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Independence

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THE PRICE AND VALUE OF SOVEREIGNTY IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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Every state has its own strengths and weaknesses. In theory, each state considers these when designing its national and foreign policy, free from external influence and thus manifesting its independence or sovereignty. Nevertheless, each state is also a member of the international community, so in terms of policy-making it has to consider current world development trends, one of which is globalization. Globalization is accompanied by state interdependence, which unavoidably leads to the erosion of sovereignty. This is particularly evident in large interstate entities such as the European Union. This article presents research into the current challenges and consequences of globalization, transformation and the meaning of political independence / state sovereignty today, and current approaches to safeguarding state sovereignty in the EU.

Introduction

Globalization in its broadest sense can be defined as a deepening worldwide interconnectedness and interdependence. It is a progressive process of convergence, by which connections and exchanges among different countries of different regions all over the world are strengthened. This process is all-pervasive, influencing all the areas of contemporary life – economic, financial, cultural, political, technological, environmental, and so on.

As a complex and dynamic phenomenon, globalization encompasses a great variety of tendencies and trends. On the one hand, there is a trend towards homogeneity, synchronization, integration, unity, and versatility. Under the current world order, the unification of legal frameworks across the globe can be observed and the reinforcement of integration processes in all possible manifestations, as well as the establishment of transcontinental alliances. These processes have been happening because of the difficulties for a state to develop in an isolationist way. At this point in history, isolated states tend to stagnate. Hence, globalization is necessary for progressive development and the functioning of a state in the international arena.

International cooperation is becoming more institutionalized. A fundamental premise of the international legal system is the primacy of international law over national. Under the conditions of globalization and expanding international cooperation, states are making more and more treaties on a variety of issues and, thus, find themselves bound by a growing number and scope of international commitments. The entire system of international law is becoming more complicated and intricate, supplemented by ever-new conventions, agreements, pacts and other binding documents.

Moreover, the institutionalization results in an increasing number of different sorts of international organizations and "clubs." Such platforms discuss key international issues and make important decisions. The scale of global problems, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), international terrorism, drug trafficking, cybercrime, famine, shortage of fresh water, pandemics, environmental disasters, and much more, turns out to be incomparable with the capabilities of even large, highly developed states to solve them. Obviously, overcoming these challenges is possible only through shared endeavour, that is, by means of supranational regulation.

International organizations are gradually gaining a broader scope of real power and the ability to impose their decisions on sovereign states, often regarding issues not only of foreign but also of domestic policy. Such organizations normally have a core, consisting of the richest, most developed countries, and it is their position that is most significant in the decision-making process. By extension, some states are facing a stronger impact from external factors regarding national policy-making.

As a result, unwillingness to suffer the negative effects and consequences of globalization, and to become dependent on the standpoint of alliances has led to the spread of new alternative trends: localization, heterogeneity, differentiation, diversity, and particularism. Such tendencies are emerging primarily as an attempt to counteract the damaging effects of globalization on national sovereignty.

The Transformation of Classical "Sovereignty"

The spread of globalization is transforming the traditional notion of sovereignty as the external independence and internal supremacy of the state. Two legal features that characterize sovereignty remain unchanged and indisputable – territorial supremacy and the independence of the state in the international arena. They are inextricably interlinked and mutually predetermine each other. Territorial supremacy reflects the real fact that the state is sovereign within its territory, since there is no higher authority over the state.

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The concept of "sovereignty" in modern legal terminology has such characteristics as the existence of its own institutions of government, the *supreme power* to carry out its will independently, the exercise of power with no external influence or pressure, the ability of the state to participate equally and fully in international organizations, unions, pacts, treaties, and so on. However, these classical features are already outdated. Globalization has led to the emergence of a single economic and political space, which, in turn, affects the foundations of the nation state.

The question of the integrity and firmness of national sovereignty has always been acute for such a specific association as the European Union.

Sovereign vs Supranational in the EU

In recent years, both at the level of the European Commission and of individual European states, active discussions have been underway about the status and prospects of various aspects of European and national security with which the issues of European identity and "Europeanism" are closely intertwined.

There are two opposite tendencies within the EU. On the one hand, after the adoption of a series of treaties establishing the legal and political foundations of the EU over the past 25 years, centripetal tendencies within the Union have intensified, noticeable especially in the strengthening of pan-European political institutions and the transfer of more and more powers to them from member states.

Today, almost all the leading pro-European parties – the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES), The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE), and the European Green Party (EGP) – which today have an absolute majority in the European Parliament (70% of seats), to a greater or lesser extent support the idea of strengthening the European sovereignty put forward by French President Emmanuel Macron some time ago. In their latest documents, these parties focus on underpinning the powers of the leading pan-European political institutions, primarily the European Parliament, elected by all EU citizens. They also advocate for reinforcing truly European values and a common European identity.

On the other hand, clear Eurosceptic tendencies have emerged – the quintessence of which was Brexit –, together with the growth of authoritarianism and anti-immigration attitudes in some countries, for which national, rather than European, sovereignty is an unambiguous priority today.

According to President Macron, securing the sovereignty of a united Europe is a response to the challenges the EU faces today: an intensification of authoritarian tendencies in some EU countries, especially Hungary and Poland, a strengthening of the positions of Eurosceptics in Germany, Italy, Poland, Finland, and so on, Brexit, Russian animosity, and the war in Syria.[1]

In France, over the past few decades, there has been constant heated debate between "sovereignists," the supporters of the preservation of sovereignty, and "Europeanists," the adherents of a "united Europe." Today, the question of the content of French sovereignty has once again become one of the key issues in the country's political battles. This is where Macron's radical views collide with the views of the centre-right republicans and the National Rally. Still, despite the insistent appeals of the French leader to establish a European army as a complement to NATO, France is retaining and even strengthening its forces for autonomous action in defence and security. Such a task is set in the Defence and National Security Strategic Review published in October 2017.[2]

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In Italy, the centrist parties that have traditionally ruled the country for many decades ceded power to the populists in 2018 – to the Eurosceptical Liga and the Five

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1 Speech by Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic of France at the European Parliament, 17 April 2018, [https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2018/04/17/speech-by-emmanuel-macron-president-of-the-republic-at-european-parliament access: 09 April 2021].

2 Defence and National Security Strategic Review 2017 [https://www.defense.gouv.fr/layout/set/popup/content/download/520198/8733095/version/2/file/DEFENCE+AND+NATIONAL+SECURITY+STRATEGIC+REVIEW+2017.pdf access 10 April 2021].

Star Movement, which are considered to be "sovranists," that is, protectors of national sovereignty. Italian "sovranism" prioritizes current problems in the country's economic and political development, deepening economic inequality, and the maintenance of national sovereignty in the face of international migration. In short, priority is given to: the economic sovereignty of EU states, with the main requirement being to restore controls over those processes that have long gone beyond the national state; control over borders; and the preservation of national identity in the face of a large influx of migrants. Most of Italy's constituents do not perceive the EU as a guarantor of economic development and prosperity that ensures social peace and security for the country's citizens. Giuseppe Conte's government insisted on a more sovereign domestic and foreign policy, while the current government of Mario Draghi is returning to a more pro-European position.

Visegrád Four: Sovereign National Over Common European

The protection of national sovereignty has a special dimension in the countries of Central Europe – Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia (Visegrád Four). They gave up a significant part of it in joining the European Union and NATO. Since then, the leaders of these countries have been saying that Brussels' policy does not concur with the views of their citizens regarding their role in the development of Europe. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was the first to declare his disagreement with prioritising the common European

over the sovereign national. Having won parliamentary elections in 2010, he moved towards the restoration of Hungarian national sovereignty within the European Union and launched a number of very radical reforms that were criticized by the European community.

Some political analysts say that Orbán and the *Fidesz* party have built a "mafia state," where all powers belong to a group associated with the party and personally with Orbán.[3] In 2019, Freedom House downgraded its assessment of the level of democracy in Hungary, defining the country as only "partially free."[4] Over the past decade, *Fidesz* has used its parliamentary majority to impose restrictions and control over the opposition, the media, religious groups, academia, NGOs, the courts, asylum seekers, and the private sector, the Freedom House report says. Dutch MP Judith Sargentini presented a draft report in 2018, in which she accused Hungary of violating core European values[5]. Sargentini expressed concern about the legislative process in Hungary and drew attention to such issues as the independence of the judicial system, corruption, freedom of speech, data confidentiality, freedom of religion, the minorities (Jews and the Romani), and the rights of migrants and refugees.

Migrants and refugees became an acute irritant in Hungary's relations with the European Commission after the migration crisis that broke out in the EU in 2015 led to a "crisis of solidarity." Refugees were transiting through Hungarian territory to Germany. For many, Orbán's proposal to

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3   B. Magyar, *Postcommunist Mafia State: the Case of Hungary*, Central European University Press: Budapest 2016: pp. 40-41.

4   Freedom in the World 2019 Scores [https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/scores access: 20 April 2021].

5   Draft Report on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20180411RES01553/20180411RES01553.pdf access: 26 April 2021].

build an 'iron curtain' – literally a 4-meter high and 175-km long fence along the Hungarian-Serbian border to prevent refugees from crossing illegally – created a sensation.

Orbán's radical actions can be explained by two motives. First was political competition: the 2014 elections demonstrated the growing popularity of the right-wing radical *Jobbik* party as an alternative to *Fidesz*. A tough migration policy allowed the ruling coalition to return to unquestioning electoral leadership. Orbán used the crisis to mobilize the public and shift the focus away from domestic issues to an external enemy – refugees. Secondly, Orbán himself was brought up in the patriarchal traditions of the Hungarian rural bourgeoisie as a Calvinist and adheres to conservative – sometimes radically so – views, which is reflected in his policies, despite his liberal political start in 1990s.

In defending their state sovereignty, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia spoke with one voice against attempts in Brussels to impose quotas to accommodate refugees from Africa and the Middle East on their territory. At the Visegrád Group summit held in Bratislava on 19 June 2015, the leaders claimed to have developed a more systematic and geographically comprehensive approach to migration.[6] Later, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki claimed that the European Commission's decisions on refugee policy "affect sovereignty."[7]

In December 2015, Slovakia filed a lawsuit against the EU Council in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg because of its disagreement with the mandatory redistribution scheme. Eurosceptic attitudes are quite widespread in Slovakia: the then-ruling left-wing populist political party, Direction–Social Democracy, which former PM Robert Fico belongs to, followed a "soft nationalism" ideology and opposed EU migration policy and the "islamization" of Europe, directly associating the influx of refugees with an increase of the level of terrorist threat on the continent. Euroscepticism persists to this day, as evidenced by the victory in the 2020 elections of the centre-right, conservative, populist party "Ordinary People and Independent Personalities," to which the current Prime Minister, Eduard Heger, belongs.

Islam: A Bone of Contention

In recent years, Western European countries have been subject to the mass migration of Muslims from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. A leap in the number of immigrants from Arab countries took place in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Most migrants fail to assimilate or to "melt" in the "ethnic pot," instead setting up zones of traditional clan society, alien to the individualistic and democratic West.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who advocated for a multicultural policy, admitted that "multiculturalism leads to parallel societies and therefore remains a 'life lie' or a sham."[8] The concept of multiculturalism was initially aimed at socializing members of all nations and nationalities in the European community based on the principles of respect and freedom of conscience. At the same time, this concept assumed minimal intervention by the state in the integration

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6   Joint Statement of the Heads of Government of the Visegrad Group Countries [https://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-statement-of-the access 30 April 2021].

7   Interview with Poland's Prime Minister [https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/interview-with-polish-prime-minister-mateusz-morawiecki-a-1194264.html access 01 May 2021].

8   Merkel zur Flüchtlingskrise (Merkel on Refugee Crisis) [https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/fluechtlinge-angela-merkel-spricht-von-historischer-bewaehrungsprobe-fuer-europa-a-1067685.html].

processes while maintaining the entire cultural autonomy of immigrants. In fact, the various diasporas were left on their own. As a result, multiculturalism has ended up fragmenting and disintegrating Western society, and generating new crises.

In the view of some Europeans, the large influx of Muslim migrants is destroying the established system of values historically formed on this territory. Supporters of anti-immigration movements believe that Muslim newcomers bring their own system of values: a different vision of the way of life and social relations, a system where there is no place for such concepts as "liberalism" and "tolerance," that is based on the religious and legal norms of Sharia. For example, Iranian philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr refers to "…the basic assumptions of modern Western civilization, nearly all of which are the very antithesis of the Islamic principles he cherishes."[9] The Muslim believer sees himself as part of the Ummah and remains faithful to its cultural centre, which disseminates religious and legal judgments on various issues of modern life, including events in world politics. These specificities sometimes make it challenging to adapt to life in a completely different historical and cultural region, resulting in a tendency towards self-segregation. Muslims form enclaves, communicate for the most part only with their fellow believers, in their own language, and feel little need to integrate into European society.

In this regard, the current leadership of Central European states – with Poland and Hungary more active than the rest – continues to insist that it is defending state sovereignty by protecting traditional Christian values as opposed to not only Islamic, but also the progressive values actively spreading today, including same-sex marriage or the equality of homosexual couples in receiving government subsidies along with traditional families. These leaders focus on the protection of "traditional family values" as well as the national language and culture. A good example is the Basic Law of Hungary, the new Constitution in force since 2012. It recognizes "the role of Christianity in preserving the Hungarian nation" and the state's responsibility for preserving the "intellectual and spiritual unity" of the nation, and defining a family as marriage between a man and a woman.[10]

The population of Central European countries is declining today, not only due to emigration, but also due to demographics, most often falling birth rates. In both Poland and Hungary, strengthening the family and recovering population numbers remain the focus of attention. In our opinion, the problems of ensuring state sovereignty that Central European countries are facing differ from those faced by other European states today. The task before CEE is self-preservation among the well-established nation states of Western Europe. To achieve that, they rely on the revival of national traditions.

Foreign Policy Dysfunction

The crisis of solidarity and the struggle to strengthen national sovereignty are also noticeable in foreign policy, where sovereignty and independence are most affected. The EU's second "pillar" is a common foreign and security policy (CFSP). All members of the European Union are expected to conduct their domestic and foreign policies in compliance with EU legislation. EU member-states diplomats and European External Action Service

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9   S.H. Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, ABC International Group, Inc. 2001: pp.27-28.

10 The Fundamental Law of Hungary [https://web.archive.org/web/20140221180827/http://www.kormany.hu/download/a/1c/11000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf access 20 May 2021].

representatives carry out the decision-making process after consulting with others.

One illustration of this tendency, when national interests take priority over common or supranational ones in foreign policy, is relations with Russia. The EU Global Strategy defines Russia, which violated international law by annexing Crimea and stirring a military conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, as a "strategic challenge" to the European security system.[11] As a result, the EU Council imposed economic sanctions against the country. However, EU countries were not all in agreement with this initiative. Some states, such as Poland and the Baltic countries, saw Russia as an existential threat, while Italy,

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for example – most actively through the conservative Eurosceptic Liga party – was more amenable. Eurosceptic countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, on the other hand, have sometimes favoured normalizing relations with Russia. The crisis of 2014 provoked by the Russian Federation, further intensified discussion within the EU on the need to also strengthen the national sovereignty of member states in order to reduce the influence of the CFSP on national foreign policy-making and implementation.

The divergence of national interests among EU member-states provides the most fundamental challenge to a common and successful EU foreign policy. Because an individual member can oppose collective action, EU foreign policy is often ineffective in the face of a crisis. The rise of Euroscepticism has gone hand-in-hand with greater obstinacy and willingness to block decisions. One of the more promising ideas for making the EU a stronger foreign policy actor is to change the foreign policy decision-making process. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has called for a definitive move to qualified majority voting in CFSP.[12] Unanimity is clearly an obstacle to a more effective EU foreign policy, but abolishing it implies a significant change in the perceived sovereign status of member-states and the Union as a whole. Qualified majority voting would prevent member-states from blocking foreign policy decisions such as by third countries encouraging member-states to break consensus, and would also shield EU foreign policy from the corrosive influence of Eurosceptic governments. This would not lead to a convergence in national interests, but what it would do is incentivize unity where the differences are small. In fact, national interests among the European states ought to be converging.

Frail Economic Sovereignty

The economic sovereignty of EU member states is quite weak. Among other things, it is limited because the members have transferred the right to make key economic decisions to the general governing bodies of the EU. The sovereignty of economically weak states is even more limited. One of the reasons for this is their financial dependence on subsidies received from EU funds, which

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11 The European Union's Global Strategy [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_global_strategy_2019.pdf access 08 May 2021].

12 STATE OF THE UNION 2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/soteu2018-speech_en_0.pdf access 01 June 2021].

often forces them to follow disadvantageous guidelines under threat that funding will be cut. The example of Greece is illustrative. Its public debt has grown significantly over the past 10 years, partly because of recommendations imposed by the European Union to limit the development of the country's traditional economic sectors, shipbuilding and agriculture. At the same time, within the European Union, the economic and political sovereignty of economic powerhouses like Germany, France and, previously, Great Britain is significantly higher than the sovereignty of Greece or Central European countries, since the stronger members have stronger voices to defend their interests at the European level. Sovereignty together with the proper economic policy ensure national economic security. The latter means the protection of vital economic interests for a state. In theory, the greater the sovereignty, the more possible it is to act for the benefit of the domestic economy.

When analysing the next rise of particularistic attitudes in the EU, the key question will be what is the determining factor in the growth of particularism.

The answer, it would seem, is obvious – the global financial and economic crisis and its negative impact. This crisis, called the Great Recession, has led to the emergence of new contradictions in all countries of united Europe – and the exacerbation of existing ones.

We saw a weakening of collective interests and cooperation at the European level, and the strengthening of nationalism within the European Union, threatening the erosion of the solidarity principle, which is one of the fundamentals of the European integration project. The increasingly visible North-South, rich-poor, core-periphery confrontation within the European Union represents serious risks for cohesion and unity in the European community and its

system of governance, as well as for the development of a European identity.

In economically developed regions, people are more frequently asking themselves whether they should support neighbouring, less prosperous areas at a cost to their own budgets. They want to control their finances and manage natural resources independently.

Economic sovereignty is the key reason for Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. British public opinion on the EU was highly volatile throughout the years the UK was a member. A negative trade balance with the EU, the unfair – from the British point of view – revenue sharing of the general European budget and blocking of Britain's trade relations with other countries around the world fuelled Euroscepticism. The meaning of Brexit lies in the fact that, freed from EU-imposed trade rules, the island state will now independently engage in protectionism in order, on the one hand, to slow down imports, and on the other, to increase exports. In other words, Brexit was motivated mostly by economic considerations, with the simultaneous promotion of national interests and the preservation of foreign policy priorities.

Overcoming Conflicts of Sovereignty

The coronavirus pandemic has seriously exacerbated existing trends. Early on, EU member states realized that, despite their economic strength, they could not provide sufficient medical protection against the virus. In February 2020, the Italian government approached the Emergency Response Coordination Centre for assistance and was refused. Rather than working together to find solutions, key EU countries – France and Germany – banned or restricted the export of medical equipment to other EU countries. This led to increased mistrust among the EU members. And so, this external challenge, which was supposed to unite

Europe, on the contrary, further split it. The pandemic stirred even more nationalism and Euroscepticism, and fostered the spread of particularistic attitudes.

The crises that the EU has to deal with show that conflicts of sovereignty are taking place at various levels, in different domestic situations, and pertaining to different policy areas. These are pushing European states apart, posing the risk of fragmentation over the next two decades. The task for the EU is to find the right path to reform certain policy areas, to improve supranational institutions, and to minimize bureaucracy in the decision-making process to make the Union respond more promptly, supposedly by changing the voting rules. "Old Europe" must show greater communication skills when making decisions and remember that any decision should be consensus-based with absolutely all the members of the European Community.

The classic concept of sovereignty is shifting and evolving, so at the moment the "sovereignty concept" does not have a clear updated definition that would correspond to the era of globalization. If earlier the division of state functions into external and internal was clearly defined, today, the division of functions into exclusively external and exclusively internal is rather difficult to establish. For example, in the context of globalization, even such a purely internal function as community policing acquires an external aspect, such as cooperation through Europol.

At present, all the functions of a state can, without exception, be extended to the level of supranational relations and be carried out outside the sovereignty of the national state. On the other hand, any function limited by the internal state sovereignty cannot currently exist and develop in isolation from the functions of supranational associations of which the state is a member. Globalization generally promotes a change and reduction in the range and scope of sovereign powers of states. At the same time, it is a two-way process: the factors that objectively reduce the sovereignty of countries are increasing, while most states voluntarily and deliberately limit their sovereignty. By delegating sovereign rights to an authorized organization at the supranational level, a transformation of the nature, capabilities and limits of state power takes place.

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To this day, sovereignty continues to have a very high value, allowing a state to develop in accordance with its unique characteristics and the idea of its role in the region and in the world. However, complete independence turns out to be a burden for the state, for objective reasons. Integration associations, especially such a unique one as the EU, allow small states with small economies and small populations, in exchange for a part of their sovereignty, to develop and prosper many times more effectively within the Union, making the Union itself much stronger as a global actor.

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RUSSIA'S QUEST FOR REGIONAL HEGEMONY:
APPEARANCES VS. REALITIES

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Increasingly, Russia's hegemonic decline is worsening the regional security climate, making Russia's cooperation with other actors difficult. By connecting politically disadvantageous interdependencies and operating effectively in grey areas, Russia undermines the institutional legitimacy of aggressed states and discredits a series of processes with echoes in the nation's consciousness, shattering the societal resilience that is the foundation of state sovereignty. In order to cope with Russia's pressure, the Black Sea coastal states need to improve their ability to maximize specific common foreign policy objectives in order to increase the security capacity of their common geographical region. Violating the sovereignty and independence of other states has become a common practice for Russia. This attitude reflects a deficit in understanding the democratic framework of European civilization and is also undermining of the system of international law.

From Global to Regional Hegemony

The hegemonic theory often captures formulas involving a dominant state actor, even at the regional level, that uses a wide range of instruments to gain influence, especially through exerting military power, to achieve hegemonic status. Eventually, this turns into a resource of political power over other states, used to impose its own model.

Hegemony is a term used in the last four decades to denote primordiality or leadership. Frequently used in relation to the theory of hegemonic stability, it refers to the international system, the capabilities of a given state, and other states' relations with the hegemon.

In the search for hegemonic stability, we encounter a situation described as the relationship of two actors between whom there is no balance of power that can typically develop along two possible scenarios. The first scenario is the hegemonic peace achieved between two actors whose power is approximately equal, while the second scenario involves to a dominant peace that presumes the existence of a superpower that imposes itself upon one or many other powers.

Until hegemonic stability is achieved, the behaviour of the dominant actor usually incorporates aggressive characteristics that might not be in line with international law. Ironically, the initial use of intimidation and domination techniques has the ultimate goal of achieving cooperation within the system of international or regional relations, in order to finally reduce the hegemon's effort and expense.

Russia's Hegemonic Profile

When it comes to profiling a hegemon, we need to consider at least five variables:

1. Military – the hegemon is the strongest military force globally or regionally and its military capabilities are superior to any regional or global adversary. Its system of alliances is superior to any other military alliances.

> ❝ *Russia does not have a highly developed economy, and by conducting large-scale raids outside its territory, it risks running out of financial resources, which is counterproductive and contrary to Putin's desire to stay in power for many years to come*

Regarding the distribution of power on the global scale, the picture seems to be similar to the Black Sea region, which becomes an eloquent landmark for broader geopolitical dynamics.

In this geopolitical equation, the military threat to the North and Central Atlantic regions remains Russia. With maritime access from the Black Sea and through the Mediterranean, Russia supplies and maintains conflicts in Syria and Libya, counting on broader geopolitical stakes vis-à-vis Westerners and actors in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Russia's push to gain geopolitical relevance in Syria and Libya demonstrates its tactic ability to jeopardise Western projections, whether they refer to stabilization, energy or economic development.

Declassified analyses carried out by British strategists during the Cold War highlighted the decisive role of the Black Sea, and implicitly that of Turkey, as a factor in preventing and limiting Russia's access from its mainland to the warm waters of the Mediterranean.[1] Once there, Russia would have challenged the projections and security climate of Western Europe. Travelling in time, the Black Sea maintains its strategic relevance today, and Russia's illegally annexed Crimea has become a coveted outpost for Moscow, in its desire to project its influence. Thus, the Black Sea is included in Russia's strategic vision as a regional platform for broader geopolitical developments and as a space for instability, a truly grey area.

2. Economic – the hegemon has the most developed economy, being a basic or indispensable partner for most other states.

Russia does not have a highly developed economy, and by conducting large-scale raids outside its territory, it risks running out of financial resources, which is counterproductive and contrary to Putin's desire to stay in power for many years to come. The trend for big economies to migrate to alternative energy sources will reduce the demand for fossil fuels, foreshadowing a collapse in these markets over the next two decades. This means that it will become impossible to support Putin's regime only by force. Having an industrial landscape dominated by energy and weapons production, Russia does not reflect the necessary features to project itself as a hegemon.

3. Political – the hegemon has a vast system of political partnerships and agreements with most states. Moscow's connections occur mainly with dictators and, overall, Moscow wants to spur regime change favourable to its agenda.

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1   Secret note (Ref. A09483) handed to Prime Minister Thatcher on 05 May 1979 [http://fc95d419f4478b3b6e5f-3f71d0fe2b653c4f00f32175760e96e7.r87.cf1.rackcdn.com/D19E236B19944300801205EC89E5B656.pdf, accessed: 21 May 2021].

Forcing internal political crises and instability, Russia's vision of neighbouring countries is as part of a political union. All these steps seem to be part of a broader geopolitical project to limit – and preferably kill – the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of these states.

4. Institutional – the hegemon and its allies control international institutions and impose the rules (and mostly influence the rules) that govern the world. This way they control the international agenda.

Due to its economic strength, China has the power to advance competing projects on a global scale, something that is not the case with Russia. This is why rapprochement with China is becoming vital for Moscow.

Economic power is an important vector for institutional multilateral games. From this perspective, Russia – as a regional power – has become somewhat dependent on China as an actor with multiple valences. The tendency of the international system to move towards bipolarity sent Russia into the hands of China. The desire for cooperation between the two states is obvious, and although they have decided not to disturb each other when it comes to regional interests, the prospects for global positioning may differ. Although Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, its ability to structure the international agenda is limited, precisely due to its weak system of allies and precarious institutional system.

5. Ideological – the hegemon determines the main aspects of politics at the global or regional level, being a value indicator for other actors.

Russia's domestic political model and repressive actions by its authorities against political opponents and its own citizens are disapproved of in the liberal societies that represent the dominant global political and economic force. In short, Russia's political behaviour does not entirely reject its Soviet ideological heritage.

The decline of a hegemonic state is associated with closed economies, instability, and the emergence of competing regional blocs. Charles Kindleberger argues that the instability of the world economy between the two world wars was due to the absence of a dominant power capable of stabilizing the international system.[2] Russia's decline and its dominant hard-power policy suggest that only a balance of power supplemented by NATO and the EU can ensure the stabilization process in the Black Sea.

In an attempt to find out whether Russia is a hegemon, Keohane's three characteristics formula is quite relevant. From his point of view, a hegemon:

- has the ability to create, implement and maintain international rules;
- demonstrates the will to do so;
- exercises decisive dominance in the economic, technological, and military arenas.[3]

In the case of Russia, we can see aspirations for regional hegemonic status, without economic and political weight, leaving its profile more that of a declining hegemon. When its primordiality cannot be ensured through soft power or coercive diplomacy, it resorts to direct military force.

2   C. P. Kindleberger, *Economic Laws and Economic History*, Cambridge University Press: New York 1997, p. 54.

3   R. O. Keohane, J. S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence Revisited*, "International Organization," Vol. 41, #4, Autumn 1987, pp. 725-753.

In addition to its military arsenal, Russia is prepared to impose ideological models, energy blackmail, and diplomatic and political pressure under the "attractive" umbrella of corrupt networks and oligarchs.

By connecting politically disadvantageous interdependencies and being capable of operating in grey areas, Russia undermines the institutional legitimacy of aggressed states and discredits a series of processes with echoes in the nation's consciousness, shattering the societal resilience that is the foundation of state sovereignty.

False Questioning of Statehood

Traditional European sociologists consider that states are usually – but not always – constituted around a nation, while society is never to be confused with the state.[4] This is falsely exploited by Russia, invoking the right to protect its ethnic minorities in other countries through aggressive military actions.

One thing that Russia omits when making claims against Ukraine, Georgia, the Baltic States, and other neighbouring actors is the fact that Russia itself is a deficient model of governance whereby state security is not equivalent to societal security, and consequently, security as seen by government structures is different from security as seen by societal structures. The pattern of its dominant behaviour is a result of its Soviet legacy.

Russia's deficit in democratic understanding[5] is due precisely to its inability to place itself within European sociological thought. Immanuel Wallerstein is extremely relevant in his assertion that the state is part of society, but society is more than the state: it is the other side. Society is an alternative to the state and the ultimate source of its legitimacy.[6] When Russia's authorities quell domestic protests and challenge the national sovereignty and legitimacy of other states, they offer a bad example of action in international relations based on false pretences. All this suggests the behaviour of a declining power.

> *One thing that Russia omits when making claims against Ukraine, Georgia, the Baltic States, and other neighbouring actors is the fact that Russia itself is a deficient model of governance whereby state security is not equivalent to societal security*

According to Max Weber, the nation is a "community of feeling" that will adequately manifest itself within its own state, meaning that a nation is a community that normally tends to generate its own state.[7] Aggression against moral security precisely aims to destabilize the foundations of the nation. This subtle approach, complemented by influence operations, intelligence operations

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4   See the works of David Émile Durkheim, Constantin Noica, Ferdinand Tonnies, Max Weber, and Immanuel Wallerstein.

5   The failure of Russian political leadership to understand democracy is reflected in its inability to internalize the values promoted by traditional European sociology, and consequently fail to be part of the European space of thought. In short, they do not find themselves in the space of European liberal values, and this has triggered a series of abuses and societal misunderstandings.

6   I. Wallerstein, *Utopistics: Or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-First Century*, The New Press: New York 1999, p. 5.

7   A. Anter, *Max Weber's Theory of the Modern State: Origins, Structure and Significance*, Palgrave Macmillian: New York 2014, p. 119.

and military shows of force, addresses the ecosystem of values and cultural identity, and produces reverberations intended to challenge the sovereign right of other states.

> **The world has grown accustomed to the fact that the Kremlin mixes political goals with military ones: it makes a military move and then contextually analyses new offensive opportunities, as well as the political gains offered by this move**

These considerations show that an autocratic hegemon in decline, refusing to accept its new status and still in search of a way to project dominance, will resort to aggressive actions that end up in undermining the legitimacy of other nations and, implicitly, their sovereignty.

Disadvantageous Interdependence or the Negative Effect of Geopolitical Contagion

The psychological effect of the latest military developments in Eastern Ukraine and the Sea of Azov is being used by Russia to intimidate. For Moscow, the demonstration of military power is an instrument to blackmail Western powers in the hope of gaining a place at the table where global interests are at stake. These attempts demonstrate Russia's efforts to claim the status of a global power.

The world has grown accustomed to the fact that the Kremlin mixes political goals with military ones: it makes a military move and then contextually analyses new offensive opportunities, as well as the political gains offered by this move. Russia's

ethos is the saying "Push, and if there is no resistance, push more." And if there is resistance, push elsewhere. Its tactical and strategic components are important and not negligible when referring to a Russian-style modus operandi.

In the new global configuration, Russia is a limited power and, from this geopolitical position, it has resorted to a series of inappropriate reactions. One of the effects of incomplete, non-democratic hegemonic actors is the use of unconventional and kinetic practices in order to break the political systems of targeted countries.[8] Because of this, any gain, however small, turns military or unconventional aggression into a political resource and results in a complex, disadvantageous interdependence and regional negative contagion.

Russia's covert pattern of using proxy groups and subversive actions requires the NATO response to hybrid aggression. The Euro-Atlantic community is facing a challenge: it is having difficulty determining a legitimate response to covert aggression, a Russia's actions become mechanisms and resources of power. The techniques used in the illegal annexation of Crimea are the perfect example.

At the same time, Russia has historically shown that it respects strong interlocutors, an attitude that suggests that an increase of firm deterrence on the part of the allies is justified. This legitimises efforts directed towards strengthening Alliance presence in the Black Sea.

At the same time, NATO and the European Union must bring to the forefront of talks with Russia respect for other states' sovereignty. Flagrant aggression must be punished under international law, because

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8   S. Nate, A Rațiu, *Defending the Truth and Counter Information Warfare in Europe, "International Conference Knowledge-Based Organization"* XXIII 2017, pp. 213-219.

otherwise similar incursions will be more difficult to discourage in the future.

Will the New Clash Be Ideological?

Due to its geography, Russia manifests itself predominantly as a military aggressor on its periphery. Tolerating its malignant behaviour is becoming a matter of contagion. If the Euro-Atlantic community does not control its geostrategic periphery, it will endanger the stability of the democratic and functional core of the Western world, while also paving the way for the downfall of countries drawn into the "insecurity gap" that is Russia's direct concern.

On 23 March 2021, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said about his meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, "We emphasised that against the background of active attempts by the West to promote its concept of a 'rules-based world order,' the joint efforts of Russia and China...to preserve the modern system of international law are becoming more and more relevant."[9]

This requires some clarification. In reality, without a commitment to the rule of law, human rights and international norms, multilateralism divides the world into two incompatible types of polities and two major currents: multilateralism based on the liberal order – which is the foundation of the United Nations – and faked multilateralism, which actually hides a "left-wing internationalism" and sets the ground for competing multilateral organizations.

Lavrov's statement reflects *contested multilateralism*, a concept developed by Morse and Keohane, distinguished thinkers who describe this approach as a situation, which "involves the use of different multilateral institutions to challenge the rules, practices, or missions of existing multilateral institutions"[10] that are based on liberal values.

The Lessons Offered by Recent History

If the Black Sea is placed at the centre of the global map, one of Huntington's civilizational delineations can be found in this confluence between Western, Slavic and Asiatic cultures. It is precisely these challenges, which make the Black Sea a node of geopolitical convergence, that must put the region on the EU-NATO agenda.

Russia's hegemonic decline is increasingly endangering regional security, making cooperation with other dominant actors difficult.[11] The prospects for challenged multilateralism and the weakening of multilateral institutions are creating a vacuum of authority that portends an anarchic system of international relations. For declining hegemonies, these conditions ensure that trust is no longer a constant in negotiations.

The mirage of Russia-NATO and Russia-EU dialogues led to delays, most often counterproductive and lacking in transparency or predictability on the part of Russia. Russia's approach to the *dual-track strategy* system advanced by some NATO members, that is, both military deterrence and openness to dialogue with Russia, has proved of limited effectiveness as a diplomatic tool.

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9   S. Qiu, A. Osborn, *Russia, China Push for U.N. Security Council Summit, Lash out at West*, Reuters, 23 March 2021 [https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-russia-china-un-idUKKBN2BF0H6 accessed: 21 May 2021].

10 J. C. Morse, R. O. Keohane, *Contested Multilateralism*, "The Review of International Organizations," 9.4 2014, pp. 385-412.

11 R. O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, Princeton University Press: New Jersey 2005, p. 9.

From this perspective, a new hypothesis remains to be proved: beyond economic disputes and military forays, with the prospects of a China-Russia axis, the great global competition is expected to be an ideological one. Learning from the lessons from history will become useful.

To cope with Russia's pressure, the Black Sea coastal states need to maximize specific common foreign policy objectives in order to increase the security capacity of their common geographical area.

Russian rhetoric about the "incursions" of NATO and the EU near its borders is a false problem as long as every society and sovereign state has the right to determine its aspirations and choose its own foreign policy agenda.

The Black Sea states must work to strengthen traditional multilateral organizations based on liberal values and adherence to international norms. Societal and political resilience are the key to ensuring transparency among partners, but also an indicator of the sustainability of joint actions.

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ATYPICAL POST-COLONIALISM: UKRAINE IN GLOBAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

Dr Volodymyr Yermolenko
Internews Ukraine

Written by a Ukrainian philosopher and journalist, this article focuses on Ukrainian intellectual history and current political and social dilemmas. It examines at key contemporary controversies such as modernity vs tradition, republic vs empire, colonialism vs postcolonialism, and identity vs otherness. These issues form the basis for an analysis of how Ukrainian intellectual history can provide some new insights into issues of global political thought today.

There are two contradicting fallacies when looking at history and the political experience of a nation. The first fallacy states that the world is ruled by universals and therefore no national experience is specific enough to challenge these universals. The second fallacy argues that a particular national experience is unique and therefore no universal concept can apply to describe it fully.

The art of political thinking is, in a way, the art of avoiding these two traps: the Scylla of abstract universalism and the Charybdis of utopian national uniqueness. The cases of specific nations and societies can, indeed, put some universalist clichés in doubt, but no nation is so unique that it is exempt from commonalities.

In this context, Ukraine's history and political experience deserve a fresh look because this can help bring new nuances into the way we think about our world today. The question is, which *specific* traits of Ukrainian political experience might help rethink some *universal* problems we are all facing today.

Ukraine's situation can give us examples of how to possibly bridge certain key

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controversies we are globally going through now. It does not mean that Ukraine has a recipe for dealing with these problems: sometimes it does have answers, sometimes it does not. What the country's experience can tell us, however, is how the binary oppositions, between tradition and modernity, liberalism and conservatism, liberty and identity, colony and metropole that define today's world, can be looked at with a fresh eye, in the light of this Ukrainian experience, which we might call "atypical postcolonialism."

Tradition and Modernity

The struggle between tradition and modernity defined key controversies in the Western intellectual and socio-political history in the 19th century. This opposition was weakened in the second half of the

20th century, creating space for the conflict between liberalism and communism, which ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the early 21st century, however, especially since the 9/11 attack, this opposition has come back, splitting societies in the US, the United Kingdom, France, Poland, and many other countries into polarized clusters, often barely able to talk to each other.

> **Ukrainian intellectual debate was formed in the 19th and 20th centuries as a reflection of a nation under imperial rule. Striving for freedom and emancipation often meant striving for both individual rights and community rights**

Interestingly, Russian intellectual history knows this opposition too: its key 19th century debate, which has reappeared in the 21st century, has been the debate between traditionalist "Slavophiles," and modernist "Westernizers." Paradoxically, the Soviet Union was the result of a victory for the "Westernizers:" progressive, atheist, often materialist, intellectuals and activists. And yet, this victory gave rise to the most anti-Western empire in Russian history.

Ukraine's historical experience has been different. Ukrainian intellectual debate was formed in the 19th and 20th centuries as a reflection of a nation under imperial rule. Striving for freedom and emancipation often meant striving for both individual rights and community rights. The modern – or modernist – focus on the individual rights went hand-in-hand with the traditionalist focus on the rights of the community and its unique identity.

This explains why many prominent Ukrainian writers and intellectuals were *modernizing traditionalists*. The "modernism" in fin-de-siècle literary Ukraine – Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko, Vasyl Stefanyk, Olha Kobylianska, Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi – also involved the re-inventors of tradition: look at Ukrainka's *The Forest Song*, Kotsiubynskyi's *Shadows of the Forgotten Ancestors*, which later became the plot for Sergei Parajanov's cinema masterpiece, or Stephanyk's rural short stories. The "traditionalist" element differentiated this Ukrainian literary modernism from many European contemporaries. At the same time, when it worked with the "traditionalist" peasant or rural subjects, Ukrainian modernist literature did its best to not only preserve the tradition, but also to give it new and modernized means of expression.

But looking at both the predecessors and successors of this literary modernism, similar patterns emerge. In the 1920s, communist Ukrainian writer Mykola Khvylovy was professing a radical aesthetic revolution founded on the great European tradition but projecting itself on what he called an "Asian Renaissance." This is why he found an ally in the neo-classicist poet Mykola Zerov, a professor of literature and translator of ancient Roman poets. So, a revolutionary modernist was seeking his roots in a great European heritage, that is, looking at the future and into the past at the same time.

A hundred years before him, the key symbol of Ukrainian national poetry, Taras Shevchenko, was not only a re-inventor of a Ukrainian tradition, but also an avant-garde poet for his time. This is why Dmytro Horbachov, the Ukrainian art critic and expert on literary avant-garde, compared Shevchenko's 19th century poetry to the futurist aesthetics of 1910-1920s.[1]

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1   Дмитро Горбачов, «Авангардизм XX століття і Шевченко» [Dmytro Horbachov, "20th century avant-garde and Shevchenko"], in Дмитро Горбачов, *Лицарі голодного Ренесансу*. Kyiv, Dukh I Litera, 2020, p. 49-68.

The specific relationship between tradition and modernity in Ukraine has one explanation. Modernization implied emancipatory discourse: emancipation from hierarchies, inequalities, and oppression. But going deep into national tradition meant yet *another emancipation* – from the transnational empire. This modernist traditionalism defined many phenomena in Ukrainian culture, even to this day. When a progressive reformist wearing a *vyshyvanka*[2] holds an iPhone, or an ethnic music band combines Ukrainian folk songs with electronic music and modern rhythms, such as *Onuka, Go_A, Dakha Brakha*, and others, these are the heirs of the phenomena taking place a century ago.

While outside observers are often myopically focusing on the "far-right" challenge in Ukrainian politics and society, they are missing an important key to understanding the Ukrainian approach to the past. Far-right parties consistently get no more than 1-2% during parliamentary elections, but Ukraine's "modernizing traditionalism" has far deeper roots, permeating moderate and liberal discourse, but rarely venturing into the political extreme.

Much of this Ukrainian traditionalism employs what I would call a *soft tradition*, meaning it is often flexible and adaptable to modernity. It can embrace technological progress, democratization and inclusion. Politically, a Ukrainian citizen is unlikely perceive tradition as a "Golden Age" to which they need to return. Ukrainian history did not have a proper Golden Age, given too many tragic events and losses of identity and agency, so there is little genuine basis for nostalgia. Yet the idea of "returning" is a key slogan in today's conservative backlash: Trump's "Make America Great *Again*," Brexit's "Take *Back* Control," or the popular Russian slogan "We Can *Do It Again*" with reference to World War II. In Ukraine,

however, the idea of repeating the past is horrifying: in Ukrainian history, the main "repeats" were fateful mistakes and grave tragedies.

Ukrainian historical and political experience is thus developing in a different dimension than the simple binary opposition of "tradition" and "modernity," or "conservatism" and "liberalism." And this deserves some special reflection.

Republic and Empire

Ukraine's history can also provide an unusual perspective on the conceptual struggle between the ideas of the Republic and the Empire.

As an independent state, Ukraine was born on the territories of former empires: Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian – turned the Soviet Union in the 20th century. The idea of a "dismembered nation," a collective body whose parts were divided between empires, was important for the imagination of the 19th century, which saw the birth of founding myths for many nations, especially in Eastern Europe. The Ukrainian story of a "dismembered nation" was promoted by the Ukrainian romantics, primarily by historian Mykola Kostomarov and poet Shevchenko, in 1840s.

In some aspects, it echoed the Polish myth of the time, in particular Adam Mickiewicz's vision of Poland as a collective Christ striving for a resurrection. But Ukrainians applied considerable creativity to the Polish imagining. For one thing, they pointed out that Ukraine's "dismembering" experience preceded Poland's. While Polish "disintegration" dated to the late 18th century, Ukraine had been divided between the other states – Muscovy, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and between Eastern Christian, Western Christian, and Muslim states – since

2　The Ukrainian national embroidered shirt.

the mid-17th century, during the period called *Ruina* or Ruin. This explains why the *Ruina* was given such enormous attention in 19th century Ukrainian literature: by Shevchenko, Panteleimon Kulish, Marko Vovchok, Ivan Nechuy-Levytsky, and others. While projecting the Polish Romantic imagining of a "dismembered nation" on their own experience, Ukrainian romantics argued that the Ukrainian experience had deeper historical roots.

> **The construction of nationhood was beyond and despite political borders, which at different periods cut right through the "body" of the Ukrainian nation. The idea of "remaining on our land" despite borders that were often shifted by imperialist expansions has become one of the key notions in Ukrainian political imagining**

This imagining was not unique: it was a continuation of an old European notion of *palingenesis*, the passage through suffering, dismemberment and death to a higher stage of development developed by French, Italian, Polish and other writers and philosophers in the early 19th century. What differentiated the Ukrainian case was its longer horizon of memory. History also showed that it was set to be more patient, able to create a sustainable national state of the collected "fragmented parts" of the national body only in the late 20th century.

The key notion developed by this romantic literature of the 19th century was that, despite the fact that they were scattered among various empires, Ukrainians continued to be *one* nation. The construction of nationhood was beyond and despite political borders, which at different periods cut right through the "body" of the

Ukrainian nation. The idea of "remaining on our land" despite borders that were often shifted by imperialist expansions has become one of the key notions in Ukrainian political imagining. Even now, in the early 21st century, it can still be heard in one of the mobilizing memes of recent years, the word *stoyimo*: "We're taking a stand" (and not going anywhere): holding their ground during protests on the Maidan in the face of police brutality, holding their ground in Eastern Ukraine facing the Russian army, and so on.

This feeling is essentially republican. It combines traditionalist "love of one's land" with the republican idea of active citizens fighting for their rights. The idea of the republic is a concept of bottom-up politics, politics created by the interaction of members of the community. The idea of a republic can have interesting links to the idea of land, stable borders and the specific attitude of a group of people towards this land – a link that we tend to forget after the far-right devaluation of the "land" and "earth" as metaphors in the 20th century.

The idea of empire, on the contrary, contains the idea of *expansion*, of shifting borders. Empires are built with the intention of going far *beyond* a specific place, far beyond national borders. The imperial mentality, recreated by a rich poetic imagination in Virgil's *Aeneid* – which had an ironic remake in Ukrainian literature in Ivan Kotliarevsky's 18th century *Eneida* – contains the core idea of an "evacuation of the motherland." An empire is a political project able to copy-paste itself everywhere else in the world, a top-down conception of politics acquiring territories through force or seduction.

Many episodes of Ukrainian history can be read as attempts at a republican political practice to oppose the expansion of empire. But Ukraine cannot be understood only as a republic. Being a meeting point among empires, it contains multiple imperial traces.

Ukraine's history was not imperial, it was *inter-imperial*. In a way, it can be described as a place where religious – Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim – imperial projects met in the early modern era, while ideological imperial projects – far right and far-left – met in the 20th century.

These meetings were not innocent. They left horrible trails of suffering and death. But they have also left traces of mutual influence, interpenetration and dialogue. Mixtures, junctions, mosaics, and combinations are left from the imperial interconnections, which Ukrainian republic is now trying to re-appropriate. In a way, Ukraine is a republic trying to re-interpret its inter-imperial heritage.

Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Ukraine's history is also an interesting case in the history of postcolonialism. Ukrainian culture was developing postcolonial optics already in the 19th century, before postcolonial studies became an intellectual fashion, but it still lacks a full voice to persuade the world that its optics are interesting.

At the same time, there are several nuances that make the Ukrainian postcolonial perspective different from others.

First of all, proto-Ukrainian polities were not only a colony but also a "metropole," a centre of influence. In the Middle Ages, Kyiv was the centre of the most powerful state in Central and Eastern Europe, Kyivan Rus'. In the Baroque era, Kyiv was an epicentre of both orthodox influences on its neighbours, as far as the Middle East, and Roman Catholic influences on orthodox Eastern Christianity. In the early Classicist era, Ukrainian intellectuals helped formulate and implement the concept of a Russian empire as a new, highly centralized state under Peter I. Paradoxically, this empire later destroyed Ukraine's autonomy. Then

there's the 19th century Romantic era, when Ukrainian popular culture was a magnet for the literary imaginations of both Polish and Russian intelligentsia.

Secondly, Russian colonialism with regard to Ukraine and its other Slavic neighbour Belarus was not only a colonization per se, but also a huge *assimilation* project. Over the 18-20th centuries, Russia was constructing what German conservatives only imagined in the 20th century: a "continental empire" that needs not only to conquer and subjugate other peoples, but also to erase their identity, the assimilate them into the imperial linguistic, cultural, and religious world, that is, to prove that they *did not exist*. The absence of a racial difference between the colonizer and the colonized, in contrast to most European maritime empires and the cultures they colonized, and the proximity of ethnic and linguistic traits made this assimilation an easier task – and less visible to outsiders.

While postcolonial nations colonized by Western European empires had to prove that their identity was valid and their voices should be heard, Ukrainian postcolonialism was a struggle with a somewhat different challenge: it needed to prove that its identity existed *at all*, that it had not been invented by an external conspiracy.

Thirdly, Russia itself has applied postcolonial discourse to its own relations with the West. It has persuaded some international players that the West has been an (unsuccessful) colonizer of Russia and that Russia's "right to self-determination" can be described in postcolonial terms. According to this narrative, encircled by enemies and the victim of several "Western invasions" in the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, Russia itself needed postcolonial emancipation. This fits today's Russian discourse that it is under attack from NATO and that its cultural specificity is not properly cherished in the world.

Significantly, this type of discourse ignores the actually imperial nature of the Russian political project. Applying post-colonial logic to Russian society, which plays on the guilt in Western post-imperial reflexes, automatically eliminates the uncomfortable issue of Russia's own imperialism. By imposing the idea that Russia deserves its part in postcolonial discourse against the West, the very essence of recent Russian history is completely ignored and the fact that it was an empire, not a colony.

> ❝ **Assimilation made the identities of the colonized nations of the Eastern Slavic world invisible. Having similar physical features as the colonizer, they needed to renounce the less visible parts of their nation: language, literature, music, traditions, and so on**

Western-type colonialism was essential *racial*: it was built upon an idea that one group is "naturally destined" to be subordinated due to its race and skin colour. It was an imperialism based on *fatal identity*. Eastern European colonialism differs: it was based on the "historical" idea that a people actually *can* – and should – change its place in the universe by renouncing its identity. In short, an imperialism of *changeable identity*. Assimilation made the identities of the colonized nations of the Eastern Slavic world *invisible*. Having similar physical features as the colonizer, they needed to renounce the less visible parts of their nation: language, literature, music, traditions, and so on.

This is what is making Eastern European post-colonialism so focused on identity. Differences between Ukraine and Belarus today are differences in the degree of *assimilation*: Ukrainians were more successful at preserving their identity than Belarusians, and so now they have more resilience against imperial assimilation. In this context, identity becomes not an opponent of liberty, as in Western world, but its inalienable ally, its *conditio sine qua non*: erasing identity means the victory of empire, and the victory of empire means the destruction of liberty.

Identity and Otherness

This leads us to another crucial question: the relationship between identity and "otherness."

Twentieth century postcolonial thought was focused on the question of "the Other." It interpreted colonialism as a massive attempt to denigrate and erase the "otherness" of other peoples, cultures, genders, identities, and so on. Struggling against colonialism meant struggling against the totalitarian voice of identity, and "logocentrism." It also meant accepting and embracing the *difference* in contrast to identity, embracing "otherness" in its full richness and diversity.

But this view also contains imperial traces. It's easy to embrace any "otherness" when it is *weaker* than you, when it does not pose a threat to your existence – or at most when it is equally strong. What if "the other" is stronger? What if it turns aggressive? And a more difficult question: what if the "other" is trying to erase *your* own "otherness," your identity? What if this "other" is essentially an empire determined to erase all otherness entirely?

Today, Ukraine faces an interesting dilemma, finding itself between a "bad empire" that is trying to rebuild its previous power (Russia) and "good" or "repenting" empires (mostly Western countries) whose awareness of the moral problems of colonialism is growing and who are trying to undo the harm they have done in the past.

The problem with the "bad empire" is obvious: for today's Ukraine, Kremlin Russia is an existential threat to its very existence.

The problem with "good empires" is a bit trickier: values-wise, Ukraine feels part of Western civilization, but on the practical level there are important discrepancies. A "repenting empire" tends to enact its repenting through a discourse of otherness: the good postcolonial society is only the one that cherishes otherness as much as possible. Multiculturalism was also a product of former empires, in which all possible "others" that were suppressed for centuries are reclaiming their rights.

For a much more local "republican" culture, the situation is more ambiguous: built by the local identity of a local community, it is deeply suspicious towards "others." In the worst scenario, the local "republican" identity develops a hostile vision of the other, seeing any "other" as a threat. The republican idea, in short, is not immune to diseases like radical nationalism or xenophobia.

In a better and more moderate version, the republican political culture feels important distinctions between "the other," "the alien" and "the enemy," and is able to navigate among these modalities. This navigation might lead to an important "mapping of otherness," since not every "other" is an "alien," let alone an "enemy." But this republican feeling will never develop infinite trust towards "otherness." It is aware that some others can actually be enemies. Here is the point where it finds itself in conflict with "repenting empires" that believe, because of their burden of guilt, that the appreciation of otherness should be infinite, and that there is no bigger enemy than *identity*, which creates clear boundaries with "others."

Conclusion

The Ukrainian political experience has rarely been on the radars of global political thought. It's time for it to take its place. This experience often offers atypical answers to the global issues faced today. These answers come from the specific milieu of the Ukrainian political culture and political thinking, mostly developed in its literature, which often a different set of concepts and oppositions than the mainstream of European and American political thinking.

> *The Ukrainian political experience has rarely been on the radars of global political thought. It's time for it to take its place*

This set of concepts come from an experience that Ukraine shares with many other postcolonial countries: a stateless nation that developed the idea of a political community existing outside of political institutions; a republic coping with an imperial and inter-imperial heritage; a nation that expresses modernizing traditionalism, seeing tradition and identity not as opposed to modernity and liberty but as a necessary component of the two.

This experience is shared by other countries that have gone through a similar struggle for identity, statehood, cohesion, and plurality. And this is what makes the Ukrainian case so interesting.

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POST-SOVIET SOVEREIGNTY AND UKRAINE'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

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In a realistic analysis of the status of national sovereignty of Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, the author argues that Russian aggression against Ukraine, post-Soviet frozen conflicts, and the U.S.-Russia antagonism have established the political, legal and military macrocontext in which Ukraine can develop for the foreseeable future. In this context, Ukraine can maintain its existing and even regain its pre-2014 level of sovereignty if it develops either as a buffer zone between the EU/West and Russia, or as NATO's battering ram. The author concludes that the new Eastern Europe will remain a region of damaged national sovereignties with a high chance for new conflicts and poor chances for stable peace and socio-economic prosperity.

Today, the concept of sovereignty is once again being contested, both theoretically and practically. This dispute manifests itself at multiple levels: globally, regionally and in national contexts. It is also one of the major sources of the insecurity felt in political and legal orders around the globe, in the new Eastern Europe,[1] and in Ukraine.

The theoretical debate is visible, for example, in various attempts at defining sovereignty. Contemporary encyclopaedias of philosophy, law and politics agree on the core notion of sovereignty as a "*supreme authority*" connected with a state and a territory, but vary in their explanation of the nature of this authority.[2] This incongruence in the concept of sovereignty is evident in terms of its internal and external dimensions, levels of absoluteness, different kinds of sovereignty holders, and so on. Yet the theoretical debates in and of themselves do not necessarily undermine order: only if the theoretical dispute merges with the practical application are they likely to lead to profound political conflicts.

The practical dispute over sovereignty is grounded on the intra- and inter-national struggle of different political groups, states and alliances of states. This struggle is vested in different ideological interpretations of the idea of sovereignty by political agents. Historically, the limits to these interpretations were imposed by international legal acts, such as the *Peace*

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1 Here I refer to the new Eastern Europe as a region consisting of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

2 See e.g.: "Sovereignty," *Encyclopedia Prinstoniensis*, 2021 [https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/671 access: 1 May 2021]; "Sovereignty," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2021 [https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sovereignty access: 1 May 2021]; "Sovereignty," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2021 [https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sovereignty/ access: 1 May 2021].

of *Westphalia* (1648)*, the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States* (1933), and the *United Nations Charter* (1945).[3] Still, there was enough room for differences and changes in the practice of sovereignty. These legal acts were usually the result of profound political and security crises stemming precisely from the struggles over state sovereignty over the last four centuries.

Today, the sovereignty of post-Soviet states is in crisis, especially visible in the case of Ukraine. After 30 years of political development in the Eastern European region – called the "Eastern Neighbourhood" from the Western European perspective –, the regional order has come under destructive pressure, partly due to contested applications of sovereignty. This paper will argue that multilevel disputes over the notion of sovereignty are directly connected to the current disorder in Eastern Europe and will describe how it damages Ukraine's sovereignty and prospects for development.

The Global Context

The major current debate over of the concept of sovereignty is a struggle between "sovereignists" and "cosmopolites."[4] This conflict is a recent turn of events – the sovereignist turn – and equally affects democracies and autocracies around the world as it is changing the post–World War II consensus about what sovereignty means.

Sovereignism per se is not a new ideology: it was actually the logic of the political development of modern states argued for by Jean Bodin, the authors of Peace of Westphalia, and Thomas Hobbes. At around the same time, a State was recognized as a super-institution with the exclusive right to sovereignty. Its rival institutions – various religious organizations, tribes, feudal clans, transcontinental corporations, and so on – lost their case to the State. In a sense, the modern sovereign State was evolving together with modernity itself. Thus, between the 16th century and today, the concept of sovereignty has evolved through at least five stages, each marked by the dominant interpretation of sovereignty.

> **"** **The practical dispute over sovereignty is grounded on the intra- and inter-national struggle of different political groups, states and alliances of states**

First, sovereignty was understood as an absolute, indivisible power – the view held by Bodin and Hobbes – that was linked to an absolute, enlightened monarch as the embodiment of the State.

Next, sovereignty was perceived as the position of the supreme and final authority at the top of a pyramid of discrete lower powers, as proposed by Locke and the federalists, and their followers. This interpretation was used with constitutionally limited monarchies and some early modern republics.

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3   See A. Tiescher, "Peace of Westphalia," *The Oxford Bibliographies*, 2020, [https://www.oxfordbibliographies. com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0073.xml access: 1 May 2021]; "Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States," *University of Oslo depository*, 1933 [https://www.jus.uio.no/english/ services/library/treaties/01/1-02/rights-duties-states.xml A access: 1 May 2021]; "United Nations Charter," *The United Nations Organization*, 1945 [https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text access: 1 May 2021].

4   This interpretative has recently been analyzed in the Ideology and Politics Journal (Issue 1(17) 2021), namely in: Y. Mielkov, *From Nation State to Human Person: The Evolution Of Sovereignty*, pp. 8-21; R. Zaporozhchenko, *Sovereigntism as a Vocation and Profession: Imperial Roots, Current State, Possible Prospects*, "Ideology and Politics Journal," pp. 44-71; O. Fisun and N. Vinnykova, *De-Etatization of State Sovereignty and Formation of Global "Maidan*," pp. 72-86; M. Minakov, *The Sovereigntist Turn: Sovereignty as a Contested Concept Again*, pp. 87-114.

Then, sovereignty was applied as a common term to denote two distinct authorities: the highest law-making authority and the legitimate power to rule, which limited each other's scope and endowed the *people*, not the ruler, with sovereignty in the liberal and nationalist traditions. These practices mainly applied to different nation-states.

In the fourth phase, sovereignty was treated as the coexistence of internal sovereignty, which granted a monopoly on the use of legitimate force within a specific territory, and external sovereignty, which granted external war- and peace-making powers. This was the dominant position in the inter-war period, and partly in the post-WWII period as the world system began to globalize.[5]

> **After the unprecedented violence of World War II, the concept of sovereignty had to adapt to the requirements of justice within and among the nations, as well as to the demands of human dignity and the continuing existence of humanity**

The fifth approach developed after WWII, when the interpretation of sovereignty as the supremacy of the State was overtaken by the sovereignty of the human individual acknowledged by the State.[6]

In the course of this history, the holder of sovereignty has shifted, from the traditional monarch, to an absolute monarch in a regular state with an emerging bureaucracy, then as a nation-state with an established bureaucracy, and finally as combination of international, national and human individual agencies.[7]

After the unprecedented violence of World War II, the concept of sovereignty had to adapt to the requirements of justice within and among the nations, as well as to the demands of human dignity and the continuing existence of humanity. This concept and practice of sovereignty were an ambitious process that participated in the creation of the "full world," in which political systems, jurisdictions, economies, environmental systems, and humanity as a biological species could be managed only if national territorial sovereignty was limited by other "sovereigns."[8] To reduce the threat a sovereign state constitutes for peace and life on the planet, the United Nations Organization was established as an all-embracing platform for interstate conflict prevention, management and resolution.

On the other hand, most colonies were emancipated from subjugation and gained national territorial sovereignty in the late 20th century.[9] Meanwhile, the sovereignty of the state was more and more outweighed by the increasing sovereignty of the human individual and the growing role of human rights within and among states.[10] Altogether,

5   R. Porokhovnik, *Sovereignty: History and theory*. Andrews UK Limited: Luton 2017, pp. 5-8.

6   S. Benhabib, *The Rights of Others. Aliens, Residents and Citizens*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2004.

7   P. Du Gay, "Bureaucracy and liberty: State, authority, and freedom," [in] P. Du Gay (ed.), *The values of bureaucracy*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 2005, pp. 41-62; C. Tilly, "States and nationalism in Europe 1492-1992," *Theory and society* 23(1), 1994, pp. 131-146.

8   E. Von Weizsäcker and A. Wijkman, Come on! Springer: Berlin 2018, 10ff.

9   D. Strang, "From dependency to sovereignty: An event history analysis of decolonization 1870-1987," American Sociological Review 55(6), 2010, pp. 846-860.

10 C. Rudolph, "Sovereignty and territorial borders in a global age," International studies review 7(1), 2005, pp. 1-20; S. Benhabib, "The new sovereigntism and transnational law: Legal utopianism, democratic scepticism and statist realism," Global Constitutionalism 5(1), 2016, pp. 109-144.

this combination of sovereignty practices defined the period from 1947 through the end of the Cold War, until the sovereignist shift.

The sovereignist position is a discursive and practical challenge to the post-WWII complex interpretation of sovereignty, undertaken by political forces that insist on dismantling the international legal order and returning to exclusive, unlimited national territorial sovereignty. Contemporary sovereignism is an ideology that ascribes sovereignty to "the people," which is an imagined majority whose specific qualities are traditional to each separate state and cannot have universal connotation or even agreement with the cosmopolitan notion of human rights.[11]

The sovereignist shift has had a particularly strong impact on the state sovereignty of the new Eastern Europe, aka, the Eastern Neighbourhood.

The Regional Context

With the dissolution of the socialist bloc over 1989-91, the new Eastern European societies and states coexisted for almost 30 years in a system with multiple norms and tendencies, and very different understandings of sovereignty.

One tendency is connected with the spread of nationalist imagination legitimizing the connection between the national group, the territory populated by this group, and the state. This was the ideology driving the dissolution of complex multinational states in Eastern Europe.[12] By the end of 1992, the USSR, the Yugoslav Federation and Czechoslovakia all ceased to exist. Yet there were many more tendencies. The "parade of sovereignties" in the USSR has led to the establishment of 15 recognized sovereign states and four de facto states.[13] Between December 1991, with the Belavezha Accords and Alma-Ata Protocol, and December 1994, with the Budapest Memorandum, the new post-Soviet nations, especially those in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus, were going through a period that put three sovereignty concepts at the foundation of their statehood:

1) *people sovereignty*, which treated the populations of Soviet republics as sovereign peoples with the right to self-determination;[14] or *ethnonational sovereignty*, which treated the populations of some Soviet regions as sovereign peoples aspiring to the right to self-determination;[15]

2) *individual sovereignty*, or cosmopolitan norms, which provided the new post-Soviet states with liberal legitimacy to overcome the ills of totalitarianism;[16]

3) *regional values*, which arrived first as the Council of Europe's fundamental treaties, and then as EU-related transnational, multilayer norms and became an additional source of sovereign recognition.

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11 Minakov, The Sovereintist Turn, p. 106.

12 For more, see M. Minakov, G. Sasse and D. Isachenko, "Secessionisms In Europe: Societies, States And The International Order Under Stress," [in] M. Minakov, G. Sasse and D. Isachenko (eds). Secessionisms in Europe: Societies, Political Systems and International Order, Ibidem: Stuttgart 2019, pp. 4-17.

13 H. Hale, "The parade of sovereignties: Testing theories of secession in the Soviet setting," British Journal of Political Science 2000, pp. 31-56; M. Minakov, "On the Extreme Periphery. The Status of Post-Soviet Non-Recognised States in the World-System," Ideologies and Politics Journal 1(12), 2019, pp. 39-72.

14 This logic is seen in the declarations of sovereignty of the republics in 1990, and many declarations of independence of 1990-91 repeated it.

15 This logic could have been been based either in ethnonationalist (for example, in the Nagorno-Karabakh or Abkhaz cases) or civic autonomist/irredentist (for example, in the Transnistrian case) arguments.

16 Such norms are present in most republican declarations of sovereignty and declarations of independence, as well as in the post-Soviet constitutions of the early 1990s.

By the end of 1994, these interpretations of sovereignty – despite of their theoretical contradictions – were predominantly resolved in the political practice of international relations among post-Soviet nations. Over the next several years, Russia ceased its support for secessionist movements outside its territory, focused on secessionism within the Federation itself, and signed a number of bi- and multilateral cooperation agreements with other post-Soviet nations.

A new period in regional order came around 2003–2006, when political systems founded in the early post-Soviet period and developing outside the EU's legislative influence were entering into a deep crisis. In two cases, Georgia and Ukraine, the crisis resulted in colour revolutions. In Moldova and Armenia, the protest waves did not change regimes, but democratized them significantly. And in Azerbaijan and Belarus – as well as in Russia – a reactionary autocracy gained impetus for cutting back the remaining leeway for political freedoms.

The new Eastern Europe was slowly growing into a region of international conflicts that manifested in the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, partial recognition of two quasi-states, and economic conflicts among Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Belarus. Altogether, this began to inspire more distrust between the elites and ordinary citizens in the region. By 2009, when the EU introduced its Eastern Partnership policy, the Eastern Neighbourhood region was a constellation of states with damaged state sovereignty:

1. Six sovereign states – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – included two partly recognized quasi-states, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and two de facto statelets, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria.

2. At least two "frozen" international conflicts were taking place, with economic blockades and sporadic military clashes: between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and between Georgia and Russia.

3. Three countries had a deficit of sovereignty over their internationally-recognized territory: Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova.

4. Two states controlled more lands than their internationally-recognized territory: Armenia as the sponsor state of Nagorno-Karabakh, and Russia as the sponsor state of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

> **A new period in regional order came around 2003–2006, when political systems founded in the early post-Soviet period and developing outside the EU's legislative influence were entering into a deep crisis**

The growing contradictions between the post-Soviet states with very different statuses of their sovereignty were supported and deepened through the growing influence on the nations of new Eastern Europe of Western- and Russian-led regional integration projects: EU associations and possible enlargement, NATO enlargement, the Custom Union, and so on.[17] By 2013, the "hardened" integration projects entered a phase of direct conflict

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17 K. Wolczuk and R. Wolczuk, "'Soft is beautiful...!' Ukraine's approach to regional integration," [in] G. Brogi et al. (eds.), *Ukraine Twenty Years After Independence: Perspectives, assessments, challenges*, Aracne editrice: Rome 2015, 23-44.

in Ukraine: in 2014, after the Euromaidan's change of government in Kyiv, and Russian aggression against Ukraine and its support of secessionist/irredentist forces resulted in even deeper structural conflict around the region.

The 30th anniversary of the post-Soviet nations' independence has been marked by multilayer sovereignty disputes, related military and economic conflicts, and ideological change. By 2021, all the limits of the practical application of the post-Cold War notion of sovereignty had become evident, as the sovereignist position manifested itself. Ukraine is surrounded by political regimes in which transnational norms of human rights are restricted and the power elites use official institutions to construct new "peoples," conservatively defined majorities of populations. These regimes vary from Putinism in Russia to Orbanism in Hungary to the Kaczyńskian doctrine in Poland.

Ukraine: Damaged Sovereignty and Development Options

For over 20 years, Ukraine developed as a state with an apolitical system and culture connected to the Soviet past, but with many revolutionary innovations after the change of 1991. In terms of sovereignty, the Soviet legacy was connected to the territory of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was internationally recognized as the territory of independent Ukraine, and to a ruling class stemming mainly from the late Soviet-era *nomenklatura*. However, there were important sovereignty innovations connected with the establishment of the national state, ideological pluralism, an open market economy, civic political identity, and multilateralism in foreign relations.

This combination was not unique: the developmental pattern where pre- and post-communist political and economic factors were merged was shared by many post-communist nations and usually termed the *Bridge* model.[18] This Bridge was seen as a cooperation setup to link the East/Russia and the West/EU economically and culturally. Such a model, whether in Latvia, Belarus or Ukraine, envisaged multilateral geopolitical "vectors" leading to certain economic gains from active trade and the recognition of sovereignty by key geopolitical players.

Unlike Latvia or Belarus, which were "bridges" with significant economic gain despite their definitive choice to participate in only one regional integration project, Ukraine developed as a "bridge" without a clear preference and without solid economic profit until 2014. Before that year, Ukraine moved in "revolutionary cycles," 1993-2004 and 2005-2013. In terms of sovereignty, these cycles had certain internal and external specificity. Both cycles started with a period of successful protests, political freedom and democratic promise. At that time, especially during the second cycle, Western support for Ukraine's sovereignty was growing, and Russian influence was clearly shrinking.

The next period would be characterized by popular disorientation and intensified competition among parties and clans. At that time, external influences were equally strong, with some parties and clans allying with the Western powers, and other groups allying with Russia. The third cycle usually led to a victory of one of the clans, which would then try to build an authoritarian pyramid and establish a stronger orientation towards Russia. This would provide the basis for the consolidation of opposition clans

18 J. Black and M. Johns (eds.), *The Return of the Cold War: Ukraine, the West and Russia*, Routledge: London 2016, p. 7; R. Dragneva-Lewers and K. Wolczuk, *Ukraine between the EU and Russia: The integration challenge*, Springer: Berlin 2015, p. 7ff; M. R. Freire, "Ukraine and the Restructuring of East-West Relations," *The Russian Challenge to the European Security Environment*, Palgrave Macmillan: Cham 2017, pp. 189-209.

and parties, as well as marginalized social groups, and the start of mass protests. Twice in the last 30 years, such a consolidation resulted with revolutionary attempts that shook the political system, and undermined its "bridge" role to all "shores." Moreover, external influences were reaching such a level that they threatened the existence of Ukraine as a sovereign nation.[19]

> **Both external and internal conditions for Ukraine's development have radically changed since 2014, and the external factors now play a much bigger role than internal ones**

The Bridge model finally lost its value for Ukraine since the start of a multilevel conflict with Russia and the loss of control over Crimea and parts of the Donbas in 2014. With this security challenge, Ukraine's revolutionary cycles seem to have come to an end. The annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in the Donbas have damaged Ukraine's state and national sovereignty, securitized politics, and diminished the electoral role of voters oriented towards Russia. The pro-Russian clans and parties have either closed or been marginalized. Security needs and patriotic motivations are helping maintain high levels of popular consolidation around Ukraine's sovereignty and independence.

The conflict with Russia has significantly limited trade with it and changed the shape of the Ukrainian economy. The annexation

and war have changed Ukrainian foreign policy from wavering multilateralism into a clear orientation towards allying with the US, the EU and NATO. In short, developmental dynamics and the national interest have changed: as a state with contested sovereignty over part of its territory, Ukraine cannot develop as a bridge anymore. Even if the Minsk Agreements were to be implemented and the communities of the uncontrolled Donbas reintegrated, the issue of Crimea would ultimately a factor for mutual estrangement and hostility between Moscow and Kyiv for decades to come. To ensure its security, Ukraine would need to rely on either consolidated Western support, or the combined support of several Western and non-Western partners, with the US as the primary ally.

Both external and internal conditions for Ukraine's development have radically changed since 2014, and the external factors now play a much bigger role than internal ones. 2021 saw increased Russia-US[20] and Russia-Ukraine[21] antagonism, which added to many other incentives for Washington and Kyiv to be allies. However, this alliance is limited by certain factors, such as an escalation in attacks in the Donbas and drawing of Russian troops to Ukraine's border over March-May 2021, leading to a visit by Secretary of State Blinken to Ukraine in May 2021. Even though there is consolidated bipartisan support for Ukraine in a possible open conflict with Russia, the US, as well as the EU, G7, and NATO, have offered neither military nor substantial economic support. Instead, the US and the "collective West" demanded greater reforms without offering clear membership prospects in the EU or NATO.

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19 For a more in-depth analysis of these cycles, see M. Minakov, *Dystopia and Development. Studies in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Eastern Europe*. Ibidem: Stuttgart 2018, p. 28ff.

20 J. Goldgeier, "U.S.-Russian Relations Will Only Get Worse," *The Foreign Affairs*, 6 April 2021, [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-04-06/us-russian-relations-will-only-get-worse access: 1 May 2021].

21 M. Samorukov, "Are Russia and Ukraine sliding into war?" *Carnegie Center Moscow*, 5 April 2021 [https://carnegie.ru/commentary/84250 access: 1 May 2021].

Given all this and seeing no prospects for reconciliation, or even a reduction in antagonism, between Russia and Ukraine, the Western powers, and other states of new Eastern Europe, it is our opinion that there are only two possible routes for Ukraine to develop: as a buffer zone or a battering ram. The bridge model is no longer viable.

The buffer zone model has already been in place since the annexation of Crimea and start of the conflict in the Donbas. Ukraine has radically decreased economic cooperation with Russia, which, in terms of import and export has dropped to the third or fourth place.[22] Diplomatic and political ties, as well as most bilateral agreements have been severed. Instead, Ukraine has introduced amendments into its Constitution enshrining the European and Euro-Atlantic course as a "constitutional" foreign policy priority and an additional source of sovereignty.

If the buffer zone model becomes the main model for Ukraine to develop in relation to US-Russia antagonism, the country will be even more isolated from Russia and strengthen a number of bilateral connections, with the US, the UK, Turkey, and major rivals to Russia among EU member-states. These ties would shore up the country's security, prevent the Russian conflict from escalating, and preserve the current political and socio-economic order. Ukraine's political class would be left to itself and its usual practice of the imitation of reforms and cooperation with the Western partners. The Donbas war would remain at the current level or would turn into a Transnistria-like frozen conflict. Ukraine's main geopolitical role would then be to keep Russia and the EU/West at distance from each other and, unfortunately, to serve as a space of their proxy operations.

In this case, Ukraine's state sovereignty would continue to be damaged. The post-Cold War combination of the three elements of sovereignty – state, individual, and regional – will not be stable in such a situation, as the buffer zone model involves the power elites consolidating power in their hands, reducing transnational norms of human rights, and limiting the influence of regional normative systems. If this model continues to be applied, Ukraine's sovereignty will follow.

The battering ram model is also possible if West-Russia antagonism deepens. To survive, Ukraine would need to enter into much deeper integration with NATO or with several Western military strongholds, such as the US and the UK. In this case, Western military bases would provide Ukraine with guaranteed security on government-controlled territory and minimal ties between Ukraine and Russia, Russia's allies and proxy-controlled Ukrainian communities in the Donbas and Crimea. All oligarchic clans with Russian ties would be eliminated, and other clans and Ukraine's political class as a whole would be forced to reject their usual self-isolating practices: adhering to the alliance with the West would become critical for maintaining power. To pay back, the Western allies would need to economically integrate Ukraine and cover its losses from breaking economic ties with Russia and Russia-oriented countries. Such a model would resemble the case of South Korea, with clear differences reflecting the times and geography.

In this model, Ukraine's sovereignty would be secured from further weakening. The balance of all three sovereignty elements would be re-established and supported from outside. However, the prospects for

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22 In 2020, the main importers to Ukraine were China (15.3%), Germany (9.4%), and Russia (8.5%); the main exporters of Ukrainian products were also China (14.4%), Poland (6.7%), and Russia (5.5%). See "Report," *Derzhstat*, 4 April 2021.

Ukraine's return of control over the lost communities and territories would recede to the indefinite future.

Which of the models becomes a reality depends on which model of new Cold War shapes relations between the West and Russia. The first Cold War had three major phases.[23] The period between post-war situation (1947) and the Cuban Crisis (1962) had no rules and was easy, applying proxy war methods like the Korean War or Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, and the build-up of arms in anticipation of a direct conflict. After the Cuban Crisis, both sides started following certain unwritten rules towards each other and limited their stand-off to proxy wars. Finally, after the Helsinki Accords (1975), a West-East détente became possible, though proxy wars continued.

Now, the question is which Cold War periods will today's US/West- Russia antagonism lead to. If it develops like the post-Helsinki period, the buffer zone is the most probable scenario for Ukraine. If antagonism deepens and return to the logic of the early Cold War period, the battering ram model becomes a more realistic option. The thinking of the post-Cuban Crisis period provides Ukraine with a choice between the two models.

Conclusions

Without a West-Russia détente and Russia-Ukraine, Russia-Georgia and Russia-Moldova reconciliations, the new Eastern Europe will remain a region of variously damaged sovereignties. This means that the conflicts will continue among the states, and socio-economic prosperity will not be ensured.

Given current geopolitical divisions and the interests of the power elites in Ukraine, Russia, the US, EU, and other involved parties, Ukraine should prepare to live with a long conflict, economic hardship and damaged sovereignty. Whichever development plans are drawn up, Ukraine's decision-makers need to deal with the limitations that damaged sovereignty imposes on any nation.

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23 M.P. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2010, p. 7ff.

UKRAINE: BUILDING INTERNAL STABILITY

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Ukraine continues to be trapped in its long statelessness. The historical errors that were made by the country's national elite are often listed among the reasons why the national state is not valued. A postcolonial syndrome is also among them. Still, Ukraine need not abandon its history, but rather formulate an approach towards critical historical events. Today there is a lack of understanding of the national interest as the basis for internal stability, although defining the national interest is the basis for survival. This article looks at what are Ukraine's national interests, who should define them, and how they might be formulated. How sufficient is the level of awareness of the national interests among the national elite? How can these interests be implemented? What can be done to make Ukraine resilient?

(Un)awareness of National Interests

In December 2017, Estonian Foreign Minister Sven Mikser stated, "Lack of internal stability prevents Ukraine from focusing on important reforms." He added that Tallinn, together with other European partners, was ready to help Kyiv find a solution to its many pressing issues.[1] This statement was particularly aimed at the country's domestic politics, but it equally describes one of the key obstacles on Ukraine's path of democratic reforms and transformations.

Mikser's comment raised some key points regarding internal stability and the national interest in maintaining it. How might stability be maintained without putting limitations on political activity? Who might stand for Ukrainian national interests? Who should define them? Could outside reform experts be helpful in building the Ukraine of our dreams? What procedures might protect the state from failure and make Ukraine more resilient? How might Ukrainians ensure the durability of their government and make bureaucracy a guarantor of stability, rather than a barrier to it?

Path of (In)dependence

Ukraine continues to be trapped by its long statelessness and the failures of state- and nation-building during the 20th century. Some historians and political experts speak of a postcolonial syndrome.[2] If Ukraine suffers from postcolonial syndrome, it must have been a colony, more specifically,

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1 *Україні потрібна внутрішня стабільність, щоб сфокусуватися на реформах.* [Ukraine needs internal stability to concentrate on reforms], [https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news/28909352.html access: 31 May 2021].

2 See, for instance, Матеріали третьої Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції 4-5 квітня 2014 року, м. Львів «Геноцид України у XX столітті. Україна під окупаційними режимами: історичні реалії та постколоніальний синдром». Львів, 2015; Рябчук, М. *Постколоніальний синдром. Спостереження*, 2011.

a Russian colony. Curiously, that point is still being debated. For example, Stanislav Kulchutskyi claims that Ukraine could be regarded as a colony only at the time of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky, when the state was in the process of being established and Russia subsumed it instead.[3] When analysing Russian-Ukrainian relations during the 19th and 20th centuries, we see that Russian authorities and even some Ukrainians did not separate Ukraine from Greater Russia, so how could Ukraine be called a colony?[4]

> **Ukraine continues to be trapped in its long statelessness. The historical errors that were made by the country's national elite are often listed among the reasons why the national state is not valued. A postcolonial syndrome is also among them**

Some experts argue that the real problem lay in the critical role that historical errors and poor decisions played in the state-building process. For example, agreeing to give up the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world in 1994, a flawed approach to military and defence policy, or lack of attention to Ukrainian cities during the liberation struggle of 1917-1921. They prefer thinking in "what if…" mode, rather than analysing the existing situation. No nation could have managed its way without mistakes and Ukraine is no exception.

Moreover, there are much more pronounced historical events that determine the specific way of that Ukraine has developed. Firstly, Ukrainians had minimal opportunities to develop a national culture and political institutions. Russian imperial policy throughout the 19th and 20th centuries led to the russification of the local population and other imperial pressures channelled economic resources to build and support the imperial economy, denying the right to be an autonomous nation. Instead, Ukrainians were treated as an ethnographic offshoot of a single Russian nation. Ukraine's national elites had an uneasy choice: to face repressions for starting or maintaining nation-building projects or to accept the Russian empire's rules. Some chose empire, and others chose to develop a sense of national identity and struggle for their nation's independence.[5] [6]

History as Weapon

Meanwhile, arguments over whether Ukraine was a Russian colony or not should not miss the danger that Russia represents. After all, after seven years of hybrid aggression, 6% of Ukrainians still think that Ukraine and Russia should have been united in one state.[7] Ukrainians need to strengthen political independence from Russia and overcome the forms of dependence

3 *Виховання голодом. Станіслав Кульчицький про причини і наслідки Голодомору* [Upbringing by Hunger. Stanislav Kulchitsky about reasons and consequences of Holodomor], 27 November 2020. [https://zaxid.net/vihovannya_golodom_n1511218 access: 31 May 2021].

4 Кульчицький, С. *Чи була Україна російською колонією в царські і радянські часи?* [Has Ukraine been a Russian colony in Tsar and Soviet times?], [in:] Academia. Terra Historiae. Студії на пошану Валерія Смолія. – К., 2020. – C.583-594.

5 Fedor, H., Belarus: A Country Study. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1995.

6 Plokhy, S*., Lost Kingdom: A History of Russian Nationalism from Ivan the Great to Vladimir Putin.* Allen Lane Publishing, 2017.

7 Ставлення населення України до Росії та населення Росії до України, лютий 2021 року [Attitude of Ukrainian citizens towards Russia, and attitude of Russian citizens towards Ukraine, February 2021], [https://www.kiis.com. ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1015&page=1 access 14 July 2021].

inherited from the past that have not been fully eliminated over the last three decades: economic, psychological and informational.

In this sense, it is impossible to overestimate the role of history in any nation's development and survival, so it is not surprising that Ukrainian national history has become a target in the hybrid war. History policy is one of the key elements of Russia's hybrid aggression against Ukraine. Some key messages are: Ukrainians are an artificial nation, Ukraine does not have the right to exist, Ukrainians are judeophobes and collaborated with the Nazis regime, and they were responsible for some episodes of the Holocaust. These claims are neither new nor unfamiliar, but nowadays, there is clear reason to consider them a part of informational and hybrid aggression.

How to counter this challenge? The past is impossible to forget, and it affects our lives, our visions and our coping strategies. Of course, it is also impossible to avoid its influence in international politics. Historians should discuss the painful areas of Ukrainian history. Historical traumas should be re-thought and re-lived, but not re-written. Every nation has its successes and failures during its history. On-and-off statehood during the 20th century is hardly Ukraine's problem alone, and when it came, independence did not fall from the sky on Ukrainians. The goal today should be to learn how to draw conclusions from historical events and processes, including those that are unpleasant for Ukrainians, such as the Holocaust or the Volyn tragedy, and not to try to re-write history in a more acceptable way. Ukrainians need not abandon their history, but they do need to formulate an approach to key historical events. These can become the drivers for a positive perception of statehood.

Let's start with the fact that Ukrainian elites participated in the empire-building and development of Russia. That caused problems in nation-building and national self-consciousness. The formation of a political nation continues today, but under the strong influence of objective factors, such as Russia's hybrid aggression, and the subjective visions and evaluations of external players.

> *It is impossible to overestimate the role of history in any nation's development and survival, so it is not surprising that Ukrainian national history has become a target in the hybrid war*

In the 30 years of its independence, the most prolonged period in the history of Ukrainian statehood, the political system and society have undergone three revolutions. That suggests that the country's democratic institutions are working poorly. Ukraine is still a country in transition and this seems to be an alarming signal.

The Maidan Was Good, But Not the Answer

What are the critical lessons of the three Ukrainian revolutions? First, revolutionary activity in Ukraine has taken place too often. Second, the peaceful nature of the Granite and Orange Revolutions determined the bloody scenario that ended the Revolution of Dignity. In the end, not one revolution's victory established the irreversibility of social and political changes in Ukraine. Thirdly, Ukraine has turned out to be the most revolution-minded of all the post-Soviet republics – evidence of tectonic changes in Ukrainian society. Nevertheless, even the brief analysis of the key events of the last three decades shows that revolutionary changes appear to be over. A fourth revolution could threaten the territorial integrity and effective development of Ukraine.

The state of Ukraine stood steadfast in the whirlwind of revolutionary events and continued to maintain foreign subjectivity. This suggests that revolutions had a positive effect on the Ukrainian state. Yet, Ukrainians as a political nation continue to lack consolidation around national interests as the basis of internal stability.

The revolutionary mood and changes it brought did not lead to a clear, rapid shaping of the country's national interests. Sadly enough, only the start of Russian aggression pushed the discussion towards the future of the state, to the question, what Ukraine do Ukrainians want to see over the next few years? This conversation will not be easy and cannot be reduced to elections alone. It has to take place. The definition of national interests, mechanisms for ranking and updating them, and open debate of these issues are the basis for national survival and can only strengthen Ukraine as a state.

Realizing its revolutionary evolution, the peak acceleration of movement towards European values, the restoration of territorial integrity and sovereignty, the deoligarchization of the economy based on the principle of the inviolability of private property, the building of a powerful army, the creation of an attractive image, and the completion of European and Euro-Atlantic integration – are all these part of the Ukrainian dream? Do Ukrainians understand European integration as a key national interest? The issues must be discussed.

The image of a state where revolutions are the only way to move forward is one possible image of Ukraine, but it is an image that is harmful to the country. The electoral process and public oversight must be improved to increase trust between state and society when developing an effective strategic communications system.

A specific triad is the driving force behind a national security system: national values, national interests and national goals. As Volodymyr Horbulin noted,

> **The state of Ukraine stood steadfast in the whirlwind of revolutionary events and continued to maintain foreign subjectivity. This suggests that revolutions had a positive effect on the Ukrainian state. Yet, Ukrainians as a political nation continue to lack consolidation around national interests as the basis of internal stability**

"[The] elements of the triad for all their importance and unconditional relationships are not equivalent. In their hierarchy, the first place belongs to national values as the least mobile and most stable system element. These values are formed during the historical process. The development of the material and spiritual culture of a society corresponds to the geopolitical direction of the country. National interests are a relatively dynamic element that is formed based on national values under the influence of long-term trends in social development. National goals are the most mobile element. They are determined by national interests, taking into account the domestic and international situation."[8]

Structuring national interests is a long, steady process in a complex historical

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8   Чернятевич, Я. Формування економічної політики держави у контексті забезпечення національної безпеки [Y. Chernyachevych, Formation of Economic policy of the state in the context of the national security] [in:] Національні цінності й національні інтереси в системі публічного управління. – К. , 2017., c. 175-178.

combination of economic, political, social, national-psychological, cultural, and other factors. That is why national interests are inextricably linked to their bearers: the people and their history. They have the closest relationship with the self-determination of a particular nation, with the formation of national statehood that is appropriate to a particular nation's forms and political and legal environment, and the norms of world development.

Anniversary on The Edge: Defining National Interests

Thirty years of independence have resulted in visible changes in the understanding and manifestation of Ukraine's national interests. The key result of these transformations is growing internal stability, internal consensus, and subjectivity in international relations. However, the challenges facing the Ukrainian state today sometimes raise unpleasant, difficult questions.

Some key points might help to define Ukrainian national interests:

- *Achieving peace and restoring territorial* integrity – the leading national interest in terms of scale and time. All others, including European integration and NATO membership, are derivatives and the instruments for achieving the main goal.

- *Eliminating Soviet traditions and elements of Soviet culture* – in particular, establishing national achievements for key anniversaries, such as 30 years of independence.

- *Focusing on process*, as process is sometimes more important than the result. And this is true for the democratic and sustainable development.

- *Preserving the democratic nature of the Ukrainian state* – and strengthening meaningful competition is the key to its development.

- *Having a clear plan for Baltic-Black Sea integration*, especially as Ukraine could become a regional leader in this part of Europe.

- *Investing in the military* – Ukraine is destined to increase military spending and qualitatively improve its defensive organization. Clearly, Russian threats and aggressions are not going to disappear at once or soon. One of the key lessons the 1917-1921 national liberation struggles that should be definitely remembered in the 21st century is to keep strengthening the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

- *Working to reduce the values gap* – European and Euro-Atlantic integration is not a mere slogan for election campaigning but a modus operandi in overcoming the gap with the region's countries. The values gap is not an easy gap to overcome.

- *Supporting a healthy middle class* – Ukraine needs not a symbolic deoligarchization but effective support for establishing a national bourgeoisie. This term may sound old-fashioned in the 21st century but its substance is the foundation for national economic stability and solid ground for the national business community.

- *Developing Ukraine's historical narrative* – This will always come under pressure from the narratives of other states in the modern world – Poland, Russia, Romania and Turkey are the closest and the most powerful in the region. It should be taken into consideration, that some of these narratives have vestiges of imperial thinking and some are effectively hybrid aggression.

- *Increasing energy independence and diversifying energy supplies* – This is partly a component of conflicted relations with Russia but it is also a guarantee of economic growth for Ukraine for upcoming years.

- *Improving media literacy and critical thinking* – This is especially critical in socio-political discourse. State support for such campaigns and initiatives is critical.

Henry John Temple, the 3rd Viscount Palmerston, made a speech in the House of Commons in 1848 in which he stated, "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow."[9] Despite its age, this quotation undoubtedly remains relevant today.

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9   *Lord Palmerston 1784-1865. British statesman; Prime Minister*, 1855-8, 1859-65.
    [https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191866692.001.0001/q-oro-ed6-00008130 access: 31 May 2021].

INDEPENDENCE AND THE LUBLIN TRIANGLE INITIATIVE

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The concept of sovereignty has been evolving. This article is an attempt to define "European sovereignty" and to compare it with the approaches emerging in Central and Eastern Europe. How might independence be defined today? Paul Samuelson's theory of public goods plays a special role in this analysis to answer the main topic: whether the Lublin Triangle initiative has a chance to strengthen the independence of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine.

Sovereignty Yesterday and Today

Sovereignty does not have a single definition in international law that would unequivocally say which attributes of a state are sufficient to constitute it as a sovereign. Moreover, the principle of state sovereignty is reflected, not only in international law, but also in domestic law. States often decide for themselves what attributes reflect their sovereignty.

However, one of the sources that offers common ground for understanding sovereignty is the United Nations Charter and the principle of *sovereign equality of states* expressed in it. It is possible to speak here of certain rules, such as the rights of a state arising from full sovereignty, which are expressed in the freedom to choose and develop its own social, economic and cultural system, and the inviolability of the territorial integrity and political independence of the state. The principle of *sovereign equality of states* was also confirmed in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, 1975), so in looking for the most universal definition of sovereignty, the principles expressed *explicite* in these various acts of international law.

Equally importantly, the concept of state sovereignty has evolved, and at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, it is possible to even speak of a revolution resulting from growing state interdependence in the multidimensional processes of globalisation and state integration, including European integration. Adam Łazowski and Anna Zawidzka write: "[T]he classical notion of sovereignty, referring to self-rule and entirety, is collapsing."[1] However, J. Kranz counters: "[S]overeignty does not disappear with the intensification of international relations and the development of international law. Rather, it should be believed that, with the evolution of international law, the perception of sovereignty and its functions changes, as well as the role of the state."[2]

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1   A. Łazowski, A. Zawidzka, *Prawo międzynarodowe publiczne (Public international law)*, C.H. Beck: Warsaw 2001, p. 73.

2   J. Kranz, *Państwo i jego suwerenność (The state and its sovereignty)*, "Państwo i Prawo (The State and the Law)" #7/96, p. 5.

The presence of a state in these international structures within the framework of integration processes is also an issue that needs to be discussed. Does a state's membership in a given community undermine its sovereignty? One of the answers to this question was provided by former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Prof. Jacek Czaputowicz, a scholar of the sovereignty concept: "If we define sovereignty as the ability of a state to act in pursuit of its national interest, then membership of the EU or NATO does not necessarily imply a limitation of sovereignty, but may be its exercise."[3]

There is no doubt that, apart from international circulation, the notion of sovereignty can be defined differently at the domestic level, i.e., at the level of the individual state itself. In Central and Eastern Europe, a particular understanding of sovereignty as the exclusive attribute of a state is repeatedly expressed. French President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 spoke for the first time of "European sovereignty" as complementary to that of national sovereignty: "Only Europe can ... guarantee true sovereignty, which is our ability to function in the modern world to defend our values and interests." Macron goes on to expand on European sovereignty by outlining what it covers: security, migration, cooperation with Africa, sustainable development, the digital revolution, and the EU's economic and monetary weight in the world.[4] Czaputowicz disagrees with such an understanding of sovereignty, stating: "[I]f sovereignty is a supreme power that has

no other power over itself, then the effect of European sovereignty would be, for example, the absence of French sovereignty."[5]

In Central and Eastern Europe, an example of the understanding of sovereignty as *supreme power* could be the Hungarian use of the concept of *illiberal democracy* expressed by Prime Minister Victor Orban. This objectively fits into the possibility of choosing and developing a state's own social, economic and cultural system.

The subjective perception of sovereignty in this part of Europe can be seen as a result of its specific history, which Polish Foreign Minister Prof. Zbigniew Rau commented on: "Apart from [Austria – author's note] all other countries in our region have had similar experiences. Above all, each of our countries has lost its independence at least twice in the last five hundred years. [...] If we look at the map of those times [the Congress of Vienna - author's note], we can see that between the great powers: Prussia, Austria, Russia, and Turkey – that is, where the Three Seas region extends today –, there was only one sovereign state. That was... Montenegro. The result of the long-term loss of independence was the experience of a lack of subjectivity."[6]

With some semantic background, the question of sovereignty in the countries of the Lublin Triangle Initiative can be considered. At first glance, it's clear that Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine are in different positions when it comes to securing their state sovereignty. Poland and

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3   A. Koziński, *Jacek Czaputowicz: Jesteśmy w stu procentach suwerenni (Jacek Czaputowicz: We are one hundred percent sovereign)*, "Polska Times," 26 March 2018, [www.polskatimes.pl access: 12 May 2021].

4   E. Macron, *Initiative pour l'Europe. Discours pour une Europe Souveraine, Unie, Democratique (Initiative for Europe. Speech for a Sovereign, United and Democratic Europe)*, Elysee.fr, 26 September 2017, [www.elysee.fr access: 12 May 2021].

5   A. Koziński, n. 3.

6   G. Górny, *Prof. Zbigniew Rau: Trójmorze jest dobrodziejstwem dla UE (Prof. Zbigniew Rau: The Three Seas Initiative is a boon for the EU)*, "Trimarium.pl," [www.trimarium.pl access 2 May 2021].

Lithuania are long-standing members of NATO and the European Union. Although a state's participation in these communities often results in shifting some of the state's sovereign attributes to the supranational level – Lithuania's transfer of its monetary policy to the EU level by adopting the Euro being a case in point –, it is still the exercise of the state's sovereign will. In the case of Ukraine, there problems with effectively retaining sovereignty in separate districts of its eastern regions and in Crimea, thanks to Russia's illegal occupation.

While the sovereignty of Poland and Lithuania is limited by certain international treaties the two countries accepted, the sovereignty of Ukraine on some of its territory has been restricted by Russia's hostile actions.

The Concept of Independence Today

The concept of independence for a state is closely linked to the word's actual definition, which has been the subject of scientific inquiry for years.[7] Georg Jellinek's fundamental conception points to three elements without which a state cannot exist. These are territory, population and state authority.[8] Independence can thus be defined as the ability of a state to maintain its own territory and to protect the interests of the population living in that territory by exercising effective power over that population.[9]

Jellinek's theory is widely recognised. Therefore, from the point of view of international law, these attributes define a state and its independence. The key question seems to be whether and how a state can defend it, and what are the dangers of losing independence.

> **While the sovereignty of Poland and Lithuania is limited by certain international treaties the two countries accepted, the sovereignty of Ukraine on some of its territory has been restricted by Russia's hostile actions**

The threats to independence have a new dimension today, although the definition of independence is not changing as rapidly as the concept of sovereignty, which is linked to the development of interdependence among the actors on the international stage. The changes in the threats to independence are primarily influenced by developments in military technology and techniques. Although states today face new challenges and not only military ones, their goal is still to ensure effective sovereignty over their own territory and provide security for their citizens.

Today, threats to independence can be observed not only on the military level, that is, defending the state's territory against aggression from a hostile army, but also – perhaps even more importantly – information and cyber security, the control of which could provide a basis for armed

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7 See L. Antonowicz, *Państwa i terytoria: Studium prawnomiędzynarodowe (States and Territories: International Law Study)*, Państwowe Wydaw. Naukowe: Warsaw 1988.

8 G. Jellinek, *Das Recht Des Modernen Staates V1: Allgemeine Staatslehre (The Law of the Modern State V1: General State Doctrine)*, Kessinger Publishing: Berlin 2010; pp. 381-420.

9 See Barrington, Lowell W., editor. *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States*. University of Michigan Press, 2006. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.126246. Accessed 30 May 2021.

aggression or attaining the goals of a third country on a state's territory, and energy, the subordination of which could lead to economic decline and its eventual dependence on raw materials from abroad.

> **The threats to independence have a new dimension today, although the definition of independence is not changing as rapidly as the concept of sovereignty, which is linked to the development of interdependence among the actors on the international stage**

The independence of a state today can also be seen from the perspective of the supplier of public goods, which were characterised by Paul Samuelson in *The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure*.[10] According to this model, public goods are characterised by the impossibility to exclude them from consumption and, at the same time, by their non-competitiveness.[11] And so we may include national defence, the police, fire brigades, and information. A state that is unable to defend its territory and ensure the security of its citizens, including information security, that is, to ensure that information is secure and to shape the information space in an unfettered manner, free from the influence of other centres of power, can hardly be considered independent in the light of the public goods theory.

Poland learned the importance of cyber security during last year's secondary school exams, when its schools received information *en masse* about explosive devices. Bomb alarms were reported in more than 100 educational institutions during a key exam, the passing of which opens university doors to students. Polish investigators determined that Russian services were behind the false alarms. Analysis of the connections led to servers in St Petersburg that had previously been used to spread disinformation in various parts of the world. What is more, the individuals who carried the operation out had logged on to accounts used by Russia's military intelligence service.[12]

Russia's cyber breach capabilities were also tested on Lithuania. Russian intelligence was said to have used IT infrastructure in Lithuania to launch cyber-attacks on targets in other countries, including entities working on a vaccine against COVID-19. This information was provided by the Lithuanian State Security Department in its *National Threat Assessment* 2021 report.[13]

Lublin Triangle Initiative: Response to Threats to Independence in CEE

Military threats – a field of cooperation for Lithuania, Ukraine, and Poland

In July 2020, a new trilateral initiative by Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland was launched, taking the name "Lublin Triangle" from the meeting place of the three countries' foreign ministers. The location was not accidental, as it was in Lublin that the political union of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, composed also of some lands of present-day Ukraine, and the Kingdom of Poland was established in the 16th century. The current initiative aims to deepen regional cooperation. During the meeting, a joint declaration was adopted,

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10 P.A. Samuelson, *The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure*, "The Review of Economics and Statistics," Vol. 36, #4, 1954, pp. 387-389.

11 R.G. Holcombe, *A Theory of the Theory of Public Goods*, "Review of Austrian Economics," #10 (1) 1997, pp. 1-22.

12 *Rosyjskie specsłużby odpowiedzialne za fałszywe alarmy bombowe w Polsce (Russian special services responsible for false bomb alarms in Poland)*, "CyberDefence24," 11 May 2020, [www.cyberdefence24.pl access: 6 May 2021].

13 S. Palczewski, *Rosja wykorzystała infrastrukturę Litwy do cyberszpiegostwa (Russia has used Lithuania's infrastructure for cyberespionage)*, "CyberDefence24," 5 March 2021, [www.cyberdefence24.pl access: 6 May 2021].

in which the ministers noted the benefits of creating political, economic, scientific and cultural ties among Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine.[14]

Such a broad outline of areas for cooperation raised both hopes and concerns among the members. For Ukraine, this is a chance to fill the void left by the Eastern Partnership and to move closer to the EU and transatlantic structures.

> **Military cooperation between Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland is important on several levels for defending and strengthening the independence of these countries. It is also an opportunity to bring Ukraine closer to full NATO membership**

Experts involved in Central and Eastern European studies in Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine agree on the scope of cooperation under the Lublin Triangle Initiative. In a poll conducted by the Foreign Affairs Portal (PSZ.pl) on the future of this format, the consensus was that it could and would serve military cooperation.[15] As Łukasz Adamski of the Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding argues: "The natural area is the security issue and the Belarusian issue. The security issue – because it is in the interests of Poland and Lithuania to strengthen Ukraine and its defence against Russian aggression."[16]

This idea was already evident during the initiative's inauguration, when the Foreign Ministers of all three countries visited the headquarters of LITPOLUKRBRIG, the multinational military unit located in Lublin. This multinational brigade with all-military capabilities designed to independently conduct military operations. The unit includes specialist military units seconded from the Polish 21st Highland Rifle Brigade, the Ukrainian 80th Landing and Assault Brigade, and the Lithuanian Grand Duchess Biruta Lancers Battalion.

This trilateral brigade is primarily intended to increase the interoperability capabilities of the Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian armies and, as the Polish foreign ministry noted, "to implement NATO standards in the Ukrainian Armed Forces primarily through training of officers and units of the Ukrainian army in these standards, and the planning and execution of operational tasks, and maintaining the operational readiness of the units."[17]

Military cooperation between Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland is important on several levels for defending and strengthening the independence of these countries. It is also an opportunity to bring Ukraine closer to full NATO membership. In light of the recent demonstration of force by the Russian Federation and the accumulation of troops on Ukraine's borders, there has been a clear statement from President Zelenskyy that Ukraine will again seek the NATO membership action plan (MAP).

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14 *Spotkanie ministrów spraw zagranicznych Polski, Litwy i Ukrainy (Meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine)*, "Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Gov.pl" 28 July 2020, [www.gov.pl access: 8 May 2021].

15 B. Bodalska, *Trójkąt Lubelski – nowy format współpracy Polski, Litwy i Ukrainy. Z jakimi zadaniami? (Lublin Triangle - a new format of cooperation between Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. With what tasks?)*, "Euractiv.pl," 29 July 2020, [www.euractiv.pl access: 7 May 2021].

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

Although the North Atlantic Alliance has been talking about an open-door policy for new members since 2019 through the Secretary General and this was also reiterated recently by the new US administration, there is no consensus among NATO countries on the prospects for Ukraine being admitted as a full NATO member.

When asked about this possibility by Carnegie Europe, experts from Western European countries expressed quite serious scepticism.[18] Firstly, Ukraine is at war with Russia and its formal admission to NATO could result in an even more aggressive policy from Moscow. Secondly, Ukraine's accession to the Alliance would have to mean overt support for military operations in the east of the country, while the absence of such support would mean that NATO is an alliance on paper only, like the alliance of Poland, France and Great Britain in 1939. The majority of the European members do not want an open test of alliance commitments. Third and finally, the cohesion of the alliance is a debatable issue today. European states are considering implementing Macron's concept of European sovereignty and there are voices about strengthening military capabilities within the EU itself. When this is added to the ambiguous position of Erdogan's Turkey, the vision for Kyiv's aspirations is quite bleak.

This does not change the fact that it is Poland and Lithuania that are Ukraine's most faithful supporters in its endeavours. Firstly, these countries themselves have emerged from the Russian sphere of influence, and secondly, Russia is still their greatest military threat, as they are NATO frontline states. Regardless of the vision of military alliances in Western Europe, Poland and Lithuania will stand by the need to strengthen NATO and Ukraine, because this is what their interests require and, on this point, they coincide with those of Kyiv.

For Ukraine, however, pursuing NATO membership without any guarantee is difficult. The price of reforming is high, but if Ukraine wants to ensure its independent and sovereign in Europe, it will have to pay it. Even if Ukraine does not join NATO in the next few years, it will have a chance to strengthen its deterrence capacity against Russia, modernise its army and shore up its statehood.

For Poland and Lithuania, Ukraine is a testing ground, a lesson in how to deal with Russian military aggression and how not to make mistakes. These countries should pay for this lesson first and foremost with the knowledge of how to implement NATO standards in the army, how to train officers and plan operations, and with support for Ukraine's NATO aspirations.

Energy: A new dimension of independence

Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania are aware that the Initiative will be an important mechanism for strengthening the role of Central Europe in the EU and to promote Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic integration in terms of energy and cooperation in this area.[19] Energy security is a priority for every country and in this region, it is especially important to become independent of Russia's energy leverage. Energy cooperation should be supported and reflected in state strategies and by individual actions in line with international and national legal frameworks.

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18 see J. Dempsey, *Judy Asks: Should NATO Admit Ukraine?*, Carnegieeurope.eu, 15 April 2021, [carnegieeurope.eu access: 9 May 2021].

19 N. Dordević, *Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania launch Lublin Triangle, a new regional cooperation initiative*, "Emerging Europe," 29 July 2020, [www.emerging-europe.com access: 7 May 2021].

The growing potential of regional energy cooperation can be seen in the development of infrastructure, such as the option of exporting liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Ukraine from the Świnoujście terminal in north-western Poland and, possibly quite soon, from Lithuania's Klaipeda. Indeed, Lithuania's Energy Ministry has often stated that Lithuania is willing to contribute to the diversification of gas supplies to Ukraine as soon as the Poland-Lithuania Gas Interconnection pipeline is completed.[20]

In order to diversify gas supplies, the construction of the Baltic Pipe was started and the LNG terminal in Świnoujście was launched. The Baltic Pipe is a strategic infrastructure project aimed at providing a new gas supply corridor on the European market. The pipeline will deliver natural gas from Norway's Continental Shelf to the Danish and Polish markets, and to consumers in neighbouring countries. This is the main reason why Poland is implementing gas connection projects with Lithuania, Slovakia, Ukraine, and the Czech Republic. Furthermore, the expansion of the Baltic Pipe transmission networks will also enable the distribution of gas from Poland to Denmark and Sweden.[21] Baltic Pipe should bring significant social and economic benefits to Poland, Denmark and other countries in the Baltic region and in Central and Eastern Europe – including Lithuania and Ukraine. By diversifying natural gas supplies, these countries will become independent of Russian supplies.

A further important element in regional cooperation is a new gas pipeline connecting the natural gas transmission systems of Poland and Lithuania, which can undoubtedly be included in the Lublin Triangle strategy. The construction of the new pipeline is currently underway. The partners are Gaz-System SA, the operator of the Polish transmission system, and AB Amber Grid, the operator of the Lithuanian system.

The Poland-Lithuania interconnection (GIPL) is perceived by the European platform as infrastructure that contributes to the integration of the European gas industry and shaping a liberalized gas market in northern Europe. This new transmission infrastructure will allow the off-take of gaseous fuel through the distribution network, as well as the direct connection of large industrial customers to the high-pressure gas pipeline system.[22] The GIPL pipeline to Poland should be completed by December 2021 and will also give Finland, Estonia and Latvia access to LNG from continental Europe.

While energy cooperation between Poland and Lithuania seems to be easier, cooperation with Ukraine is more complicated. Polish Gaz-System and TSOUA, the Ukrainian gas pipeline management company, are involved in a project to build a new gas connection. The planned connection is 1.5 km long on the Polish side and 110 km on the Ukrainian side, and the technical transmission capacity in both directions will be about 54.86 TWh/year. In February 2019, a construction permit was obtained on the Polish side. However, in January 2020, the president of the new operator of the gas transmission system of Ukraine announced that Ukraine was not interested in the project, due to the

20 J. Bornio, *Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine Inaugurate 'Lublin Triangle'*, The Jamestown Foundation, 5 August 2020, [www.jamestown.org access: 7 May 2021].

21 A. Wojtaszewska, *Bezpieczeństwo energetyczne Polski i regionu w kontekście budowy Baltic Pipe (Energetic security of Poland and the region in the context of the construction of the Baltic Pipe)*, ECPP.org.pl, [www.ecpp.org.pl access: 8 May 2021].

22 *Gazociąg Polska-Litwa (Gas pipeline Poland-Lithuania)*, Gaz-System.pl, [www.gaz-system.pl access: 9 May 2021].

alternative of using the virtual reverse at the border with Poland.[23]

Analysing cooperation between Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine, and their individual relations with each other, it is plain that the goal of Lithuania and Ukraine is energy independence from Russia. They are both working to synchronize their power systems with the EU and cut off the IPS UP network system launched during the Soviet period. They also oppose the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. In December 2018, both countries began closer cooperation in the power industry, including the shutdown of nuclear power plants, and the gas industry. Lithuania still counts on Ukraine's support in blocking energy imports from the nuclear power plant in Ostrowiec, located on the Belarusian-Lithuanian border.[24]

> **Although, all three Lublin Triangle Initiative members are currently at different levels of independence in these fields, there is common ground for cooperation among them**

It should be emphasized that Poland continues to get gas deliveries from Gazprom because of its 1996 Yamal contract, which expires at the end of 2022. Poland consumed 19.7 billion cu m of natural gas in 2018 and it's on an upward trend. As much as 60% of this fuel comes from the Russian Federation.[25] The same is true of Lithuania and, even more so, of Ukraine. This high dependence on Russia is exacerbated by the risk of growing gas prices as Russia manipulates supply and the threat of gas supply disruptions due to political conflicts. This clearly has had an impact on the shaping of the Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian energy markets.

The main goal of energy cooperation among Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine under the Lublin Triangle should be independence from Russia and diversification of energy sources through individual and regional initiatives.

Summary

The concept of independence, while not as volatile as the concept of sovereignty, continues to evolve, due in large part to the new challenges that states are facing nowadays. These are not only military ones, although this sector remains essential to state independence, but also threats to information and cyber security, as well as energy security.

Although, all three Lublin Triangle Initiative members are currently at different levels of independence in these fields, there is common ground for cooperation among them. In terms of military and cyber security, Ukraine is again actively pursuing NATO membership and taking part in initiatives such as the LITPOLUKRBRIG multinational military unit, which could help bring the country closer to the desired standards. For Poland and Lithuania, a strong and independent Ukraine remains a goal in protecting their own independence. Ukraine comes also with a lesson for the other two members on how to deal with Russian military and informational aggression.

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23 B. Sawicki, *Znamy warunki powstania Gazociągu Polska-Ukraina, ale do jego realizacji wciąż daleko (The conditions for the construction of the Poland-Ukraine gas pipeline are known, but its realization is still far away)*, BiznesAlert.pl, 26 April 2021, [www.biznesalert.pl access 9 May 2021].

24 D. Szeligowski, K. Raś, *Litwa jako adwokat Ukrainy na arenie międzynarodowej (Lithuania as Ukraine's advocate in the international arena)*, PISM.pl 15 February 2018, [www.pism.pl access: 9 May 2021].

25 A. Wojtaszewska, n 19.

Energy security is an important value for every state and a goal in itself. An important measure to achieve this goal is introducing it into the state's internal security system. Partnership in this area is a matter of utmost importance.

The Lublin Triangle Initiative members came together to achieve a desired level of energy security by linking various solutions. They are primarily focused on combining innovations in the energy sector within the framework of a regional agreement. The condition for this is the creation of equal operating conditions for all participants in the energy market. It is important to ensure stable conditions that will make it possible to cover the current and future needs of the three economies, which can be done with additional support through individual country activities.

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