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UKRAINE'S INCONSISTENT FOREIGN TRAJECTORY AS A CHALLENGE FOR ITS NATIONAL SECURITY

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The present article analyses the correlation between the ambiguous vector of Ukraine's foreign policy and post-communist transformation, on the one hand, and the country's East-West regional cleavages, on the other hand. The author argues that the inconsistent foreign trajectory is not only affected by the societal differences inside the country but also has a significant role in instigating and shaping the divide. In order to break such vicious circle a prompt and resolute integration into the European and North-Atlantic structures is imperative for Ukraine's security and well-being.

Key words: post-communist transformation, foreign trajectory, East-West regional cleavage, national security.

Relationship between a country's choice of foreign vector and its track of post-communist transformation in the region of Eastern and Central Europe is hardly problematised. The successes of democratic transitions in the region have been closely associated with the societies' aspiration and subsequent integration into European and Trans-Atlantic political, economic and security structures. Studies on the interrelationship between recent post-communist transformation and European integration confirmed that Europeanization facilitates transition to a fully-fledged democracy and market. These findings have even received a theoretical substantiation in the form of an idea of «virtuous circle», which postulates that the integration releases a certain chain of actions leading to enhancement and acceptance of the democratic and capitalist system [7, p. 3].

On the contrary, those post-communist countries that kept political and institutional distance from Europe and Western institutions in general performed poorly. An unenthusiastic and inconsistent Europeanization (or lack of thereof) of a post-communist Eastern-European country inevitably led to conserving of old problems and mounting of some new challenges in its social development. «Indeed, it is striking how vastly different the outcomes of the democratic transitions have been in Central and Eastern Europe» asserted Jacque Rupnik already in the late 1990s [10, p. 57].

However, what remains largely undertheorised either in the literature on post-communism or various theoretical accounts of European integration and Europeanisation in the East European region is the question of mutual correlation between the country's foreign trajectory and its domestic security.

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The case of Ukraine is quite special in this regard. Its well-cited societal cleavage allegedly dividing some Eastern and Western parts of the country has become one of Ukraine's most enduring characteristics. It is obvious that national disunity presents a significant risk to a country's national security. On the other hand, Ukraine still faces the problem of choice of foreign vector for its post-communist transformation after more than two decades of its independence.

This article analyses the question of co-determination of Ukraine's undefined foreign vector and its domestic societal disunity. Particularly, the article focuses on identifying the impact of the continuous wavering between the Eastern and Western trajectories of post-communist transformation on its national cohesion. It will argue that such indeterminacy has had a negative effect on the societal solidarity of the Ukrainian people and thus presents a major challenge to Ukraine's domestic security.

Ukraine's foreign course is more than just a vector of its foreign policy. «Foreign policy preferences are […] a key element in a much broader cultural and political struggle within Ukraine» notices Neil Munro [9, p. 44]. Contemporary social and geo-political environment of Eastern and Central Europe has been shaped as a consequence of post-communist transformation. Now, we live in the region that for a significant part has been the product of this transformation. The Eastern and Central European (ECE) societies (at least those that form the Western, or more successful, part) some 25 years ago and now are two different realities, populated by materially and mentally very unlike people. It has been a unique and absolutely fantastic change indeed.

The reason *why* this change has taken place so quickly is that that the process of post-communist transformation largely consisted in copying of foreign institutional patterns and policies. Most ECE countries in fact were significantly involved in the process of imitation of the political structures and patterns successfully approved and verified elsewhere. Moreover, it can be suggested that the post-communist transformation for the most part in fact *was* the imitation of the foreign institutional model.

Therefore, the foreign course of an ECE country was a certain *channel* of imitation. Hence, post-communist transformation was often understood as transition and associated with integration: it presupposed renouncing former communist structures and moving towards or integrating into more effective and right Western community and institutions. As the experience of many of ECE countries has demonstrated, following a foreign course in fact may be seen as imitating (emulating) of a concrete model of social and political development.

Here the idea of imitation proposed by Alexander Wendt is helpful for comprehending the link between post-communist transformation and European integration. According to Wendt, imitation is one of the mechanisms of cultural selection, which presupposes acquisition of identities and interests by adopting «the self-understandings of those whom they perceive as «successful» [11, p. 324]. As he observes, «one of the important patterns in the contemporary international system, the tendency of many Third World and former communist states to adopt the institutional

and ideological attributes of Western states, seems to be largely explained by imitation» [11, p. 341].

The type of international integration followed by the ECE countries, therefore, has been of a fundamental nature, since it involved direct borrowing of basic institutional settings and cultural structures of the Western societies. That is why the foreign trajectory, has been so important for the mode of development of the post-communist countries in the region and remain so now.

For the ECE post-communist countries to the West of Ukraine there was no other model of imitation than the West. This model is principally associated with liberal democracy and wealthy market economies for all. Unlike its Western neighbours important parts of Ukrainian elites and public have identified an alternative model. The Ukrainian left and partly the centre (namely the centrist «party of power») and their supporters located this socio-political alternative in the post-Soviet space dominated by Russia. Transforming of the institutional setting here has stuck to keeping under-reformed quasi-market economic structures and formal democracy with weak or non-existent civil society. In the literature on post-communist transition this path has been called «partial» or «under-reform» trap [8; 3].

These distinct parts of the formerly unified post-communist region in Europe stretched within direct reach of the Ukrainian nation. Ukraine's peculiarity was that its governments attempted to follow the two foreign trajectories simultaneously – and thus imitate the two distinct institutional designs. Such specific «in-between» location of the country during the first two post-communist decades was closely connected with Ukraine's continuous balancing between the Western and Eastern trajectories of development domestically. The direction of social development was stuck in the middle between developing new Western-type institutions and cherishing some quasi-Soviet structures and practices.

Since its independence Ukraine has followed a fairly inconsistent foreign course. Ukrainian politicians and analysts alike dubbed this bizarre strategy «multi-vector policy». Yet, in reality Ukraine's foreign trajectory has never been «multi-vector» nor confined by any formal or actual «neutrality» – for two reasons. First, there have been only two actual vectors available – the West and East and thus its policy was pro-Western or pro-Russian – or rather mixed, thus pro-Western *and* pro-Eastern. Consequently, this was rather a «two-vector» and not «multi-vector» strategy. Secondly, Ukrainian governments have never tried to preserve real neutrality vis-à-vis the Western or post-Soviet centres of power. Quite the opposite, Ukraine participated in (some of) their integrationist projects and even declared the determination to integrate into the supra-national structures on both sides at different points of time.

The best example of a pro-Western course so far was demonstrated by Yushchenko administration (2005–2009). Still, even Yushchenko refused to take any steps (like Ukraine's withdrawal from the CIS), which would have ended Ukraine's participation in the post-Soviet integration projects. The foreign policies of administrations of all other Ukrainian leaders – Leonid Kravchuk (1991–1994), Leonid Kuchma (1994–2004) and Viktor Yanukovych (2010–) – demonstrated the typical contradictions and ambiguity of the foreign course of the state. In any case during either periods of

Ukrainian independence the government never gave up attempts to follow the inconsistent foreign trajectory consisting in integrating into the Western and Post-Soviet political, economic and cultural structures at the same time.

What outcomes have resulted from leading such an inconsistent foreign trajectory and respective efforts to integrate in both ways? One can of course think of some positive aspects and outcomes of such trajectory. Yet the negative side – the failures and risks associated with the inconsistent foreign course – is first which come to mind. The latter are definitely more numerous and significant.

Firstly, this is an ineffective political strategy, something the vast majority of Ukrainians can see and experience. In practice, balancing between the West and the East meant remaining at the crossroads – after more than two decades of its independence. Ukraine has failed to develop a stable political system or a strong and effective economy so far. Attempts to accommodate incompatible institutional designs have certainly had a weighty effect. This situation translated into half-hearted reforms and unwillingness to part with the grim Soviet legacy in a radical way.

On the other hand, this trajectory is linked to different kinds of risks and challenges. Perhaps one of the most important risks is largely overlooked or underestimated by analysts and commentators. This is the role of the «East-and-West» integration trajectory in deepening Ukraine's domestic regional cleavages, or the notorious West-East divide.

Determining the way how Ukraine is divided turns out to be a complex question. Paradoxically, the experts are still not sure *where* exactly does the dividing line or lines lie or even *what* is this divide really about. Researchers debate whether this is ethnicity, language, religion, region, certain demographic properties or some other structures that constitute the alleged divide [4; 6; 2]. Nevertheless, a common intuition that has been proved many times through Ukrainian post-Soviet political history is that there do exist some two quite different parts (which at the same time definitely are not irreconcilably different or hostile). Thus, some Western scholars tend to make a conclusion that «from Ukraine's independence on, this East–West divide has been *the* salient feature of Ukrainian elections and political life more generally» [5]. These two parts roughly coincide with the Western and Northern regions as opposed to the South and East.

What is, however, more certain is that these two large parts of Ukraine have different foreign trajectory preferences. There is quite ample and plain statistics demonstrating that while attitudes in the North-West are pro-European and pro-Western, the South and East is much more pro-Russian than the other part. Thus, recent polls have demonstrated that the West and North overall support Ukraine's membership in the EU, while the East and South would prefer the country's accession to the Moscow-controlled Customs Union [1].

Therefore, a traditional way of looking at the problem of relationship between Ukraine's regional cleavages and its inconsistent foreign policy is deducing Ukraine's foreign vector ambiguity from its regional divide. In other words, some East-West divide inside the country is said to be the source of the wavering foreign course, since the elites and government try to accommodate inconsistent interests of different parts

of the society. According to this logic, the quite strong pro-Western inclination of the North-West, on the one hand, and salient pro-Russian sentiments in the South-East, on the other hand, are to be blamed for the problems with Ukraine's foreign trajectory.

However, there are good reasons to believe that causal arrows go both ways. When a «top-down» (instead of the traditional «bottom-up») approach is applied to this case, it becomes clear that the inconsistent foreign trajectory followed by Ukrainian governments, on its part, also is a factor of the important problem inside the country. The contradictory foreign vector in fact instigates the Ukrainian domestic disunity, just as it is affected by the regional East-West cleavage. The ambiguous foreign trajectory damages the national cohesion of Ukrainian society.

What happens here is institutionalising of the regional differences in the Ukrainian public domain by constant reiteration of the crucial geopolitical choice in practical politics. Be it some corresponding discourse of the elites, governmental policies and decisions or development of formal associational bonds with respective international integration projects – all these political acts and processes regarding Ukraine's foreign trajectory evoke and deepen the dividing line existing on the societal level.

In this context the contradictory «East-and-West» trajectory, therefore, can be regarded as an important challenge to Ukraine's national security. Further deepening of the existing societal cleavages will weaken the societal bonds and government both domestically and internationally. Therefore, contrary to a view that the so-called «multi-vector policy» is inevitable for Ukrainian well-being, it in fact may present a much more significant problem than appears at first sight.

The negative influence of the inconsistent trajectory on Ukraine's national security is apparent when we take into account the idea of imitation of foreign social and economic models as the main focus of post-communist transformation. Since the transformation in the ECE region is about borrowing some basic institutional designs, the institutionalising of regional differences in Ukrainian case takes a quite straightforward form. The Western and Eastern trajectories presuppose incompatible domestic and foreign strategies of development for Ukraine. These strategies correspond to the divergent beliefs held on these issues by different parts of Ukrainian society. The North-Western part of the country (on the elite's and societal levels) may be more inclined to «import» and «institutionalise» the Western structures, while the South-East will develop its local (either formal or non-formal) institutions following to the post-Soviet model.

These theoretical conclusions imply an important practical suggestion. It seems that the way out in this situation will be a resolute parting with the contradictory «East-and-West» foreign course, which affects the Ukrainian societal unity and vice verse. Consistently and unequivocally following a chosen foreign trajectory is perhaps the only means to break this vicious circle. Therefore, prompt integration into the European and North-Atlantic structures is imperative for Ukraine's security and well-being also on these grounds.

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НЕВИЗНАЧЕНІСТЬ ЗОВНІШНЬОПОЛІТИЧНОЇ СПРЯМОВАНОСТІ УКРАЇНИ ЯК ВИКЛИК ДЛЯ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ БЕЗПЕКИ

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У статті аналізується проблема взаємозв'язку невизначеності вектора зовнішньої політики та посткомуністичної трансформації України, з одного боку, і регіональної роз'єднаності Сходу та Заходу країни, з іншого. Обґрунтовується теза, що непослідовна зовнішньополітична спрямованість держави не лише обумовлюється внутрішніми суспільними відмінностями, але, зі свого боку, так само відіграє істотну роль у провокуванні та формуванні цих відмінностей. Аби розірвати це порочне коло, необхідна швидка і рішуча інтеграція України у європейські та північноатлантичні структури.

Ключові слова: посткомуністична трансформація, зовнішньополітична спрямованість, регіональна роз'єднаність Сходу і Заходу, національна безпека.

НЕОПРЕДЕЛЕННОСТЬ ВНЕШНЕПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ НАПРАВЛЕННОСТИ УКРАИНЫ КАК ВЫЗОВ ДЛЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ

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В статье анализируется проблема взаимосвязи неопределенности вектора внешней политики и посткоммунистической трансформации Украины, с одной стороны, и региональной разобщенности Востока и Запада страны, с другой. Обосновывается тезис, что непоследовательная внешнеполитическая направленность государства не только предопределяется внутренними общественными отличиями, но и, со своей стороны, также играет существенную роль в провоцировании и формировании этих различий. Чтобы разорвать этот порочный круг, необходима быстрая и решительная интеграция Украины в европейские и североатлантические структуры.

Ключевые слова: посткоммунистическая трансформация, внешнеполитическая направленность, региональная разобщенность Востока и Запада, национальная безопасность.