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**POLITICAL AND MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL  
SECURITY OF POLAND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UKRAINIAN  
CRISIS.**

Summary of the PhD thesis under the supervision of

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## SUMMARY

This thesis has been devoted to the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on the security of Poland in the political and military dimension. The considerations in the thesis were made on the strength of a realist paradigm and a detailed theory of structural realism. In the thesis, five hypotheses were adopted, which contributed to the verification of a fundamental thesis, according to which the Ukrainian crisis had a pro-quality impact on the security of Poland in the political and military dimension. The Ukrainian crisis and its accompanying events became one of the biggest challenges Poland faced after 1989. Polish security policy towards Ukraine, from the moment Ukraine gained independence, had invariably assumed supporting its sovereignty, and later also its Western vector of foreign policy. As part of the "Giedroyc doctrine" (the "ULB doctrine") implemented for the needs of Polish eastern policy, the independence of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus was supposed to hinder the revival of Russian imperialism and push away the threats it generated deep into the Eurasian space, creating a strategic safety buffer between Poland and Russia. Because of the Ukrainian crisis, Polish power centres faced a decision-making dilemma, the essence of which was the question of how to conduct foreign policy in the light of the events beyond the eastern border.

The Ukrainian crisis was influenced by many factors which can be divided, for the purpose of clarification of the analysis, on the basis of the source of their origin into internal and external factors, which were in fact overlapping. The Ukrainian crisis started when the most active part of Ukrainian citizens decided to make mass demonstrations as a form of opposition to the resignation from signing the AA (Association Agreement) with the EU, which constituted an opportunity to improve the internal condition of the state. From the perspective of the research problem raised in this thesis, more important were the external conditions of the Ukrainian crisis, which reduced its essence to the form of geopolitical Western-Russian rivalry, initiated before the outbreak of the Euromaidan revolution. Since Russian strategic culture operates in terms of spheres of influence and it perceives the EU enlargement policy as a form of expansion by other means and as the first phase of the future tightening of military cooperation within NATO, Western actions in Ukraine were believed to affect Russian national interest, and even to threaten Russian security.

The events of the political crisis lasting from 21 November 2013 to 21 February 2014 were characterised by varying dynamics and evolutionary course. In the first pro-European phase, supporters of the pro-European development vector of the country gathered on the streets of Kiev and other towns, mainly in central and western Ukraine. The breakthrough



moment, which triggered another mobilization of protesters and a clear reorientation of the nature of their speeches in the anti-government direction, was the pacification of the few protestors who remained on the Maidan square in Kiev (30 November 2013). This act led to an increase in the number of citizens participating in the citizens' demonstrations and their radicalization, which was deepening as the Euromaidan went on. In response to the riots, the regime of Viktor Yanukovych chose the tactics of strategic anticipation. From 18 February 2014, in Kiev, bloody clashes took place, in which only on the protesters' side more than 100 people lost their lives. The victims later became a factor legitimizing the seizure of power by representatives of the opposition. As a result of these events, Viktor Yanukovych fled from Kiev, and the interim government was formed by representatives of the opposition.

International determinants of the crisis, including above all political involvement of external actors, were more important from the perspective of the problem discussed in the thesis and the adopted cognitive paradigm. For Russia, Viktor Yanukovych was the guarantor of the temporary halt of Western-Ukrainian cooperation and the factor expanding the Russian influence on the entire Ukrainian state. As a result, the withdrawal of Yanukovych from power became a strategic defeat for Russia, all the more acute that one of the clearly articulated postulates of the new Ukrainian decision-making elites was to strengthen relations with the West. The withdrawal also threatened Ukraine with breaking out of the Russian sphere of influence. In opposition to Euromaidan events, and while it was going on, Russia led a narrative which was stigmatizing protests, defining Euromaidan as a "fascist revolution" from the West, and later consistently undermined the legitimacy of the new authorities. As shown by the following events, these activities were also directed at creating a positive narrative legitimizing Russia's future activities and creating a stimulus for protests of this part of Ukrainian society which did not support the events of Euromaidan. From the perspective of the West, the events of the political crisis were presented in the rhetorical layer as a struggle of a civil society with a hostile and forceful regime. It was widely believed that Russia was responsible for the crisis, and its sources were seen in the pressure imposed on President Viktor Yanukovych in connection with the planned signing of the association agreement with the EU. Western politicians often appeared on the Euromaidan forum, providing protesters with their support. Such actions certainly had a mobilizing effect on Ukrainian activists, but at the same time, it made the Russian narrative about the West-inspired coup credible. Western support for protests was also expressed through the introduction of further sanctions against Russia: first personal, individual, and then sectoral. Within the meaning of the cognitive

paradigm adopted in the thesis, the Ukrainian crisis was a classic geopolitical conflict over domination over the territory of Ukraine, between Russia and the West, understood in the block category. A special part in this dispute, mainly due to the relatively high level of involvement, was played by Poland.

Due to the endeavour to make Ukraine an area free of Russian influence, the withdrawal of Ukraine from the AA with the EU was received with dissatisfaction in Poland. The obvious consequence was the support for social demonstrations, which were perceived as a chance to reorient the strategy chosen by Viktor Yanukovich. Taking into account the change of power in Poland in 2015, it was important that both the politicians of the coalition in power at that time and the largest opposition political party were involved in supporting the opposition forces during the Euromaidan revolution. Polish MEPs were also relatively active; using the authority of the EU institutions, they called on the protesting Ukrainians to keep on pressuring the government and ensured them about the Western and, above all, Polish support. The main recipient of the narrative conducted by Polish politicians was the Ukrainian society, which was considered an ally for the implementation of interests coinciding with the national interest of Poland. Recognizing this relationship in realistic terms, it should be stated that by supporting the events of the Ukrainian revolution, Poland pursued the assumptions of its security policy towards Ukraine, seeking to re-enter Ukraine into a pro-European course. As the events of the following weeks showed, the tactics chosen by Polish politicians proved to be extremely effective. The highest form of Polish involvement during the Euromaidan revolution was leading by Radosław Sikorski a mission aimed at resolving the political crisis in Ukraine. The very process of forming the mission and entrusting the role of the chairman to a Polish politician was beneficial from the point of view of pushing for solutions that would coincide with the Polish national interest and controlling the course of the negotiations, or at least the current orientation in them. Although several rounds of negotiations with representatives of the opposition, the government side and representatives of France, Germany, Poland and Russia led to reaching an agreement, it was not accepted by the demonstrators, who were no longer controlled by any political force. The agreement itself was a catalyst for change and prevented further bloodshed, and from the perspective of the Polish security policy contributed to the power shift in Ukraine – to one which favoured Polish national interest.

Due to the strategic failure which for Russia was losing the influence over the entire territory of the Ukrainian state to the West, Russia resorted to the last form of pressure which



allowed it to continue its effective policy towards the Ukrainian crisis, namely armed response. In the context of threats generated by Russia on a wider scale, from a cognitive point of view, it was valuable that the country proceeded with a direct military intervention only when the potential of other tools run out. Russian hybrid activities during the Ukrainian crisis were divided into two phases, which can be distinguished primarily due to different international consequences and diametrically opposite motives of actions taken by Russia. This was the "Crimean operation" phase and the phase of destabilization of eastern Ukraine. A pro-Western coup in Ukraine threatened Russia with the loss of control over one of the most important geopolitical territories – Crimea. In the face of the expected reorientation of the Ukrainian vector of foreign policy and the desire to bring this country closer to NATO, the loss of the peninsula would mean for Russia not only its neutralization, but also a takeover by an antagonistic international entity. Because of a threat of such a scenario, Russian hybrid operations were directed in the first phase to the Crimean Peninsula, which was instantly occupied, with the use of Russian troops stationed in the region and camouflaged special units. Both the practice of the operation and the accompanying narrative were a conscious operation, the essence of which was the deliberate limitation of military operations and keeping them below the threshold of war. The aim was to create an impression of bottom-up incidents and disorientation of the West, essential from the perspective of the research problem. The difficulty in discovering the actual preparatory agent or in proving the alleged acts significantly delayed Western reactions and the development of a coherent position. The gradual increase in Russian involvement was also a survey activity performed to see how far Russia could go in its operations. The local social factor raised the effectiveness of hybrid activities and allowed for the implementation of a wider strategy both on the local, intra-Ukrainian, and on international levels. The Crimean referendum, as well as the subsequent annexation of the peninsula, were to legitimize the Russian intervention. In this way, Russia was appealing to the right of nations to self-determination and invoked the case of independence of Kosovo for propaganda purposes. The annexation of Crimea by Russia took place on 18 March 2014 and ended the first phase of the hybrid war in Ukraine. Ruthless and dynamic operations of Russia in Crimea were a surprise to the West, confused about the situation. The annexation of Crimea, which was an act of questioning the borders created as a result of the collapse of the USSR, generated a sense of threat in the Western countries, and therefore also in Poland. Its core was the fear of repeating a similar scenario in another area, such as Belarus or Baltic states, regions essential because of the NATO alliance guarantees. Certain fears were also linked to the specificity of hybrid operations, and especially

tooperations below the threshold of war. Ambiguities caused by such an act may seriously threaten allied solidarity and cause difficulties in formulating a definite answer. Since Ukraine was not covered by allied guarantees, the West had a limited possibility to react, which in turn paradoxically benefited the region's security, locating the conflict and not making it an element of Western-Russian military rivalry. Ukraine, unable to counteract Russian intervention, has made an attempt to internationalize the conflict. Responses of the West in the rhetorical layer, initially overly cautious, became more dynamic only after Vladimir Putin consented to the use of troops in Ukraine (1 March 2014). Being aware of the limitations of its own potential, Poland sought to internationalize the crisis in line with the aims of Ukraine. It was due to Polish pressure that provisions defining the aggressive nature of Russian actions were included in the statement of 3 March issued by the EU Council. It was also at the request of Poland that a meeting of the North Atlantic Council was convened on 4 March, pursuant to Article 4 of the Washington Treaty. Poland also sought to consolidate the position of the countries of the region, which condemned Russia's actions at the beginning of March, through cooperation platforms such as the Nordic-Baltic Eight and the Visegrad Group. Clearly confrontational rhetoric of Polish authorities, unequivocal calls for imposing sanctions on Russia and stressing the necessity of consolidation of the West around security issues put Poland first of all countries involved in the crisis. However, Russian tactics of limited aggression did not favour the development of a common position by EU countries, including the policy of sanctions or the militarization of the eastern flank of NATO.

After the effective annexation of Crimea, Russian potential was directed to southeast Ukraine. The main purpose of Russia's actions was to revolt the social factor, which with the subversive support was supposed to allow taking over control of as many Ukrainian oblasts as possible. As the events of the following months showed, the purpose of the Russian operation was not to annex further territories, but to destabilize the interior of Ukraine, which would hinder cooperation with the West and force federalization of the state. The scenario of federalization, mainly due to the indifference of this part of the society Russia wanted to revolt, was only implemented in part of the eastward Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, where People's Republics (DPR and LPR) were proclaimed at the beginning of April. In the context of Western-Russian rivalry, the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis was a form of pressure diplomacy directed against the West to force it into strategic concessions. In response to the annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of some Ukrainian regions, as well as the Western states continuing the narrative supporting the new Ukrainian government and



condemning Russian actions, on 21 March 2014, immediately after the annexation of Crimea, the political part of AA of Ukraine with the EU was signed. In the meantime, the Polish government continued its policy of internationalization of the crisis, and also called for the increase of NATO's military capability in the eastern flank region, pointing out that Russia's actions pose a direct threat to Poland as well. Such a narrative coincided with real initiatives undertaken by Western countries.

In response to the separatist movements spreading in the east, the new Ukrainian government began an anti-terrorist operation (ATO), which successfully continued the offensive until August 2014. Due to the expected defeat of the separatist troops, the first Russian offensive took place at the end of August 2014, causing severe losses to Ukrainian units and allowing for the regrouping in the ranks of separatists. Since the clashes escalated, there were attempts to overcome the crisis via international negotiations. Their dominant platform, confirming the adequacy of the cognitive paradigm chosen in the thesis, was the "Normandy format" established in June 2014. From the perspective of the research problem, it is important that its formation meant excluding Poland from the group negotiating the agreement in the Ukrainian crisis. After the first agreement in Minsk, signed in September 2014, the intensity of fighting decreased, which allowed both sides of the conflict to pursue their particular interests. Ukraine was preparing for early parliamentary elections, while Russia used this time for technological reinforcement and training of separatist units. The Ukrainian elections clearly articulated its pro-Western aspirations, at the same time fulfilling the postulate of the Polish security policy. In mid-January 2015, Russia supported the separatists with a second offensive, which allowed to retake Ukrainian-controlled centres around Donetsk airport and Debalcevo. This caused intensification of negotiations within the Normandy format, aimed at de-escalation of the conflict, which ended with the Minsk II agreement of 12 February 2015. Second Russian offensive, which ended around 20 February 2015, resulted in the final consolidation of the DPR and LPR functioning under Russian protectorate and transition of the crisis to a frozen conflict phase, characterized by a positional fire exchange of limited intensity. The Donbass region has become a dormant tension centre, with the potential of "thawing" in the event of a political need. Within the time frame adopted in the thesis, the conflict in Ukraine took a toll of over 10,000 victims and contributed to the mutilation of around 24,000 people.

Along with the development of military operations in Ukraine, the antagonistic nature of Western-Russian relations also deepened. Due to the initiatives undertaken by both the

West and Russia during the crisis – mainly those increasing the militarization of the region – the rivalry clearly went beyond the territory of Ukraine. The West continued its support for Ukraine by launching a series of financial aid packages aimed at strengthening its defensive capabilities and training activities. However, it was not decided to hand over lethal weapons to Ukraine. Western military aid for Ukraine did not counterbalance Russian support for the separatists. The main instrument of pressure on Russia in the context of competition in Ukraine were gradually deepening economic sanctions. Maintaining the cohesion of Western states in this regard has become one of the key challenges the Polish government had to face. A certain form of anchoring Ukraine's foreign policy in the Western vector of development, complementary to the objectives of the Polish security policy, was the signing of an association agreement with the EU. However, due to the resistance of the Netherlands, the full entry of the agreement into force was delayed (until 1 September 2017). The breakdown of the European unity in this regard should have been seen as a challenge and a warning signal for the Polish policy towards the Ukrainian crisis, especially in the context of prolonging the sanctions imposed on Russia. After the power shift which took place in Poland in 2015, the government continued its policy of internationalizing the Ukrainian crisis in order to persuade the Western allies to increase the defensive capabilities of NATO's eastern flank. Despite the fact that the main direction of the Polish security policy in the context of the Ukrainian crisis was maintained, there was a considerable qualitative change in the perception of a factor fundamental for security, which was clearly recognized as the United States after the PiS took power.

Due to the fact that Poland did not have any allied commitments to Ukraine, and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict did not spread to the countries of the region, or even to the entire territory of Ukraine, it did not directly threaten the national security of Poland. However, Russia's armed involvement in Ukraine caused a disturbance of the regional security system and fears of repeating the Ukrainian scenario in other countries adjacent to Russia, which from the perspective of the discussed issue was a more important consequence of the Ukrainian crisis. The Baltic states were pointed out as an area of particular sensitivity. The analysis of sources of Russian involvement in the Ukrainian crisis brought certain responses in the context of the threats posed by Russia. It interpreted Russia's actions as reactive and carried out with a sense of threat due to the shrinking sphere of influence. Difficulties in answering the question of how much this translates into a threat to NATO are caused primarily by uncertainty about the zone of influence defined individually by Russia. In this



context, the geopolitical code of "Ruski Mir", according to which Russian influence extends to where the "Ruthenian" population resides, is particularly often pointed out. It is also an instrument of foreign policy implementation aimed at achieving political goals through the pressure strategy. The fact that the annexation of Crimea undermined the borders created as a result of the collapse of the USSR should be considered as a threat. *Modus operandi* of Russian hybrid operations allows us to conclude that they only occur in areas where Russia has an operational advantage and that they are the ultimate instrument for the implementation of the political strategy. In this respect, the internal stability of the Baltic states is much more pronounced than that of Ukraine, at that time on the verge of collapse. Intentionally conducting operations below the threshold of war, which can significantly weaken the capacity of an allied reaction, should be definitely considered as a threat. The analysis of the geopolitical location of the exposed areas is also crucial for assessing the likelihood of the emergence of threats from Russia. According to the Russian geopolitical enquiry, Russia perceived Ukraine as a territory on which it had a strong influence, and of key importance for Russian security. Only Belarus is equal in this regard, but not the Baltic states, which seems to minimize the risks resulting from Russian operations in this area. The method of *faitsaccomplis* combined with the revision of borders, which through strategic anticipation is focused on obtaining universal acceptance of a unilaterally made decision, should also be perceived as a threat. According to the assumptions of the method, cancellation of the sanctions would, for instance, mean *de facto* accepting the annexation of Crimea.

In the context of Poland's security in its political and military dimension, as well as the antagonistic level of Western-Russian relations, military-related activities undertaken by Russia during the crisis were the most important. They essentially included: the militarization of border areas with territories such as the Kaliningrad Oblast and Crimea, which are essential to the security of the eastern flank, and the demonstration of potential through military manoeuvres and clearly provocative incidents. Because of a limited potential, the only form of Russian pressure to force the West to cease actions unfavourable from the Russian perspective has become armed response. Threats to use force were supposed to hinder the development of a consensus within Western countries, limit the development of NATO's military capabilities on the eastern flank, force the West to accept the results of Russian operations in Ukraine, limit further Russian support for the operations and be a tool for testing the tolerance limits of Western countries. In the context of the militarization, apart from the scale of Russian ventures, the Ukrainian crisis has not contributed to a qualitative change in the strategy

pursued by Russia. Already long before its outbreak, Russia had been undertaking activities which could cause concern to the West. A thorough reorganization of the Russian army was a result of the reform of the Russian Armed Forces initiated in 2008. The organization of unannounced manoeuvres started before the outbreak of the Euromaidan revolution in 2013, and provocative actions such as cyber attacks (Estonia 2007), threats of using nuclear weapons against Western states (manoeuvres in *Zapad 2009*), and expanding the missile arsenal in the Kaliningrad region were permanent elements of the Russian strategic culture, used to achieve political goals. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in purely military terms, the development of Russian potential in the Kaliningrad region and the Crimea, in particular the development of capabilities under the A2 / AD strategy meant a significant reduction of NATO's operational capabilities in the region. It should be noted that Russian operations, contrary to the intentions, contributed to the consolidation of the West around the need to raise the defensive capabilities of the eastern flank, although their impact on breaking up the solidarity of Western countries should not be underestimated.

In response to Russian actions and the threats they generate, NATO undertook a number of activities aimed at increasing the defensive capabilities of the alliance, including a particularly sensitive area of the eastern flank. From the perspective of the problem discussed in this thesis, one of the more significant changes which took place under the influence of the Ukrainian crisis was the return to the original role of NATO, and thus to the assurance of collective defence. The key provisions in this regard were the provisions of the following summits of the Alliance in Newport and Warsaw. The security policy pursued by the Polish government was aimed at emphasizing the need to clearly increase the presence of NATO troops in the region and to build a broad coalition of countries which would be favourable to this idea. Some decisions on increasing the defence potential in the region were made before the Newport summit, and included, among others, sending several US combat groups into the region, increasing NATO's allied involvement in the framework of the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission, or directing AWACS reconnaissance aircraft to the eastern flank. The Welsh summit was a breakthrough due to the decision to increase the collective defence capability in the countries admitted to the Alliance after 1999. As a result, it was decided to set up the Readiness Action Plan (RAP). The implementation of its provisions meant intensification and change of the nature of the exercises on the eastern flank of NATO and long-term activities increasing its defence capability. During the Newport summit, it was decided to establish the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF, so-called "Spearhead Force"), capable of



launching operations after 48 hours, to considerably increase the potential of the NATO Response Force (NRF). Also, two commandments capable of leading troops of the spearhead and eight NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) were created on the eastern flank territory. Within the framework of the Newport summit provisions, allies were obliged to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP. In the context of Poland's security, the failure to persuade the allies to the permanent presence of allied troops in the region was some kind of disappointment. In this context, a qualitative change took place only after the summit in Warsaw, during which there was a transition from reinsurance towards a policy of clear deterrence. The provisions of the Warsaw summit were a qualitative change in NATO's strategy, the essence of which was the deployment of four battalion battle groups on the territory of the eastern flank. Their advantage over the earlier initiative of the "spearhead" was based on the fact that these units were deployed in the most sensitive area of NATO and using them did not require a political decision. It greatly raised the capability of deterrence, which in turn has positively translated into the security of Poland in its political and military dimension. Since the main aim of ensuring security in the context of Russian threats is not to oppose them, but to prevent a situation in which they appear, the provisions of the Warsaw summit should be considered much more favourable than those of the Newport summit. The key to ensuring the security of Poland and the broader eastern flank is the presence of US troops in the region, which due to the Ukrainian crisis is deepening in an evolutionary way. Russia's aggressive operations were a factor which stopped the withdrawal of the US from Europe and intensified their involvement on the eastern flank of NATO. The number of initiatives related to unilateral US activities in the region, especially in Poland, significantly exceeds the involvement of other allies, therefore the Polish-American partnership should be considered the foundation of Poland's security.

The Polish-Ukrainian relations during the crisis had a much less significant impact on the security of Poland in its political and military aspect. This impact should be linked to the destabilization of the Ukrainian state and the resulting challenges for Poland. In the military aspect, an increase in threats such as armed incidents in the Polish-Ukrainian border region, an increase in arms smuggling and serious events related to the use of weapons against Polish citizens have been observed. In the military dimension, Poland provided tangible training support to the Ukrainian armed forces, realized most distinctly by the creation of the international LITPOLUKRBRIG (Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian) brigade. These activities also had measurable political significance. Polish efforts to participate in international

military manoeuvres were also important. Bilateral cooperation platforms have enabled Polish soldiers to draw on the knowledge provided by the Ukrainians participating in the fighting in the ATO zone. The reform of the Ukrainian army and the need to become independent from Russian supplies created an opportunity for the development of cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian arms industries, which contributed to tangible benefits for Poland.

As part of the thesis, the accepted research hypotheses were confirmed and contributed to the verification of the fundamental thesis, according to which, as a consequence of the Ukrainian crisis, the state of Poland's security in its political and military dimension has improved.

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