CIVIL SOCIETY IN DANGER. POLISH PERCEPTION OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

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Abstract:

This article presents the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on the Polish civil society. At the beginning, the author describes the history and the present of the Polish-Ukrainian relations. Then the author analyses social perception of the crisis, which induces both interest and fear. According to the pools, we support Ukrainian integrity or prefer to stay neutral; there is lack of support for Russia or the separatists. Our feeling of insecurity is much higher than in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In the article, social activity is listed, such as demonstrations of solidarity or humanitarian aid. The author also evaluates, to what extent is the Polish civil society a functional background for the Polish government decision-making process.

Keywords:

Poland, Ukraine, Russia, crisis, civil society, social perception

INTRODUCTION

For every society, safety and security are the values deemed most important. Particularly, for the developed societies the notions of security, living in dignity, freedom from the risk of a military intervention are the goals and the qualities to strive for. These societies are civil in their character, which means that their members make use of their rights and freedoms via democratic procedures and may exert impact on the policies in their country in a subjective manner. These are also societies which are reflective, oriented towards the perception of their problems, as well as problem-solving and aim to maximize their assets, their usefulness and the quality of life via self-transformations.

Although it is difficult to discuss the concept of absolute security in case of contemporary European societies (since one can only gradate the objective level of threat, as well as the sense of threat and aim to minimize the two), the period after World War 2 has been surely a time of security and relative prosperity, which had never before been seen on the Old Continent. Also the Polish society, which after 1989 strived to reintegrate with the West (via admission into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1999 and joining the European Union in 2004) could, for a long period of time, enjoy the fruits of the peaceful, one can venture to say, "post-historic" order. Potential threat to the Polish security was far away (the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq), while maintaining the army was treated as a costly burden, particularly the mandatory military service suspended in 2009.

Unfortunately, contemporary context of the Poland's national safety and security is completely different. In November 2013 protests erupted in Kiev, Ukraine, the cause of which was President Viktor Yanukovych's refusal to sign the historic free trade and association agreement with the European Union. After many days of clashes with the Berkut[1], on February 22nd, 2014, the forces of the opposition managed to overthrow the then-incumbent President. Internal crisis in the Ukraine was ruthlessly taken advantage of by Russia which annexed the Crimea on March 18th, 2014. Separatist sympathies, this time of the Eastern Ukraine, were expresses as proclaiming the sovereignty of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic. As a consequence, civil war continues in Ukraine, with active participation on Russia's part which supports the anti-governmental party in various ways. We are dealing here with the so-called hybrid warfare which means that the operations are partially irregular and asymmetric in their nature and partially resemble a typical, conventional armed conflict. In particular, consequences associated with legal regulations of conflicts are avoided (mostly on the Russian part): the operations are conducted by the so-called "green men" (who officially are not Russian soldiers), the boarders are crossed by "humanitarian convoys" and the like. The military actions are accompanied by proper information policy[2], the effect of which is expressed in large number of supporters for the actions of Vladimir Putin in the Russian Federation itself; using the issue of energetic independence from Russian sources (both of the West and Ukraine itself); creating semblance of legality, such as referenda in breakaway regions and mutual economic sanctions. It is indisputable that within the last year the threat to European peace, including the safety and security of Poland on the part of Russia increased markedly. Furthermore, also on the Ukrainian part there activated groups which are dangerous from the Polish point of view, such as All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" or the far-right Ukrainian nationalist political party Right Sector. This all cased drastic lowering of both the Polish security, and the subjective sense of security.

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[1]   Berkut – Ukrainian special militsiya within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

[2]   J. Darczewska, *Anatomia rosyjskiej wojny informacyjnej. Operacja krymska – studium przypadku*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files /anatomia_rosyjskiej_wojny_informacyjnej.pdf.

This new situation is therefore the object of many in-depth expert analyses, as well as the focal point of national security as perceived by the society (the non-experts, amateurs, general public). Although scientific research should always be conducted with a certain dose of distance (also from a certain temporal perspective) and scepticism, the researcher often cannot afford this luxury. On the contrary, social responsibility necessitates a certain type of involvement in the current affairs, since thanks to their knowledge and cognitive capacity, the researchers can serve their society. Their work is important, even if such reflection is more difficult and could be burdened with some degree of error, which may result from the hype, information noise and inadequate knowledge, whereas the reflection can even be proved false in the course of successive events. That is why a sociologist should take up this present challenge and investigate the content and mechanisms of the social consciousness in order to describe and understand it. I decided to focus on the crisis in Ukraine as viewed from the perspective of the Polish civil society. I shall outline the historic context of the Polish-Ukrainian relations, as well as current events which could impact the sense of security of the Poles. Further, I shall attempt to describe the perception of the Ukrainian conflict in Poland basing my research on opinion polls conducted by CEBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research). In my next point I shall define the subjective character of the Polish society and the way it attempts to exert impact on the situation in Ukraine. Additionally, I shall attempt to study the issue of how to organise the space of ignorance and uncertainty relating to the neighbouring conflict. Finally, I shall also estimate the degree to which a civil society is an element rationalizing and stabilizing the politics and to what extent it is a factor limiting the actions of political elites and experts.

1. HISTORICAL CONFILICT

Undoubtedly, the historical context of the Polish-Ukrainian relations is the key to comprehending their current state. If one were to speak about Rus' and Ruthenia, the common history stretches back over one thousand years and it is full of periods of both cooperation and extreme animosity and hostility. The following events are the most vital, if common history is to be understood.

Firstly, the first Polish Republic, Noble's Republic, is the tradition of co-existence within the Polish statehood, although not based on equal rights. Significant part of the territory of modern Ukraine constituted the south-western Republic of Both Nations (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). This concerns the whole or part of the former regions called voivodships. These were the Ruthenian-, Belz-, Kiev-, Podolian-, Bratslav- and Czernihiv voivodships, under strong civilization, economic, social and cultural influence of the Kingdom of Poland. The social relationships, at the very beginning quite favourable, antagonized with time. The antagonisms were rooted in the social structure: the Polish nobility were the dominating class, whereas the Ukrainians were mostly peasants. Furthermore, the Ukrainian elites quickly assimilated the Polish culture and were undergoing rapid Polonisation. The social conflicts were made manifest in the Khmelnitsky Uprising (1648-1654) most fully and they weakened the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth significantly. The solution to these problems should have been sought among the reforms not introduced, the effects of which would have in-

cluded transformation into a federal state with Ukraine being its third pillar. The weakness of the Noble's Republic was ruthlessly taken advantage of by its neighbouring countries, and by Russia in particular (Treaty of Pereyaslav in 1654 subjected the Ukraine to the Russian tsar). Therefore the first issue in common relations, as rooted in history, is the remembrance of the social conflicts of the first Polish Republic period.

Another vital obstacle to mending bilateral relations is the memory of the acts committed by the Ukrainian nationalists in the interwar period, as well as during World War 2. Population-wise, the Second Polish Republic included 16% Ukrainians who constituted the majority in the Volhynian and Stanisławów voivodships. This contributed to favourable condition for the separatist tendencies and radical subversive activities. The assassination of the politician Tadeusz Howłówka, of the Minister of Interior – Bronisław Pieracki – or a failed attempt at the assassination of Józef Piłsudski himself can serve as examples here. Nonetheless, the period of World War 2 was most tragic. 120 thousand Poles living in the Volhynia and Galicia[3] area were killed by the Ukrainian nationalists from Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Insurgent Army (UPA). These were brutal killings, massacres directed against the civil population, more often than not their close neighbours. What is more, Poland lost its eastern territories, including the extremely vital Lviv, in favour of USSR as the result of World War 2. In the present day, some part of this territory is found within the Ukrainian borders and it is the least Russianised region of Ukraine. Hence the second problem of the Polish-Ukrainian mutual history, namely the Ukrainian nationalism and the memory of the recently lost Polish lands. From the Ukrainian point of view, although these events are incomparable, Operation Vistula and forced resettlement of the Ukrainian minority are stressed. The hostilities of the interwar period are explained as a sort of retribution for the abandonment of the Ukrainian ally to the play of the Soviet Union after the Polish-Soviet War.

The third element of common history, this time a very positive one, is the most recent past. Following the doctrine of Jerzy Giedroyc, Poland supported sovereign aspirations of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus. It was Poland which, after the fall of the Soviet Union, as the first state recognized independence of Ukraine on December 2nd, 1991. It was one day following the referendum. Six months later, the Presidents of both countries, Lech Walesa and Leonid Kravchuk signed the Treaty on Good Neighbour Relations, Friendship and Cooperation. The engagement of Poland as advocate of Ukraine during the "Orange Revolution" of 2004 was also a positive aspect of mutual relations. The opposition forces represented by Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Timoshenko were strongly supported by the Polish side. This resonated strongly in Russia as both anti-Russian and anti-authoritarian (and pro-democratic) acts. Recent cooperation between the two countries is illustrated in the form of 2012 UEFA Championships organized jointly by the two countries. The most recent history of the Polish-Ukrainian relations is directed towards partnership and support of the Ukrainian road towards democracy and emancipation from the Russian influences.

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3   E. Siemaszko, *Od walk do ludobójstwa*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.rp.pl/artykul/161001.html.

2. CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

The Ukrainian crisis, which has escalated to the level of an armed conflict, is a great threat to the safety and security of Poland and Europe. It also contributes to deminishing of the subjective sense of safety, permanence, stability, security and predictability. In my opinion, there are eight factors which do add to the lowered objective and subjective sense of safety and security.

Firstly, the military threat on the part of Russia increased. Despite the attempts of Moscow to maintain a façade of decorum, there can be no doubt that Russia supports the actions of separatists and provides them with weapons, economic support and intelligence, while its armed forces are directly involved in the conflict (in an unofficial capacity). Due to the common history with Russia (the partitions, Polish-Soviet war in 1920, World War 2 and the subjugation of 1945-1989), the Russian peril is perceived as one of the most dire threats to the existence of the Polish nation. The actions in Ukraine may just be the next step towards restoring the area of influence of the Former Eastern Block. In 2005, Vladimir Putin in a state of the nation address referred to the break up of the USSR as the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century[4]. Integration of the post-soviet world is one of the elements of the process of forming "the Russian word" (Russian: *Russkiy Mir*) out of the Russian-speaking, orthodox Christian peoples who share similar values[5]. This danger was noticed and pointed out by the late Polish President Lech Kaczyńsky in 2008 in Tbilisi: "(…) It's Georgia today, Ukraine tomorrow, a day after tomorrow – the Baltic countries and my country, Poland, may be next"![6] Therefore we could be forced to face a direct military threat today, as well as the potential further hazard to all the remaining countries of the region. The closer the Russian army to the Polish boarders (their presence in the Kaliningrad Oblast notwithstanding), the lower the Polish security. This situation is only made worse by Russia being an atomic power.

The hazard of Russian authoritarianism increasing is the second kind of threat. Russian intervention in Ukraine should not only be viewed form geopolitical perspective, but from the point of view of ideology as well. The turning of Ukraine towards the West must have resonated in Russia as well and impact its identity[7]. Although, in the words of a classic, no revolution should be judged on the basis of its own awareness of itself,

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[4] *Putin: Rozpad ZSRR to największa katastrofa XX wieku*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/polska/news-putin-rozpad-zsrr-to-najwieksza-katastrofa-xx-wieku,nId,142083.

[5] M. Menkiszak, *Doktryna Putina: Tworzenie koncepcyjnych podstaw rosyjskiej dominacji na obszarze postradzieckim*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.osw.waw.pl /pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2014-03-27/doktryna-putina-tworzenie-koncepcyjnych-podstaw-rosyjskiej.

[6] M. Wąsowski, *Lech Kaczyński przewidział kryzys na Ukrainie. W 2008 roku mówił: "Dziś Gruzja, jutro Ukraina, a później może Polska"*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://natemat.pl/93701,lech-kaczynski-przewidzial-wydarzenia-na-ukrainie-w-2008-roku-mowil-dzis-gruzja-jutro-ukraina-a-pozniej-moze-i-czas-na-polske.

[7] K. Wóycicki, *Ukraińska pułapka na Putina*, [in:] "Sprawy międzynarodowe", No. 1/2014, rok LXVII, p. 10.

the Euromaidan demonstrations and civil unrest, at least in its claims, expressed the ideas of democracy, self-government, liberalism, human rights and integration with the EU. This is in direct conflict with the Putin government practice which the Freedom House analysts called "consolidated authoritarian regime"[8]. The analysts accuse Kremlin of stifling the freedom of assembly, religious freedom, operation of non-governmental organizations, election violations, censorship, unsubstantiated treason and corruption accusations. What is more, the attitude of Russia towards the treaties it has signed and its obligations is marked with disregard. The separatist republics (calling themselves "people's" republics) have opted for a political model so disparate from the Maidan ideals. Among their postulates nationalisation of the industry can be found. They also refer to the soviet symbolism. Along with the escalation of the war, the authoritarian tendencies will grow in strength in Russia itself. This fosters unity of a society in the face of a conflict, pacifies the opposition and also yields the necessary explanation of the war costs incurred. The closer Russia is to authoritarianism, the more dangerous it becomes.

The third factor which decreases the Polish safety as the result of the Ukrainian crisis is the sphere of economy. It is because of the actions in Ukraine that the costs of Polish investments have risen due to increased costs of security, when compared to the period before the conflict. Increasing poverty of the Ukrainians because of the conflict (decrease of domestic demand) also impedes the Ukrainian economy, indirectly harming also the Polish economy. Furthermore, the opportunity cost is added relative to the benefits which may have been gained, should the status quo remain as it was in 2013 (these costs only grow, if the increased trade as the result of integration with the European Union is to be taken into account). The economic sanctions against Russia[9] and issued by Russia are another factor lowering the safety and security of Poland. In particular, this concerns the Russian "blackmail" in the energy sector[10] – decreasing the gas supply with winter coming may be viewed as an effective and efficient form of repression. Lastly, the Russian threat requires that Poland increased its armament spendings. Although from the point of view of safety and security the increase of defence budget to 2% of gross domestic product (increase from 1.95%) should be viewed as something favourable (it could even be worth demanding its further increase). However, simultaneously these are the founds that cannot be spent in different areas, such as education, social spendings or investments in infrastructure etc. On the other hand, the founds allocated in defence may stimulate the economy and the resultant technologies developed could also be applied in the civil sector.

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[8] J. Szymańska-Godard, *Rosja: "Skonsolidowany reżim autorytarny"*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.korespondent-wschodni.org/informacje/rosja-skonsolidowany-rezim-autorytarny.

[9] *Sankcje gospodarcze wobec Rosji uzgodnione*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.forbes.pl/sankcje-gospodarcze-wobec-rosji-uzgodnione,artykuly,1807 95,1,1.html.

[10] *Rosja zmniejsza dostawy gazu do Polski, UE i USA wdrażają nowe sankcje [PODSUMOWANIE]*, [online]. [available: 16.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl /wiadomosci/1,1 14871,16627386,Rosja_zmniejsza_dostawy_gazu_do_Polski__UE_i_USA_wdrazaja.html.

The precedence of separatism and changes of the Polish boarders constitute the fourth danger factor. Poland is a peaceful country with no territorial claims against any other country. Hence its vested interest in maintaining the status quo, as far as international borders are concerned. Particular unease must be aroused by the shift of the boarders in favour of Russia, such ass the annexation of the Crimea or the emergence of political entities which sympathise with Russia (both the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics). This is done via instrumental use of the Russian minority, which fortunately is impossible in the case of Poland but could happen in the Baltic countries. Nonetheless, the very precedent is dangerous for several reasons: firstly it could be used by the Silesian minority in its aspiration of emancipation from Warsaw; secondly it can lead to intensification of the efforts of German revisionist organizations questioning the "reclaimed lands" being attached to Poland in 1945; and thirdly: should the radical nationalist option win in the Ukraine, it may demand that the Przemyśl city and its neighbouring counties be separated from Poland.

The fifth factor threatening the safety of Poland is the probability of the Ukraine significantly weakening or even turning into a rouge country. Having a stable and predictable neighbour which could become a valuable partner is in the best interest of Poland, whereas a truncated and devastated one could become a destabilizing force in the region. A rouge country would become a fount of crime and terrorism. If Ukraine looses some of its territory to Russia, it would become anti-Russian (which is understandable) and anti-Western (due to the lack of support and backing of its territorial integrity by the EU and NATO), and that would include becoming anti-Polish. If the military actions escalated, an influx of refugees and the necessity of providing shelter and proper living conditions for this group of people should be considered, as would be the possible conflicts within the society.

The sixth danger is connected with the Ukrainian nationalism. This ideology can be a significant narration for the Ukrainian nation, around which the Ukraine will integrate. At the same time its character is exclusionary in relation to minorities (both the Russian and the Polish ones) and is harming the Polish diaspora beyond the eastern boarder. A problematic and complex history of the 20th century will render the understanding between the nations difficult. Great sense of anxiety is induced in the pro-Maidan forces by the symbolism connected with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) or other far-right groups. If political parties such as "Right Sector" or the All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" were to take over, it would certainly impair the Polish-Ukrainion relations.

The seventh threat revealed itself in the form of the reluctance of the West to stand firmly against Russia, in particular if such act would involve military actions. As a member of European Union and NATO and a strong ally of the United States, Poland bases its security on international cooperation. The Polish Armed Forces are simply unable to counter the potential thereat from the East efficiently on their own. Should the warranties given by the membership in international organizations prove to be only empty promises, the feeling of security among Poles would lower dramatically. The façade character of international alliances brings back to mind the tragic abandonment and

loneliness of Poland in September of 1939. The danger lies also in the lack of common Western policy in relation to Russia. German attitude of ambivalence is particularly noteworthy: the Germans try to avoid a confrontation and sustain dialogue at all costs, in spite of the pressure by the US and some members of the EU[11].

Threat number eight is the menace of returning to the state of Cold War between the West and Russia. This time Poland would find itself in the Western Block, due to the NATO and EU expansion to the East. This block would have a greater potential than it did 25 years ago. At the same time, such model of relations should be perceived as much less favourable than the model existing nowadays. Along with the increase of tension between the two sides, the risk of a global conflict exploding, as well as proxy wars being waged, in which the superpowers would fight on the territories of third countries. Trade would be restricted, as would the political cooperation between the parties of the two blocks, and due to the geographic situation, Poland would also become a periphery of the West.

The list of threats presented above should be treated as an identification of potential hazards, most of which could be neutralized using rational policies. What is more, some of them could be treated as a kind of challenge which, when tackled successfully, would even increase the Polish security. For example, should the Ukrainian crisis be resolved, Poland would strengthen its position as an "advocate of Ukraine"; weakening of the trade exchange between the EU and Russia would be an opportunity for the Polish businessmen, while the increase of the military threat could be an impulse to improving the condition of the Polish Army and gaining new allays (e.g. among the Scandinavian countries).

3. SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL SAFETY IN THE LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN UKRAINE

How does the Polish society perceive the national safety? There are a few elements constituting this perception, according to the opinion polls by CBOS. Firstly, there is great interest in the developments in the Ukraine among the Poles, but this interest is varied in time. It was highest in March 2014, when 88% of responders declared interest in the affairs beyond the eastern boarder of Poland (among which 28% declared a strong interest). This interest was dropping systematically to the level of 68% in July, 2014 (including the 10% of the "very interested" responses)[12]. The high interest points to high level of reflexivity and public spirit of the Polish society, following the significant events both in their own country and abroad. What results from the polls analysed, is also that this interest is highest among the better educated persons and those who assess their own economic situation as good. Those people have the proper cultural and material resources allowing them to expand their knowledge, while their

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[11] A. Kwiatkowska-Drożdż, K. Popławski, *Niemcy wobec konfliktu rosyjsko-ukraińskiego – szok i niedowierzanie*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/komentarze-osw/2014-04-03/niemcy-wobec-konfliktu-rosyj sko-ukrainskiego-szok-i.

[12] *Stosunek Polaków do stron ukraińskiego konfliktu*, Komunikat CBOS 103/214, p. 2.

place in the social structure fosters active citizenship. The dropping interested could be explained by "information overload", loss of the novelty effect, normalization (in the sense of treating the crisis as a permanent phenomenon and getting used to it), as well as news of other important matters (the information services in Spring of 2014 were dominated by the European Parliament campaign).

The Polish perception of the Ukrainian crisis is directed to a particular side of the conflict. The great majority of Poles does not sympathize with the supporters of the separation of the Eastern Ukraine (a mere 3% of respondents in May of 2014 and 4% in July). What dominates, are the sympathies to the supporters of the Ukrainian territorial integrity (in May 2014 equal 40% and in July equal 48%) or lack of sympathies to any party of the conflict (52% and 42%, respectively)[13]. The support for Ukraine results from all the reasons listed above: the feeling of being threatened by Russia (supporting the separatists) and reluctance to changing the European status quo, in particular in the immediate vicinity of Poland. It is interesting to study the reason behind lack of sympathies for both sides altogether. Does it result from weighing the arguments, thorough analysis which requires neutrality, comprehension of the nuances connected with this multidimensional situation, or is rather the aftermath of lack of interest in the conflict? The additional open-ended question leaves no doubts: 35% of the "uninterested" responders report general lack of interest; 24% are disconnected from the events in Ukraine and 15% declare their distance to the matter due to scarcity of knowledge[14].

Third element of the Polish perception is the belief in good relations between Poland and Ukraine (an increase from 21 to 37% between July 2013 and July 2014) or average relations between the two countries. This conviction is strongest among those who are "very" or "somewhat" interested in the events in Ukraine (60% and 42%, respectively). The majority of the responders, however, thinks that these relations are "neither good nor bad" (July 2013 – 39%, July 2014 – 43%)[15]. The crisis contributes to the improvement of the Polish-Ukrainian relations in a very moderate way and brings them closer together. The obstacles here include mostly the unresolved issues from the shared history. "Most of the polled who do not believe in the Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation (51%) distance themselves from the events in Ukraine, while the majority with a positive attitude towards the reconciliation issue (56%) supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine".[16]

There is also the fourth element of the Polish perception, which is the belief, albeit short-lived, in the threat to the Polish sovereignty. In April 2014, for the first time since 1991, the supporters of this thesis were more numerous than its opponents (47% to 41%)[17]. Although the number of those who profess that the threat is military in its

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13 *Ibidem*.

14 *Ibidem,* p.3.

15 *Ibidem,* p.4.

16 *Ibidem,* p.5.

17 *Polacy o bezpieczeństwie narodowym i NATO*, Komunikat CBOS 48/2014, p. 2.

character increased by almost four times (form 7% in December 2013 to 29% in April 2014), what dominates is the belief that the threats are mostly economy-related, connected with the Polish economic dependence (drop from 50% to 45%)[18]. The Poles should obviously be wary of Russia (80% of responders shared this relief, Germany was listed as the second to be feared with only 7%, whereas Ukraine is listed a country to be wary by 4% of responders[19]). NATO may become the remedy to the threat, the membership in which is supported by 81% polled, whilst 65% think that NATO military presence in Poland should be stronger (on permanent basis – 21%; on temporary basis – 43%)[20]. Once again in June 2014 the proponents of the lack of threat to the sovereignty of Poland became dominant – 50% vs. 39% of those who claim that such threat exists[21].

Polish perception of security is also constituted by the fifth element – the belief in the threat to the security of Poland. The Poles felt most threatened in March 2014 (72% of responders believed that the situation in Ukraine threatened the security of Poland, whilst 24% held opposing view). This resulted from the Russia's actions in the Crimean Peninsula. The ratio between the two positions became more balanced with time, and in June 2014 the percentages equalled 49% and 42%[22], respectively, although we were still far from the situation from March 2014, where the proponents of the threat thesis were a minority. Furthermore, the situation in Ukraine threatens the safety of Poland more than it threatens Europe or the world (in March 2014 – 72%, 66% and 52%, respectively; in April 2014 – 61%, 54%, 42%, respectively)[23]. This is thus the problem in the solution of which the Poles should be more interested than their Western allies.

Sixth component is the attitude of the public towards the international actions undertaken by Polish political elites. In April 2014, 52% of responders said that the position of Poland in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis is just, whereas 32% held the opposite view, Similar results were obtained when the polled were asked, if Poland should become involved in the Ukrainian conflict ("yes" – 54% and "no" – 40%)[24] Paradoxically, the majority of responders is at the same time convinced that the consequences of the Polish policy will be adverse in the long run (64% to 17%)[25]. This is probably an expression of general pessimism and not a legitimization of the actions by the Polish elites. The responders also think that Poland should mostly be guided in its actions by its own interests, even if it would mean abstaining from defending the just and fair rules (April 2014 – 61%) and not being guided by the just and fair rules, which

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[18]   *Ibidem,* p.3.

[19]   *Ibidem,* p.4.

[20]   *Ibidem,* p.5.

[21]   *Sytuacja międzynarodowa i bezpieczeństwo Polski*, Komunikat CBOS 80/2014, p. 5.

[22]   *Stosunki polsko-ukraińskie w opiniach Polaków*, Komunikat CBOS 95/14, p. 3.

[23]   *Polacy o sytuacji na Ukrainie w czasie krymskiego kryzysu*, Komunikat CBOS 35/14, p. 3, and *O sytuacji na Ukrainie przed akcjami separatystów na Wschodzie*, Komunikat CBOS 54/14, p. 2.

[24]   *O sytuacji na Ukrainie przed akcjami separatystów na Wschodzie*, Komunikat CBOS 54/14, pp. 4-5.

[25]   *Ibidem,* p.6.

could threaten the interests of Poland (30%)[26]. This pragmatic outlook prevails both among the proponents of the involvement into the conflict, and its opponents.

It is worth to try and compare the Polish views with the perspective of other countries in the region, namely the other members of the Visegrád Group (i.e. the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary). The public opinion polls conducted in April 2014 pointed to the Poles being the most wary of our security in the light of the Ukrainian crisis (Poland – 61%, Slovakia – 57%, the Czech Republic – 50%, Hungary – 48%)[27]. The Poles hold a much stronger belief that Russia will strive to regain its influence in the Central and Eastern Europe (62% responders answered "yes", 21% – "no"; Slovakia: 27% responders answered "yes", 51% – "no"; Hungary 41% responders answered "yes", 40% – "no")[28]. One could venture the thesis that the sense of threat resulting from the conflict is greater in Poland than it is in other countries of the region.

Summing up, Poles are interested in the situation in Ukraine, although the interest has started to flag lately. There is no support for the separatist side and either neutral attitude (resulting from lack of knowledge, among other factors) or a positive towards the Ukrainian integrity prevail. Poland has increasingly better relations with Ukraine. The Polish sense of security and the conviction of no danger to sovereignty dropped significantly, albeit for a short period of time. The Ukrainian crisis fosters the support of Poles for the Polish government international policy, in particular when it is in line with Poland's interest (although not necessary morally just). In comparison with the other countries of the region, Poland is the country with highest level of fear within the Visegrád Group.

4. SOCIETY IN ACTION

Convictions, views and ideas constituting the sense of national security do translate into subjective actions of the Polish society aimed at increasing its safety, supporting one side of the conflict and exerting pressure on the deciders. In this chapter of my paper I shall focus solely on the actions undertaken by a civil society directly, and not on any internal and external actions by politicians, official state policy or the statements by representatives of dispositional groups etc.

The first actions taken by the Polish society were demonstrations of support (also marches and picketing) and solidarity with the Ukrainian nation. Already, they started on November 24, 2013 in Warsaw, where about thousand persons gathered[29]. Also later on, regular acts of solidarity with the Maidan protesters took place, such as on December 8th and January 30th in the Constitution Square in Warsaw, or on February 23rd – a march from the Castle Square to the Ukrainian embassy building. It is during

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[26] *Ibidem,* p.7.

[27] *Wydarzenia na Ukrainie a poczucie zagrożenia w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Komunikat CBOS 59/14, p. 1.

[28] *Ibidem*, p. 3.

[29] *Euromajdan w Polsce: oduczyliśmy się wychodzić na ulice?,* [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,15215364,Euromajdan_w_Polsce__oduczylismy_sie _wychodzic_na.html.

the latter that the protesters sang the Ukrainian national anthem, read out the names of the victims and observed a minute of silence in their honour[30]. The demonstration included numerous representatives of Ukrainian minority in Poland. These were mostly Ukrainians studying in Polish universities. The solidarity demonstrations were also organized in other cities, such as Wrocław, Gdańsk, Cracov, Lublin or Poznań. They are organized in areas typical for other kinds of protests (city centres, main roads) and places vital due to political reasons (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building, embassies, consulates, both Ukrainian ones and then Russian ones). Politicians representing different political fractions attended many protests. Independent Self-governing Labour Union "Solidarity" (Polish: NSZZ "Solidarność") organized its own protest. Other protest organizers included both the players already present in the public space (Amnesty International, the Open Dialogue Foundation, Political Critique (Polish: Krytyka Polityczna) and Association of Ukrainians in Poland (Polish: Związek Ukraińców w Polsce), as well as the newly-formed ones, such as Euromaidan Organising Committee (Polish: Komitet Organizacyjny Euromajdanu) in Warsaw.

Significantly lower was the number of demonstrations which were not aimed at supporting the pro-Maidan side, and the number of persons participating in them was also much lower. One example here was the protest of the National Movement in front of the Warsaw headquarters of the "Ukrainian World" centre on May 11th, 2014 against the visit of representatives of the All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" and Right Sector and the promotion of ideas of Stepan Bandera. An anti-war demonstration was organized under the Ukrainian embassy on August 23rd, 2014 (and later, also on September 6th) expressing the solidarity with separatists from the East. One of the organizers included Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland (Polish: Samoobrona RP) and the Falanga National Radical Camp (Polish: Falanga).

The second type of Ukraine-supporting activities included gift-collection for the Ukrainians (including medicine, dressings, food and blankets) which were then transported in humanitarian convoys. Also fundraising events were organized, most often a special bank account number was given. Help was provided to the Poles living in Ukraine, mostly in Lviv too. It is interesting to note that that the very vehicles from the humanitarian convoy became gifts themselves[31]. Due to both legal reasons, and the possible controversies, mostly non-dual use items were transported. The military equipment which was surrendered to the Ukrainians as the result of public collections included purely defensive protective equipment (helmets, bullet-prove vests) and uniforms.

Subjective character of the Polish society is also expressed by the petitions and letters of solidarity. Amnesty International Poland was one of the organizers of a petition-signing campaign which additionally arranged a letter writing marathon in defence of those demonstrators who had been beaten up and/or were missing. This marathon

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[30] *Manifestacja poparcia dla integracji Ukrainy z UE*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/warszawa/manifestacja-poparcia-dla-integracji-ukrainy-z-ue/9tesb.

[31] *Polski konwój z pomocą dotarł do stolicy Ukrainy*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/artykuly/469591,polski-konwoj-z-pomoca-juz-w-kijowie.html.

was organized in 35 cities. In line with the spirit of Amnesty International, the petitions pertained to transgression of human rights, including the freedom of assembly. What is more, Amnesty International was not indiscriminate towards the newly instated Ukrainian authorities. In a report issued later on, Amnesty pointed to the crimes committed by the Aidar Battalion, a volunteer military detachment, which battled with the separatists[32]. An internet petition to the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, in which increased activity of Poland was called for, was launched by the representatives of the word of science, culture and the media[33]. Polish bishops also became involved and have written letters of solidarity with Ukraine several times[34].

The fourth expression of the involvement of the Polish society in the Ukrainian conflict was the activity in the virtual space. It is this sphere which will be an important, although still ignored field of civic activity in the future. It can already be seen on the example of Facebook, which witnessed a wide variety of actions. A film entitled "I am a Ukrainian" urging for the solidarity with the Maidan protesters was forwarded numerous times. A few thousands of people "liked" the "Euromajdan Warszawa", „Polska za wolną Ukrainą" (Poland for Free Ukraine) or "Komitet Obywatelski Solidarności z Ukrainą" (Civic Committee of the Solidarity with Ukraine) fanpages. The pages were intended as tools integrating the society, providing information, including, what is noteworthy, the information absent from traditional media, although consistent with them. They were also to provide support for the above-described demonstrations, petitions and collections. The supporters of separatists grouped themselves on an almost as popular pages of "Narodowe Republiki Doniecka i Ługańska" (Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic), "Polacy za Noworosją" (Poles for Novorossiya), "Polacy za rosyjskim Donbasem" (Poles for Russian Donbass), if the number of "likes" is used as an indicator. When compared with public demonstrations, a lower disproportion between the supporters of Maidan and the supporters of separatists is visible. This results from the disparate character of Internet space, when compared from the long-established forms of civic participation, as well as from the fact that the Internet presents interesting information representing the point of view of supporters of Ukrainian separation, absent in the mainstream media. Certainly, the Internet activity often remains barren (the so-called slacktivism) by limiting itself to web-related activities instead of actions with substantive, real or practical effects. However, undoubtedly the internet civic involvement is becoming a more and more relevant indicator of subjectivity.

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[32] *Ukraine: Abuses and war crimes by the Aidar Volunteer Battalion in the north Luhansk region*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://amnesty.org.pl/uploads/media/ Briefing_Ajdar.pdf.

[33] *Nie zostawiajmy Ukrainy samej!,* [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://www.petycje.pl/petycja/10263/nie_zostawiajmy_ukrainy_samej!.html.

[34] *List solidarności polskich biskupów z Ukrainą*, [online]. [available: 15.09.14]. Available on the Internet: http://pl.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/03/20/list_solidarno%C5%9Bci_polskich_biskup %C 3%B3w_z_ukrain%C4%85/pol-783244; *Biskupi solidarni z Ukrainą*, http://www.rp.pl/ artykul/1081429.html.

Making a catalogue of actions undertaking by the Polish society, the following can be listed briefly too:

–   increase of the number of meetings, debates and conferences dedicated to the developments in Ukraine, which illustrates the reflectivity of the Polish civic society, its strive towards reducing uncertainty by increasing the knowledge of events;

–   actions of the Polish artists (including Vavamuffin, Muniek Staszczyk, Maciej Maleńczuk, Krzysztof "Grabarz" Grabowski) who recorded a message of support of the Ukraine in the form of a song entitled "Brat za Brata" (Brother for a Brother) performed by System, Enej and Maleo Reggae Rockers; recorded a compilation PL2UA, organized a concert entitled "Wrocławscy artyści – Ukrainie", (Wroclaw Artists for Ukraine) and also an event – Lubelski Euromajdan Kulturalny (Lublin Cultural Euromaidan);

–   boycotts of Russian products and companies; promotion of the consumptions of Polish products under Russian embargo (apples, cider).

I certainly have not managed to describe the activity of the Polish society relative to the Ukrainian crisis in its entirety. What is more, in response to the new developments we shall witness new forms of activity. Nonetheless, the list I have given allow drawing some general conclusions. Polish civic activity can be assessed as relatively low. We are not dealing here with peaceful and joyful change of government but with a serious crisis and a civil war. Hence the character of demonstrations: not a celebratory one, not one which would attract a wider participation. This low activity is also the derivative of the notion that neither side of the conflict has a lot of support. This notion is held by a high number of Poles. It would be very difficult to demonstrate a neutral attitude towards a cause (or insufficient knowledge on a given matter). The explanation could be further found in a strong support of the Polish government policy – there was no need to protest.

A creation of sociological portrait of the persons involved in civic activity due to the Ukrainian crisis would require detailed studies. What can be drawn basing on information available is the following characteristics. Decisive majority supports the pro-Maidan side (and this majority is smaller, if the activity in virtual space is taken into account). The activity is rather deliberate, with formal organizations playing a significant role. These include Polish branches of international institutions and the leaders representing the sphere of culture, academy, media, politics and religion. The activity is focused in large cities (and Warsaw, in particular). Therefore, neither the relative closeness to Ukraine, nor the direct, neighbourly relationships seem to be the decisive factor. Rather the magnitude of Ukrainian majority in a given area, the number of civil-minded Poles and the attractiveness of the area where a demonstration is to take place (Ukrainian or Russian embassy or consulate) are crucial here. The actions are mostly symbolic and translate into the real, tangible improvement of the fate of the Ukrainian people in the area affected by the conflict only to a minor degree. A pessimistic interpretation would point to inertia, ignorance and opportunism of the Poles, while a pessimistic would stress their realism, pragmatism and cautious attitude.

5. GNORANCE AND UNCERTAINITY. FOR A RATIONAL POLICY

The Ukrainian crisis is surely a threat to Poland. Simultaneously, the nature of this threat is mostly potential – it may never come to be. Through their decisions, Polish authorities have to "organize" the space of ignorance and uncertainty in such a manner, so as not to allow the national security to be lowered. In their calculations they also have to take into account not only the international situation, but also the domestic circumstances in order to maintain the public support for their actions. Therefore is seems poignant to pose the following question: is the civic society an element facilitating rational politics?

Organisation of the space of ignorance can be conducted in three manners. Firstly, the most important task facing the bodies responsible for the security of Poland (i.e. politicians, dispositional groups and experts), is increasing the awareness and knowledge about the Ukrainian crisis. The greater the knowledge, the better organised it is, the simpler its use and the more useful it becomes. Typical monitoring of the conflict, an action common for many institutions, can serve as an example here. After all, this knowledge is demanded by the Polish society, substantially interested in the conflict. Secondly, the ignorance should be diminished. However, this is not synonymous with increasing the knowledge and the awareness. It can include drawing knowledge from alternative sources (being open to "unofficial knowledge", such as witness statements, treated as a useful hypothesis until reliable knowledge is gained), reflecting on the ignorance (knowing what one does know – the area of ignorance is defined), preparing for all the possible effects of ignorance (by assuming the worse scenario) and decreasing the value of ignorance (e.g. by selecting the solutions in spite of the knowledge possessed, but which result from the rules of being directed by the interest or moral justice). The third task would be to decrease the knowledge and increase the ignorance of other countries (e.g. disinformation), so as to make our own knowledge a precious resource.

Decisions in uncertain conditions mean the necessity of undertaking actions, the effects of which may be difficult to predict, also if their probability is unknown. This results not only from ignorance, but from the impossibility of gaining knowledge as well. After all, the knowledge is non-existent and it cannot be gained. One of the methods reducing the uncertainty is being prepared for all the possible variants of a situation. The other methods of responding to uncertainty may include a policy in line with the actions of our allies ("to toe the line" but also "not being left behind"), so that the profits and losses originating in uncertainty be spread equally. Finally, when the situation is precarious the policy should be not to define the actions clearly. It is my opinion that, in particular, clearly supporting one side of the conflict is unadvisable. What should be done, is observe how the situation develops (which would decrease the uncertainty), whereas the demands to act, as voiced by the public, are better to be satisfied by the activity of international organizations or NGOs. The unclear situation, a grey area between war and peace, calls for unclear solutions, ones which are vague and not defined in the binary duality of zeroes and ones.

In the times when the security policy is bound by ignorance and uncertainty, a question of whether the Polish society is an element which aids the rational decision-making process could be posed. I believe that the answer to the question is fairly positive. On the basis of the studies described above, the Polish politics in relation to the Ukrainian crisis is strongly supported by the public. What is more, the civic activism is rather modest and, moreover, mainly symbolic. It is certain that the public does not constrain the Polish policy, neither does it destabilize the situation, largely due to the fact that the number of separatist supporters is relatively small.

The needs of the society, as revealed by the study of the perception of Ukrainian crisis (such as knowledge, security and moderate support for Maidan) are rather easy to satisfy. Yet, it is easy to imagine that should the Policy relative to Ukraine change drastically (for example should Poland support Russia – now only a hypothetical situation), or should the conflict itself change character (should the military actions escalate, or should other countries be involved), a divergence between the rationality of the authorities and the rationality of the public will be made manifest. One of the tasks of security policy is to prevent such internal conflict from developing.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper is an attempt of analysing the situation of the Polish society in the face of Ukrainian crisis, describing the perception of threat, subjective actions and the possible political decisions in the context of ignorance and uncertainty. As was outlined in the Introduction, my paper has been written in parallel with the events it described. This carries with itself some obvious limitations but also a chance to capture certain processes almost immediately. In face of a universal conviction that the security of Poland is under peril, it is worth conducting such studies as soon as possible and thereby contribute to alleviation of the anxiety and fear among the public. This is particularly so, if the sense of threat is much greater in Poland than it is in the neighbouring countries, and the Polish-Ukrainian (as well as the Polish-Russian) experience is full of tragedy and unresolved issues.

The deliberations included in the paper serve as a useful starting point for further studies developed in the area of both the theoretical and methodological advancements of the safety sociology sub discipline (in which, in my opinion, this text can be classified) and new events connected with the dynamics of the Ukrainian conflicts. These include both the expected ones and those belonging to the sphere of "unreflexive ignorance" which are utterly unexpected. Over time, the perspective assumed in the paper should be revised too, the description of the events should be made current and the conclusions verified. Nonetheless, it is my conviction that I managed to record the Polish perception of the Ukrainian crisis as per September, 2014.

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