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International response to Russian aggression against Ukraine

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Introduction

Due to hard interdependency between nation-states in the contemporary world, conflict in one country can change all global alignment of forces. Global agreement was reached and international laws were signed to control the world's stability. Unfortunately, sometimes this system does not work properly, which brings chaotic tendencies to some parts of the world.

The current situation in Ukraine is a good opportunity to study fails of the modern global governance. Having signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances (*Budapest...*, 1994), Russia broke it¹ when they annexed Crimea in March 2014. By sending troops into the sovereign territory of Ukraine, Russia has violated the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Final..., 1975). There was a worldwide response to this but a lot of scholars agree that democratic countries were not fast and consistent enough in trying to make Russia follow the responsibilities taken before. And from the Russian official point of view, it is the West that threatens the security in Eastern Europe (Isachenkov, 2015).

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¹ Russia "broke it" according to Ukrainian side. From the Russian point of view, Crimean referendum followed the right of every nation for self-determination.

The matter is very controversial and the truth is very difficult to be found. I will try to present new elaborations as to international response into the latest conflict in Ukraine.

Ukrainian conflict and international response to it

Although the latest conflict in Ukraine is officially recognized as a war in one concrete country, international actors were crucial here. It can be stated that Russia from one side and the European Union (EU) with the USA from the other played a huge role in this resistance. Many scientists and politicians consider the ongoing war as a conflict between Western and Eastern civilizations, as do Donbass separatists. Timothy Snyder, a professor at Yale University specializing in Central and Eastern Europe, believes that modern Russian foreign policy is not directed against Ukraine alone but against the unity and stability of the EU and the Western culture as a whole (Snyder, 2014).

To understand the situation it is important to see that Russian actions in Ukraine are coming from its old policy of fighting for influence in this part of the world. As for most countries of the world, borders of Ukraine were changeable during the history. In Kievan Rus' times, modern Ukrainian and Russian territories were gathered in one state with a center in Kyiv. During some periods in the history Ukrainian lands were parts of the Russian Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Crimean peninsula was colonized by Ancient Greeks; as a Crimean Khanate it was a part of the Osman Empire for a long time (still Crimean Tatars are its indigenous people); later the peninsula was conquered by the Russian Empire and became a part of Ukraine in the Soviet times. Contradictory opinions into Ukrainian history of foreign scholars were often used and still are used to justify aggression against the country. However, everywhere in the world we can find different interpretations of history and there are many nationalities fighting for their independence nowadays, that is why we should distinguish the situation, when the sovereignty desire and searching for historical justice cross the border of international laws.²

From the Russian side its actions are justified by the NATO threat to the country. According to the official information, Vladimir Putin develops the army as a defense from NATO coming closer to Russian borders (Priblezhenie..., 2015). Economy is another aspect. During Soviet times the cooperation between Russian and Ukrainian enterprises was tremendous. Even now the rapid cessation of business relations could be tragic for both Ukraine and Russia. The bilateral Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was, in Putin's view, jeopardizing Russia's Eurasian Economic Union,

² Here I mean, when Crimea wants to become a part of Russia, there has to be a real referendum in accordance with the international rules in this respect, but not a fake one with 2 weeks for its preparation and Russian militants controlling the process.

in which Ukraine was expected to be one of the main economic partners. Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, called the EU–Ukraine Association Agreement “the apple of discord” in EU–Russia relations (Lavrov, 2014). So, the Ukrainian desire to join the EU and possibly NATO found such a big concern in Russian federation. Nevertheless, this does not justify military aggression against a sovereign country.

According to some supporters of realism theory, such as John Mearsheimer, Russian actions in Ukraine should have come as no surprise. The West had been moving into Russia’s backyard and threatening its core strategic interests. Western politicians tend to believe that the logic of realism is not relevant in the 21st century and that Europe can be preserved whole and free on the basis of liberal principles: the rule of law, economic interdependence and democracy. But the Ukrainian crisis shows that Realpolitik remains important even nowadays (Mearsheimer, 2014).

Shortly Russian intervention in Ukraine’s affairs could be described as follows. When Ukraine had chosen the European way of development, Russia, understanding the possibility of losing Ukraine from its former sphere of influence,³ started economic and political pressure on the country. In summer 2013 economic pressure turned into trade war, which was against the WTO principles. After Russian economic and political pressure, finally, on 21 November 2013, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine issued a decree to suspend the preparations for the signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union (*Obscure...*, 2014). This led to the revolution in Ukraine and bloody attempts to strangle it. After the victory of Euro revolution and escape of the former president of Ukraine, Russia annexed Crimean peninsula by making a fake referendum. The world’s response did not go further than expressing high concern about breaking the Agreement of integrity of Ukraine’s territory signed by Russia. After that, Russian aggression turned into the war in Eastern Ukraine. The world answered with sanctions. But it is important to analyze to what extent the international response was enough and effective.

To make it clear, the main source which I take into account when talking about the international rules is United Nation Charter. The main document Ukraine bases on when proclaiming Russia to be an aggressor is Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances signed by Ukraine, Russia, USA and Great Britain in 1994.⁴ Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, a Polish economist, politician and a member of the European Parliament, in his article “Euromaidan: time to draw conclusions” gives a very precise description how Russia

³ At that time a lot of Russian experts were stressing that losing Ukraine will be a personal defeat of the president Vladimir Putin.

⁴ Official Ukraine’s statement can be found here: Рада визнала факт військової агресії Росії проти України, UNIAN, <http://www.unian.ua/politics/1069534-rada-viznala-fakt-viyskovoji-agresiji-rosiji-proti-ukrajini.html> (24.04.2015).

was breaking concrete articles of Budapest Memorandum, bilateral agreements with Ukraine, UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. From the other side, Russia uses United Nation Charter and the right of peoples to self-determination justifying its actions.⁵

Dealing with the war in Ukraine, UN organized a couple of meetings where the Ukrainian question was crucial. UN Security Council confirmed that Russia is responsible for the violence in the Eastern Ukraine (*UN Security...*, 2014). Also United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity (*UN General...*, 2014). These did not stop Russia in any way.

A lot of foreign politicians and international organizations expressed their high concern about Russian violation of international rule, they confirmed their support to Ukraine's territorial integrity (International..., 2015). The European Union was trying its soft power policy and negotiated with Russia. The Minsk negotiations did bring some kind of peace into the Eastern Ukraine. The European Parliament in its resolution has confirmed its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity. In its Council Conclusions, the EU has acknowledged the European future of Ukraine, as have the European Parliament and the European Peoples Party (EPP) in their resolutions. The EU has made a significant financial commitment to Ukraine, aimed at facilitating and supporting the process of implementation of the Association Agreement, as well as improving Ukraine's critical economic situation.

Except financial support, the most significant world's response to Russian violation of international agreements was in form of sanctions. Such measures impacted Russia largely. But from another side, the fall in oil prices strengthen the negative effect on the country.⁶ Because of sanctions world financial markets are mostly closed for Russian businesses. Russia's finance minister estimates that the country's losses from spring 2014 till spring 2015 surpassed 140 billion USD. Russia's strategic currency reserves will probably be exhausted by the end of 2015. Moreover, the ruble lost close to 50% of its value during the beginning of 2015. But, although the sanctions clearly are starting to pressure the economy, it will be some time before a bigger amount of Russian population actually feels their impact (Inozemtsev, 2015).

⁵ Official Russian statement can be found here: Zayavlenie MID Rossii v svyazi s obvineniyami v narushenii Rossiey obyazatelstv po Budapesht skomu memorandumu ot 5 dekabrya 1994 goda, Министерство иностранных дел Российской Федерации. Retrieved from: http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp_4.nsf/8a15b43ae2d7c96443256999005bcbb8/e2c2fecc50fbd22944257cad0000474d!OpenDocument (24.04.2014).

⁶ Russia loses about 2 billion USD in revenues for every dollar fall in the oil price, and the World Bank has warned that Russia's economy would shrink by at least 0.7% in 2015 if oil prices do not recover.

Concluding the effects of the introduced sanctions, it should be stated that still inflation and falling ruble did not prevent Russia from continuing the war in Ukraine and giving back the Crimean peninsula. There is a mind that Western sanctions even helped Putin to gain more support from the population, while people united in fight with the foreign “aggressor”. Of course, there should be some time passed until sanctions can work properly and meet the political aims they were implemented for. Normally in a few years the effect is more visible. But when the war is going on, thousands of people are being killed and the Ukrainian economy is collapsing, destroying the life of citizens even not involved in the war directly, there is no time to wait till some measures work later. There should be some other opportunities to stop the conflict faster.

Proposals to stop Russian aggression

From one point of view, some new mechanisms should be invented to control the international peace more effectively. There are symptoms of a breakdown in global governance. Basically, there is only one international organ of hard power: the UN Security Council. If the five permanent members come to an agreement, they can impose their will on any country. But there are many sovereign states with armies and there are failed states that are unable to protect their monopoly over the use of lethal force or hard power. Being a member of the UN Security Council, Russia hampers the international attempts to stop the war in Ukraine. The president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, does not want to cooperate under the liberal democratic standards and follow global rules. He wants to install his world order (“Russian world”) and redraw the world map.⁷

Except measures implemented by the world to stop the war in Ukraine, there were a lot of other proposals that were rejected during the decision making process. For example, there was a strong discussion about switching Russia off from SWIFT system, which could really change the situation significantly, but also would be more harmful for European states than implemented sanctions (SWIFT..., 2015).

George Soros, a well-known investor and social activist, writes a lot about Ukraine in his latest articles. As a protective measure for the European Union and NATO, he proposes IMF to give Ukraine at least 20 billion USD. Some of the money would go for repairing of the coal mines in the Eastern Ukraine, another amount – for purchasing of additional gas for the country, another – replenish the currency reserves of the central bank, etc. (Soros, 2014). The businessman thinks that the successful development of the Ukrainian economy will be the best sign for Russia and separatists on the East to show that democracy can work properly. He argues that Russian troubles and Ukrainian

⁷ It was clearly stated by Vladimir Putin in his interviews.

economic success can persuade Vladimir Putin to accept his defeat in destabilizing the situation in Ukraine. The investor considers Europe to be indirectly under military attack from Russia (Soros, 2015). He adds that European leaders and citizens do not understand this and are not eager to give their money to fight Russian aggression. However, I would agree to some extent with Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, who states that in contrast to the USA or Russia, the EU does not possess military forces and it is composed of 28 member states, all with their own independent foreign policies, national interests and complex interdependencies with the Russian Federation. All of these factors required the EU to apply different instruments of pressure.

In order to remunerate the Ukrainians for their strong devotion to European values and demonstrate solidarity with the European people of Ukraine, the EU should accelerate the visa dialogue with the country. The opening of a dialogue aimed at introducing a visa free regime, which was suggested in the recent resolutions of both the European Parliament and the EPP.

From another side, Europe and the US should make it clear to Russia that by supporting the separatists it shuts itself out from future influence in Ukraine. Full territorial integrity of Ukraine free of all external military interference must be claimed as a starting point, not an outcome of the negotiations. Russian offensive must be contained with financial (instant economic support), diplomatic (political support to Ukrainian government) and strategic (reformulation of Ukraine's prospects vis-à-vis the EU) means.

Ukraine's internal divisions complicate the matter greatly, but the crisis offers the European Union and NATO a huge opportunity to rethink their reluctant stance towards its membership. The main thesis of the European Neighbourhood Policy, saying that post-Soviet countries between the EU and Russia can integrate into Europe without the prospect of future membership, caused serious problems. Time has come to support the pro-European forces in the neighborhood by reconsidering this statement (Karasek, 2014).

There is a proposal of regional cooperation for Ukraine. A regional integration scenario might prove viable for non-NATO members in the Black Sea region, such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. In the Black Sea both regional NATO (particularly Turkey) and non-NATO states could provide technical and material assistance to these Black Sea states. Such an organization might deal with naval cooperation in the Black Sea and beyond. Indeed, Ukraine actually took steps in this direction. Just as the Baltic States were offered to participate in NATO peacekeeping missions without a guarantee of NATO membership, Ukraine took part in NATO's "Ocean Shield" naval operations to fight piracy in the eastern coast of Africa (Poast, Urpelainen, 2015).

Vladislav Inozemcev, a well-known Russian economist and political activist, also thinks that the West should support Ukraine more. He states that democratic Western countries should deny any Russian claim to a right to interfere in the affairs of the EU and NATO. Ukraine cannot afford itself losing Crimea and Donbas. A “new Marshall plan” should be implemented, which can transform Ukraine into a free, prosperous country that can join the EU and NATO, if it so desires. Even more important, the West should state it clear that it extends its definition of Europe not just to Russia’s borders, but across them. Russia should be acknowledged as an integral part of Europe and a country that might eventually join the EU. The main policy for the coming decades should be established on a simple idea: Though Russia can never be allowed to influence Europe from the outside, it will be welcome to gain a place of influence from within, if it accepts European democratic rules (Inozemtsev, 2015).

From another way of thinking, Adam Michnik, a political activist, dissident, and editor-in-chief of Poland’s largest newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* believes Russia’s only hope lies in the establishment of democracy in Ukraine. That is why the West must help Ukraine to build such a democracy (Michnik, 2015).

The ultimate goal is not to “defeat” Russia but to defend the current international system against a serious violation. The West should recall NATO’s double-track decision from 1979 which combined explicit resolve to counter the Soviet moves with an offer to negotiate the critical issues. There is no a priori reason why Russia’s economic, cultural and even political influence should be completely excluded from Ukraine, or the rest of its near abroad. However, it must conform to the established European and international standards. In other words, everything should be negotiable, but never under duress.

Conclusion

Drawing the conclusion, I would like to state that international relations are complicated and even when “the rules of the game” are stated precisely, not all countries want to obey them. The global democratic community is not always able to stop unjust wars in time, which cause great destruction to nations which appeared to be involved in them. Scientists offer new decisions how the global governance should be transformed and in what ways to finish conflicts, but their propositions mostly are not taken into account by policy makers. The article showed the latest Russian aggression against Ukraine and the world’s response to it. Of course, there were some effects from Western diplomacy and sanctions in stopping Russia. But still the war could have been ended faster if more restrictive and fast measures were implemented. I would agree with George Soros telling that the West is under indirect attack from Russia, that is why by helping Ukraine it will help itself. Some of the decisions could be bigger financial and expert

support for Ukraine, some ways of regional integration for countries of the Black Sea, new kinds of cooperation under the European Neighbourhood Policy, stronger positions of the EU and the USA in negotiations with Russia. I would also suggest Western democracies to be more consistent and decisive in protecting democratic standards and peace beyond their borders.

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Abstract

The modern world has created a certain system of rules, which was accepted officially by all states. However, violations of human rights and democratic standards happen in various parts of the globe. Some countries attack others breaking signed agreements of friendship. In such a situation the world is expected to stop the aggressor, which does not always happen. This article shows an analysis of the latest conflict in Ukraine and the world's response to it. Global community decided not to intervene militarily but to stop Russian aggression by trying to leave it without any sources to continue the war. The effectiveness of this policy and other possibilities to stop the conflict will be studied in the article. From the author's point of view, the democratic countries of the world were not fast and consistent enough trying to make Russia stop its unannounced war against Ukraine. New scientific elaborations will be used in the article to show unused proposals to solve the situation more successfully.

Międzynarodowa odpowiedź na rosyjską agresję przeciw Ukrainie

Współczesny świat stworzył system reguł, który został oficjalnie zaakceptowany przez wszystkie państwa. Niestety, naruszanie praw człowieka i demokratycznych standardów nieustannie zdarzają się w różnych częściach świata. Niektóre państwa atakują inne, łamiąc podpisane umowy o przyjaźni. W takiej sytuacji oczekuje się, że świat powstrzyma agresora. Nie zawsze jednak tak się dzieje. Ten artykuł ukazuje analizę ostatniego konfliktu na Ukrainie oraz międzynarodową odpowiedź na niego. Międzynarodowa społeczność zdecydowała nie interweniować militarnie, lecz wstrzymać rosyjską agresję próbując zostawić Rosję bez źródeł do kontynuacji wojny. Efektywność tej polityki oraz inne możliwości rozwiązania konfliktu będą pokazane w artykule. Z punktu widzenia autora, demokratyczne państwa świata nie były dość szybkie i efektywne, próbując zmusić Rosję do zakończenia swojej nieogłoszonej wojny przeciw Ukrainie. W niniejszym artykule zostaną wykorzystane nowe naukowe opracowania, aby ukazać propozycje możliwych rozwiązań tej sytuacji w sposób bardziej efektywny.