of the truce. On the contrary, benefiting from humanitarian assistance, tanks, weapons and troops from Russia they sporadically continued the offensive. On January 22, 2015, they celebrated the conquest of the international airport of Donetsk.

The high level of concern for this situation was not without reactions from major world powers. While German Chancellor, Angela Merkel and French President, Francois Holland taking into account the possibility of a third peace agreement, the US proposed the provision of lethal weapons to Ukraine. By fear of intensifying the battles the European leaders chose the first option and started the negotiations marathon with Putin. They were completed on 12 February, when a new ceasefire was signed in Minsk. The novelty that distinguishes it from the previous consists in introducing a measure which provided the withdrawal of foreign armed forces, heavy weapons and the mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine, under the supervision of the OSCE.

Not even this complex of measures brought peace and the situation continued to be tense even today. While Russian separatists and Ukrainian military accused each other of escalating attacks, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that from the outbreak and until 9 April 2015 he armed conflict made 21 500 victims, of which 6 100 dead and 15 400 injured.

How many such reports will be necessary for the shootouts to end? In my opinion there are two possibilities. The optimistic scenario assumes that NATO, EU, OSCE and the UN will determine Russia decides to withdraw the pro-Russian rebels support and seeing him single in the battle, they will give up their aspirations. The second one takes into account the possibility that the separatists would end all attacks after they annex the territories they wish. They have already managed to impose their dominance in Lugansk and Donetsk, cities that they proclaimed independent. The fact that history has not repeated in Odessa and Kharkov does not mean that will prevent the intensification of the fighting until they achieve their purpose of creating a new state: Novorossyia.

III. Implications of the conflict in Ukraine on regional security

Without any doubt the conflict in Ukraine has serious implications on regional security at politically, economically and militarily side. For this reason, it is in the attentions of NATO, EU, OSCE, UN and especially of all EU Members and US. Amid ethnic tensions between pro-Russian groups and pro-European population, it has triggered a veritable civil war that has claimed thousands of victims. Maintaining the status quo, the inviolability of the borders and the territorial integrity of Ukraine were flagrantly violated, with repercussions in the nations in question, but also in the European community.

On the economic level, the consequences were massive for Ukraine, Russia and also for the EU. As we have already known in Ukraine was a lack of economic reforms and with the war the situation considerably deteriorated. The economy declined by about 7%, while the national currency and exchange rates have depreciated up to 70%. Moreover, the territories occupied by the

separatists represent 60% of the Donetsk basin, so the Ukrainian coal mining potential has been severely affected.

Russia did not remain far from material losses. Addressing aggressive expansionist policies had big repercussions because economic sanctions were coming from two directions. At first instance the Council of Ministers adopted on 5 February first EU sanctions freezing the accounts and actions focused on Russian personalities and denial of travel visas. Following the annexation of Crimea, on March 20 the US has made the same decision and thus 20 Vladimir Putin's close people and Rosssia bank representing a real support for them were subjected to economic sanctions. But the wave of such measures did not stop there. While the EU has decided to maintain the sanctions, a few months later Canada adopted on 12 latest financial penalties this time against 12 Russian diplomats, but also Ukrainians. The impact of these pressures on Russia should not be neglected. They have pursued the political and economic isolation of that State on the international stage in order to determine halting the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Compared to the US dollar, the rouble has depreciated significantly since January 2014 and the exchange rate fell by 40 percent. From these sanction didn't have the expected success, but rather they fuelled pro-Russian aggression (Drăgoi, 2014).

Against the backdrop of civil war in the border of the Euro-Atlantic area, the European Union has made important efforts to contribute to the financial recovery of

Ukraine. The sanctions that Russia imposed on them haven't remained unanswered. A good example of this is the decree of Moscow's embargo on several non-agricultural products from countries that have taken steps against it. In addition, amid tensions between Gazprom and Naftogaz, the EU faced the suspension of gas supply to Russia, given that some Member

States are 100% dependent on Russian gas. The financial support of Ukraine fell all as the burden of the European Union. This support has resulted in a long-term preferential trade regime with Kiev, meaning that over 90% of customs industrial imports tariffs from Ukraine were abolished. Moreover, other member countries have suffered due to the fact that a significant sum of all direct foreign investments was directed to the Ukrainian industry.

The EU wants the politic and economic restoration of Ukraine. Given that this war is a struggle for the Russian Federation to maintain its sphere of influence in the former Soviet space, the political stabilization of the country and especially the ending of the conflict are the strategic objectives for the entire eastern coast of Europe. Ukrainian aspirations to join the European political and economic structure ambitions Russians instigated and led to territorial division, political, social and cultural. Ukraine became an object of contention between NATO and the EU on one side and Russia on the other, and the conflict has resulted in the deterioration of Russo-European direct. In contrast, relations between the US and the EU have experienced significant growth amid the common struggle to prevent the enemy's expansionist tendencies. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and other western states are afraid for a possible invasion and the Americans do not want the Russian force to increase, in the context of control of Ukraine involves the possibility of involvement in "managing future oil and gas routes from the Caucasus and Near and Middle East and terrorism and other threats" (Leca, 2014).

The most ardent subject is the military one. The conflict in Ukraine shows no sign of drawing to an end, on the contrary, armed clashes are intensifying day by day and the old former US security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski believes that Putin started a new Cold War. But this situation will bring a new world war?

Relating to the threats in March, Mikhail Vanin, said that “all member states of NATO missile shield will be targets of ballistic missiles owned by the Russian Federation, there is this risk. Personally, I believe that it repeat the nuclear deterrent strategy applied during the Cold War and the possibility of a new outbreak of global dimensions conflagration is just a grim scenario”.

IV. Conclusions

In the context of regional security, the civil war in Ukraine has consequences in the economic, political and military area. Starting from an ethnic tension, the situation got complicated, actually generating changes in the global political scene because, if the war extends to other countries in the European area, all humanity would be affected. Besides the strained relations between the EU and NATO with Russia, the dispute made thousands of victims and alerted the entire region.

In addition, the Crimean annexation by the Russian Federation is regarded by the international law as a serious violation of principles specific to this area such as the the respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, non-use of force or threat of its use and thus solve international disputes peacefully (Bogdan, 2012: 42-42).

In conclusion, the fight of Russia to maintain its influence in the Black Sea region generated in Ukraine a phenomenon of political, economic and social disintegration and alerted NATO, EU, OSCE and UN which make a lot of efforts to end this conflict and restore security in the region.

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