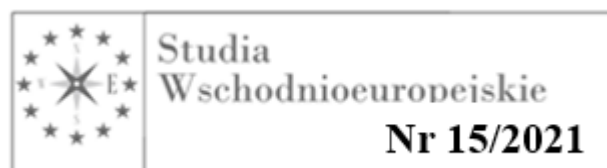


Bogusław Jagusiak

Wojskowa Akademia Techniczna

Andrzej Tuz

Wyższa Szkoła Finansów i Zarządzania



Security of Ukraine and the security of Europe

When considering the security situation in contemporary Europe, the events taking place in its eastern borderlands, in Ukraine, cannot be overlooked. The situation in Ukraine undoubtedly has a clear impact on the security of Europe. Despite numerous other problems faced by contemporary Europe, the dynamics of changes in the European security environment largely depend on how the situation in Ukraine unfolds, especially in the context of the region's relations with Russia. Europe should draw conclusions from the Ukraine crisis in order to strengthen all areas of its collective security system.

Ukraine, as one of the largest European countries, should be a pillar of Euro-Atlantic security. The question is whether the country's experience as an independent state allows for it. Given that the modern Ukrainian statehood dates back to as early as 1991, after the country regained independence, this might not be the case¹.

The reasons for the Ukrainian conflict lie in its history, cultural diversity and the relatively short period of its independence as a state. Throughout the country's history, its territories have belonged to different empires and have undergone various changes regarding their state affiliation. Ukraine was born through the process of acquiring new territories, granted from superior authorities (Figure 1).

¹ Ukraine regained independence on August 24, 1991.

Figure 1. Territories annexed to Ukraine

Source: Dorgan G., Ukraine: About Street Election Overthrowers and Democratically Elected Dictators, www.snbchf.com/ukraine, [access 24.11.2020].

Given the above, one cannot completely disagree with the opinion that Ukraine is, in a sense, an artificial creation, with incompatible ethnic and ideological elements that are distinct not only in terms of mentality, but also historical memory and religious affiliation. Therefore, it can be said that Ukrainian society lacks common history and a clear assessment of historical events.

The major security problem for contemporary Ukraine is the unstable internal situation caused by the weakness of the government and corruption at all levels of state administration. It is unimaginable that a country that had the greatest military potential in Europe in the 1990s² became a shadow of itself, with separatist groups threatening its security.

For the analysis of the impact of Ukraine's security on the security of Europe, the following hypothesis was adopted: the weakness of Ukraine's security system, the passive

² Ukraine was one of the most heavily militarised regions of the Soviet Union. It comprised 3 military districts: Carpathian, Odessa and Kiev. The first two were rather minor, while Kiev was one of the strongest and most strategically important districts in the entire Soviet Union.

approach of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership countries and international organisations, and Russia's impunity towards Ukraine have led to the current state of affairs in Ukraine.

In order to prove the above-mentioned hypothesis the following research problems were examined:

1. What were the political circumstances in Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and what implications did they have for security in the context of the conflict in Ukraine?
2. Why did Ukraine lose its defence capabilities after regaining its independence?
3. Why did Ukraine give up the Crimean Peninsula to Russia?
4. Why is a state with significant defence potential unable to put down a separatist rebellion?
5. Repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine for European security.

The article presents the research results obtained in the course of analysis of available information on the subject and through non-standardised observation. It also cites comments and conclusions of people who personally participated in the events in Ukraine.

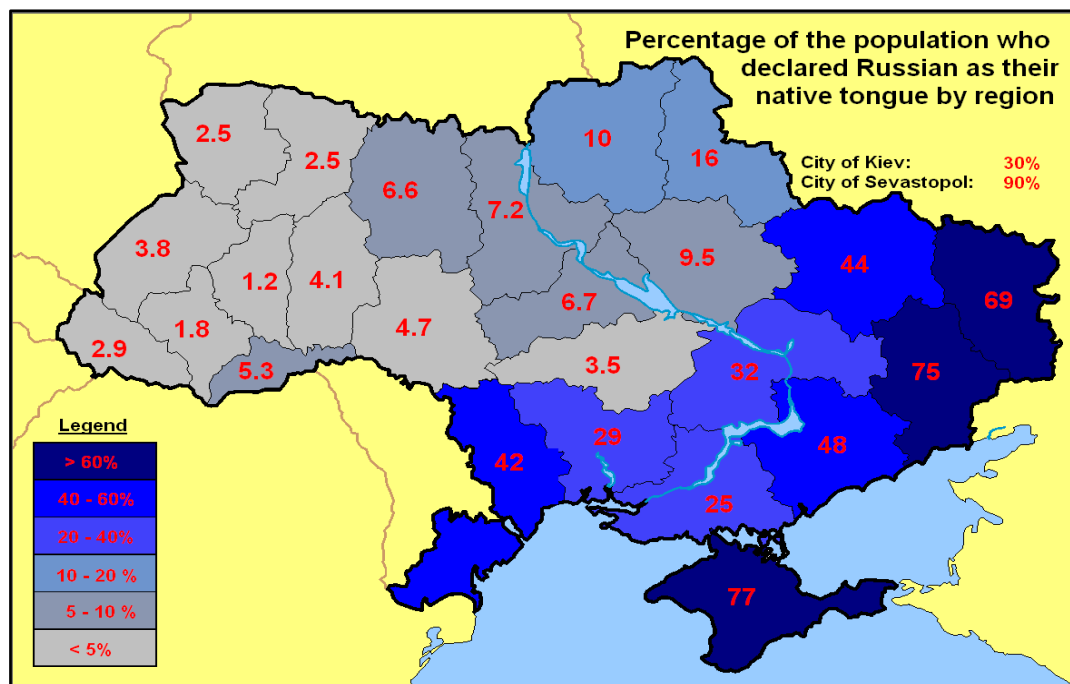
Political circumstances in Ukraine after regaining its independence

In order to understand the situation in Ukraine just before the crisis in Crimea and on the eastern border of the country, we need to understand the background of this conflict. One of the reasons is the key geostrategic location of Ukraine, which is very important for Russia³, which treats its south-western neighbour as a security buffer with respect to NATO.

Due to the country's rich and complicated history, the territories of Ukraine have never been ethnically homogeneous. Russians make up the largest national minority, which currently constitutes 18% of the population, although in the eastern oblasts, it exceeds 70% (Figure 2).

³ Ukraine - a unitary republic, located in Eastern Europe, bordering to the north with Belarus, to the west with Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, to the south with Romania and Moldova, the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and to the north-east and east with the Russian Federation.

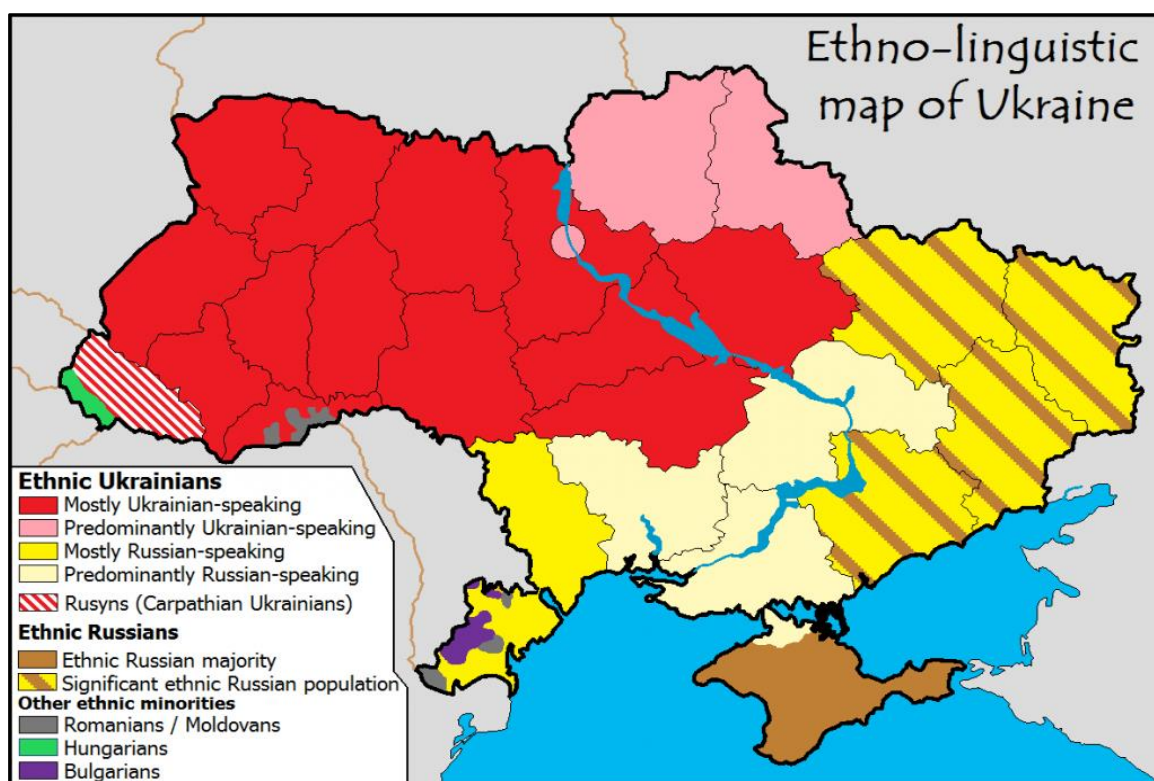
Figure 2. Percentage of the population who declared Russian as their native tongue, by region



Source: www.jakubmarian.com/category/maps, [access 24.11.2020].

With ethnic structure as a criterion (Figure 3), Ukraine can be divided into the following regions: western-central, eastern and southern, although due to dynamic changes in national, linguistic and ideological identity, the former Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Zakarpattia Oblast are usually separated from the southern and western regions, respectively. A large Russian diaspora within Ukraine was the main factor that had a significant impact on the country's security situation.

Figure 3. Ethno-linguistic division of Ukraine



Source: www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ukraine/images/map-ethno-linguisti, [access 24.11.2020].

The regions of south-eastern Ukraine (Figure 4) have always gravitated towards the Russian Federation, which has always been regarded as the homeland of their population. In these regions, the pro-Russian, conservative political views have always enjoyed greater support than the pro-Ukrainian approach⁴.

⁴ In the 2010 presidential election, Yanukovych, with a pro-Russian rhetoric, won over 75% of the votes in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts.

Figure 4. Pro-Russian Unrest in Ukraine - 2014

Source: www.businessinsider.com.au, [access 24.11.2020].

One cannot say that there is no vision of a single-state model of Ukraine with a precise direction of political involvement at the international level. Both Ukrainian types of mindset have a common problem: the lack of a universally accepted, canonical version of the country's history, which could serve as the basis for building the identity of a modern citizen of Ukraine⁵.

The process of disintegration of the Soviet Union and the agreements related to Ukraine's independence signed by Western countries led to the country's nuclear disarmament. One could argue that this was one of the reasons for the outbreak of the conflict. Once again, it became apparent how worthless and fragile "security guarantees", treaties and international agreements signed by Russia can be. By joining the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, Ukraine handed over all of its nuclear potential to Russia, and made a full commitment not to accept, produce or acquire nuclear weapons⁶ However, the "security guarantees" offered by Russia

⁵ A. Korniejenko, *Pelzająca wojna. Quo Vadis, Ukraino?*, Wydawnictwo M., Kraków 2014, p. 26.

⁶ *Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the NPT*, www.pircenter.org/media/content/files, [access 05.12.2020].

were deceptive from the very beginning⁷, given the constant military presence of Russia in Crimea or the infiltration of Russian secret services into the government and armed forces of Ukraine. Moscow's attitude to the memorandum is best illustrated by the statement of the Russian Prime Minister on 24 May 2014: Russia has never guaranteed the territorial integrity of Ukraine, as such guarantees are not in the power of any state. What happened in Crimea is an absolutely different matter. It was the very nation, which recognised itself as an independent part of Ukraine, who initiated the referendum, and then decided to split from the country⁸.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine broke out in the first quarter of 2014, after the end of the Euromaidan protests in Kiev and the escape of President Viktor Yanukovich from the country. For the Russian Federation, the transfer of power in Ukraine entailed the possibility of losing influence in one of the most important states of the former Eastern bloc. Russia could not allow Ukraine to join the Euro-Atlantic security structures, as that would mean reducing NATO's buffer zone to Moscow to a distance of 700 kilometres, and the loss of its influence in the Black Sea basin. For this reason, Russia used military force against Ukraine, annexing part of its territory and provoking a conflict below the threshold of war in the eastern regions. Russian soldiers entered Crimea and eastern Ukraine, though Moscow constantly denied that fact⁹.

Loss of defence capabilities by Ukraine after regaining its independence

After regaining independence, the Ukrainian authorities took control of the military units of the former Soviet Union that were stationed within its territory: in total 780,000-900,000 soldiers, 7,500 tanks, approx. 7,000 armoured personnel carriers, as well as approx. 1,500 combat aircraft and over 350 ships, as well as auxiliary units. A total of 1,500-1800 strategic nuclear warheads remained as part of the post-Soviet legacy - more than the entire nuclear arsenals of China, France and Great Britain combined at the time. It is also worth noting that at that point, the armed forces of Ukraine were one of the greatest military powers in Europe, second only to Russia, and in terms of nuclear potential, the third army in the world (following Russia and the USA).

⁷ What is meant here is not only the Budapest Memorandum, but also the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation of 31 May 1997 (in which the parties undertook to respect territorial integrity and not to violate the existing borders between them), as well as the Treaty Between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the Russian-Ukrainian State Border signed on 28 January 2003 (which recognised Crimea as an integral part of Ukraine).

⁸ www.wprost.pl/swiat/Miedwiediew-Nigdy-nie-gwarantowalismy-integralnosci-Ukrainy, [access 24.05.2016].

⁹ The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, said that it was the inhabitants themselves that organised themselves in Crimea and that "such uniforms could be bought in any shop".

The Armed Forces of Ukraine have always been dependent on Russia for material and technical support, as well as the training of specialised troops, especially the air force. The informal ties between the Ukrainian Armed Forces and the Russian army have, in fact, never been broken, as a result of which two waves of desertion of the Ukrainian military personnel to the Russian side occurred: the first, until the mid-1990s in connection with the displacement of cadres between the former Soviet republics, and the second after the annexation of Crimea.

The process of the formal severance of the ties between the newly established Ukrainian army and its former command in Moscow lasted over 5 years, and consisted in the following stages:

- The Tashkent Agreement (15 May 1992) on the division, between the former Soviet republics, of the military quotas allocated to the Soviet Union under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE-1);
- the Budapest Memorandum (5 December 1994) on the handover of nuclear weapons and the strategic means of their delivery by Ukraine to Russia in exchange for security guarantees from Russia, the United States and Great Britain (the process of the denuclearisation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces was completed in 2000);
- the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet of the former USSR between Ukraine and Russia (28 May 1997).

Since its establishment, the Ukrainian army was deprived not only of civilian control, but above all, of legal control - with rampant lawlessness within its structures. During this period, Ukraine was selling equipment to anyone willing to pay, even to politically unstable countries and aggressive regimes, regardless of the disapproval of Western Europe and the US. Examples of such trade included 320 T-80 tanks sold to Pakistan, and an unfinished aircraft carrier to China¹⁰.

The Ukrainian army struggled with a lack of sufficient funds for military training and exercises, which led to several incidents that discredited the armed forces of the country. The most serious was the crash of a Ukrainian combat aircraft during demonstrations in Lviv, where 77 people were killed and 534 injured¹¹. It came to light that Ukrainian military pilots were earning their living in illegal air shows, but did not have the opportunity to carry out training

¹⁰ M. Chan, *The inside story of the Liaoning: how Xu Zengping sealed deal for China's first aircraft carrier*, South China Morning Post, www.app.scmp.com/scmp/mobile/index, [access: 24.11.20208].

¹¹ *Ukrainian Military Personnel*, Global Security; www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ukraine/personel, [access: 16.02.2018].

on a daily basis. Widespread poverty and corruption in the army were also extensively reported in the Ukrainian press¹².

After the Orange Revolution (22 November 2004 – 23 January 2005), the Ukrainian authorities tried to revive the cooperation with NATO in order to lay the foundations for Ukraine to join the Alliance. The Ukrainian army became one of the main vehicles for cooperation with the West. However, the actual changes related to the Ukrainian aspirations to NATO membership were limited in scope to individual units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The crowning achievement of these efforts was the participation of the Ukrainian brigade in the American operation in Iraq (as part of the Polish-led Multinational Division Central-South). By 2010, despite the pro-Western direction of changes in Ukraine, the adaptation process to NATO standards was gradually slowing down due to financial reasons, only to come to a standstill at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. The integration process of Ukraine with NATO was met with stiff opposition from Russia and the indifference of many Western countries. Given the situation in 2006, the Prime Minister of Ukraine at that time, Viktor Yanukovich, recognised Russia as the country's main partner. After winning the presidential election in 2010, Yanukovich could begin the full implementation of the pro-Russian policy. At his request, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine passed a bill that excluded the goal of integration into Euro-Atlantic security and NATO membership from the country's national security strategy. In 2011, the president officially declared that Ukraine did not intend to join NATO. At the same time, he limited the country's military spending.

The poor state of the Ukrainian armed forces was caused by the following factors:

- since the declaration of independence, the state leadership, successive presidents and defence ministers did not treat the defence capabilities of the country as a political priority, nor did they take into account the threat of external aggression or military attack;
- in the years 1991–2014, the financing of the armed forces was gradually cut, and the number and level of training of the military cadre also decreased. Property belonging to the armed forces was sold off;

¹² K. Taras, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism*, Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara 2015, p. 457; www.books.google.pl/book, [access: 24.11.2020].

-
- the level of corruption, power abuse and theft in all areas of the military-defence complex remained the same, no matter who was in power. Governments notoriously ignored the existence of an organised criminal element in the armed forces;
 - the morale and patriotism of soldiers (especially privates and junior officers) was on the decrease. Military service has come to be scorned as regarded as devoid of future prospects;
 - the command of the armed forces did not introduce any innovation or changes in terms of military service. No new weapons were introduced, and the validity period for the existing ones was extended, which could potentially make them worthless in the event of actual combat;
 - the authorities did not make any efforts to prepare threat plans and strategic forecasts, relying only on political security guarantees made by the USA, France and Great Britain. Joint military exercises with NATO¹³ only served to showcase the Ukrainian army's operational capabilities, as did the participation of Ukrainian subdivisions in military operations abroad¹⁴.

Two more factors can be added to the list of omissions related to the reform of the Ukrainian armed forces:

- in 2014, the Ukrainian army had the oldest commanding cadre in Europe; many commanders did not have a level of education appropriate to their position. Some of them, especially in the first phase of the Crimean conflict, were prone to sabotage and treason;
- the preeminence of Russian intelligence over Ukrainian intelligence. It is worth pointing out that one day before the Russian invasion of Crimea, the antennas of the Radiolocation Centre were dismantled and sent for scrapping. This strategic military facility was the only radiolocation point in the event of external military aggression against Ukraine.

¹³ Exercise Steadfast Jazz 2013.

¹⁴ Multinational Division Centre South (MND-CS) Iraq.

When the war broke out in March 2014, Ukraine's armed forces were in a deplorable state¹⁵. Although the armed forces had just over 130,000 soldiers, only a maximum of 10,000 of them were capable of fighting. Most of the equipment, especially in the air force and armoured forces, was suitable only for renovation or the recycling of spare parts. To give an example, out of 50 Su-27 fighter planes, only a dozen or so were operational, and out of 25 combat aircraft from the Crimean Belbek base, only 4 were fit for service. An additional factor was the low level of professional training of the Ukrainian army military personnel. From the second half of the 1990s until 2014, no major military manoeuvres were carried out in Ukraine. The appalling state of the Ukrainian armed forces described above was brought about by the successive governments and presidents of Ukraine. It can be assumed that the undermining of the state's defence potential began practically at the time of the proclamation of Ukrainian independence.

As a result of the annexation of Crimea and Russia's support for separatist groups in eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian government, realising that its army was unable to fulfil its statutory obligations, decided to form territorial defence battalions, which could be compared to mass mobilisation, as these subdivisions were not financed by the government but by Ukrainian oligarchs and volunteers, as well as foreign aid.

Only the loss of Crimea, the war in the East, and the threat of losing more territory or even the entire state and the country's independence, changed the state authorities' approach towards the armed forces. In 2014, the government of Ukraine approved additional funding for the army¹⁶ and decided to increase its size to a minimum of 250,000 soldiers and officers. The National Guard and Border Guard were also sent to the fighting zones¹⁷.

It was only after the loss of its defence capabilities that Ukraine finally formulated a new defence doctrine, which defined military threat as armed aggression and violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine (e.g. temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, and military aggression by Russia

¹⁵ Cz. Kosior, Potencjał militarny Ukrainy w obliczu rosyjskiej agresji, Ośrodek Analiz Strategicznych, www.potencjal-militarny-ukrainy-wobliczu-rosyjskiej-agresji, [access: 24.11.2020].

¹⁶ Until 2014, military expenditure amounted to 1% of GDP, which prevented reforms and was not even sufficient for the current operations of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. This resulted in limitations in terms of staff training and the deterioration of the technical condition of armaments and military equipment, as well as a decline in interest in a professional military career. It has become common practice among the professional military personnel of the Ukrainian army to earn extra money to supplement their low, even for local conditions, salaries by illegal trade in military property. The state authorities in Kiev did not care about restoring the defence capabilities of the country, the most blatant proof of which was the approval of a Russian businessman, Pavel Lebedev, as the Minister of Defence.

¹⁷ Закон України Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо служби у військовому резерві, www.zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1127-18, [access: 24.11.2020].

in some regions of the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts)¹⁸. Other examples of military threat included increasing Russian military potential on the border with Ukraine (including the potential for the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as well as the militarisation of temporarily occupied territories by forming new military groups and units, as well as providing fighters, military vehicles and logistics), as well as the presence of Russian troops in the Transnistrian region of Moldova, which could be used to destabilise the situation in the southern regions of Ukraine¹⁹.

The analysis of the loss of defence capabilities by Ukraine after regaining independence allows one to conclude that:

- after regaining independence, Ukraine has neglected preparations for participation in contemporary conflicts;
- In spring 2014, right after the bloodless military takeover of Crimea by the Russian army and the beginning of the armed conflict in Donbas, the Ukrainian army was nearly a quarter of a century old. This period should be enough for the country to assemble its armed forces from scratch. However, the war in Donbass proved that the takeover of the army by Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the failure to make structural and mental changes, was the primary source of its current failures, at least in the first few months of the conflict;
- Ukraine did not have civil and military personnel capable of taking command of the state in the event of armed aggression;
- Ukraine's armed forces were not only poorly trained and equipped. They did not have sufficient motivation to defend their own country, as the state authorities treated them not as a guarantor of Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity, but as a financial burden.
-

¹⁸ For the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, an opponent and an aggressor were identified, just at the time when the anti-constitutional coup actually led to an armed opposition of the authorities against the people.

¹⁹ Президент України Петро Порошенко, Указ Президента України №555/2015 Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 2 вересня 2015 року „Про нову редакцію Воєнної доктрини України”, Офіційне інтернет-представництво, www.president.gov.ua/documents, [access: 24.11.2020].

Ukraine's loss of the Crimean peninsula in 2014

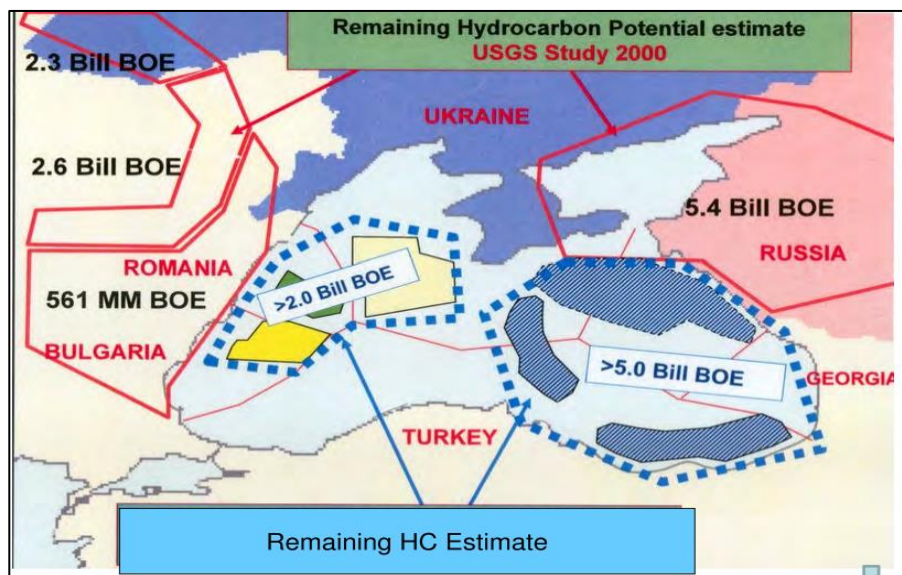
Russia's annexation of Crimea was one of the most remarkable military operations in recent years. It was carried out without bloodshed, with all political and military goals achieved.

Crimea is a peninsula in the south of Ukraine, in the northern part of the Black Sea, connected to the mainland by the narrow Isthmus of Perekop. It is situated between the Black Sea and the Azov Sea. The coastline is approx. 1,000 km long and the total area is 25,700 km². Currently, Crimea is inhabited by about 2.4 million people. The majority of the population (60.4%) are Russians, with 24.01% of Ukrainians and 10.21% of Crimean Tatars. Russian is spoken as a mother tongue by 77% of the population, Ukrainian by 9.6%, and Crimean Tatar by about 9%.

In 1954, the first secretary of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine.

Crimea plays an important military role due to the navy base in Sevastopol, which allows operations to be conducted in the Mediterranean Sea. There are over a dozen ordnance plants in Crimea, and the majority of revenue comes from agriculture and tourism. Industry plays a minor role, but this may change due to new oil reserves found, mainly in the shelf waters surrounding Crimea (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Black Sea story



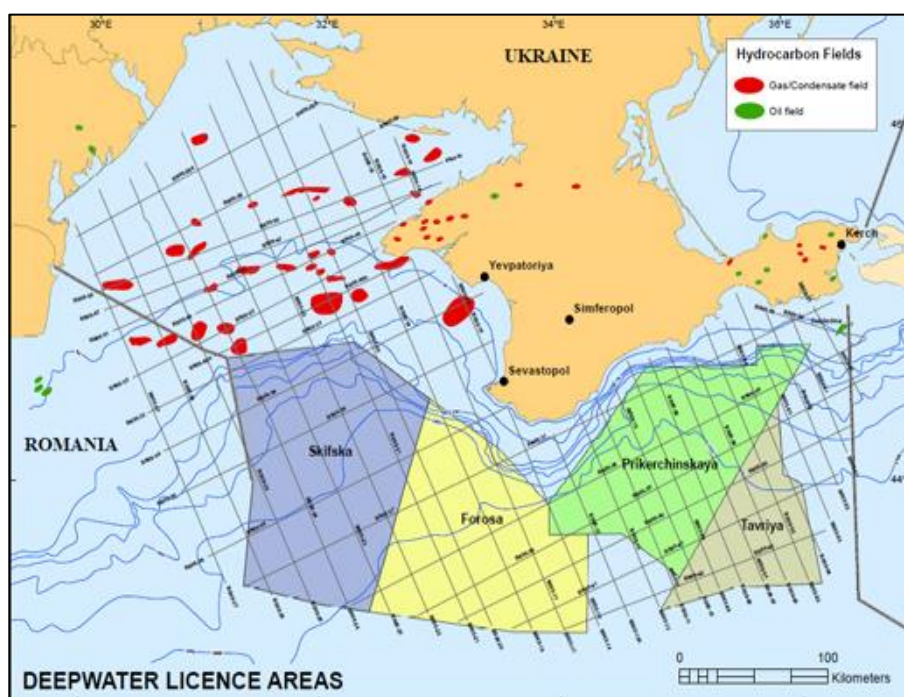
Source: www.businessinsider.com.au, [access 24.11.2020]. BOE - Barrel of oil equivalent.

The theory that the main purpose of the annexation of Crimea was not to protect the Russian-speaking population, but to lay hands on the natural resources in the waters of the

Black Sea and the Azov Sea, is not too far-fetched. Ukraine's loss of Crimea makes it even more dependent on supplies of these resources from Russia.

In 2011-2013, in the years directly preceding the Russian aggression, drillings were made in the Black Sea, in the immediate vicinity of Crimea. According to Ukrainian reports, the wealth of the newly discovered natural resources may be comparable to that found in the North Sea, and are estimated at approx. 200-250 billion cubic metres of gas (Figure 6). This makes for the 4th largest gas field in Europe. Such rich deposits would make Ukraine independent in terms of gas supply, which would be extremely disadvantageous to Russia. In addition, the gas deposits found at the bottom of the Azov Sea are located in extremely shallow waters, which significantly reduces operating costs.

Figure 6. The Black Sea hydrocarbon fields



Source: www.businessinsider.com.au, [access 24.11.2020].

The analysis of the above-mentioned facts may lead to the following conclusions:

- the Black Sea region is a critical point on the geostrategic map of the world. The potential natural resources it offers may have a significant impact on the economy of the fuel and gas sector, not only in this region, but also around the world;

-
- by the annexation of Crimea, Russia expanded its territorial waters and thus gained access to the natural resources of the Black Sea and the Azov Sea;
 - the annexation of Crimea will allow Russia to reduce the costs of the South Stream gas pipeline construction by 1/3 (around \$ 10 billion) - due to the shallow depth of the seabed around Crimea.

At the beginning of 2014, there were around 18,000 Ukrainian soldiers in Crimea, half of whom were navy soldiers²⁰. The remaining subdivisions included the air force²¹ and land forces²². At that time, Ukrainian forces significantly outnumbered the Russian contingent, which - in peace time - included only ships of the Black Sea Fleet with auxiliary units.

When considering the operations in Crimea, attention should be paid to the pace of successive events. The swiftness of Moscow's actions indicates, **first of all**, that Russia was perfectly prepared for the annexation, which had to be planned much earlier²³, **and secondly**, it had planned to present the international community with a fait accompli before any decisive steps were taken against Russia. In order to confirm this thesis, the course of events should first be examined:

- 21 February - immediately after his return from Moscow, the chairman of the Crimean Verkhovna Rada informs that in the event of a change of power in Kiev, Crimea may split from Ukraine, and the parliament will “be forced” to abolish the 1954 provisions on the inclusion of Crimea in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.
- 23 February - one day after the pro-Russian president of Ukraine is removed from power by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, pro-Russian demonstrations break out. The pro-Russian group “Russian Bloc” announces the formation of self-defence troops.

²⁰ Ship crews, technical facilities, fleet command, maritime academy, coastal defence brigade, two coastal missile divisions, reconnaissance and communication subdivisions.

²¹ Three anti-aircraft regiments (armed - according to data from 2011 - with S-300, S-200 and Buk-M1 missile systems), Tactical Aviation Brigade (armed - according to data from 2011 - with MiG-29 fighters).

²² Logistics and rear units. Internal troops subdivisions subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (1100-3000 soldiers), officers of the Coast Guard.

²³ This is evidenced by the smooth operation, the preparation of a contingent of soldiers and equipment without identification badges, perfectly organised operational camouflage, information warfare and propaganda, efficient personnel displacement, precisely defined order of targets to achieve and coordination of military and non-military operations, and the cooperation of paramilitary self-defence units with regular Russian forces.

-
- 25 February - a delegation from the Russian Duma arrives in Crimea, promises a quick unification with the Russian Federation and begins to issue Russian passports to Crimean citizens.
 - 26 February - The transfer of GRU soldiers and officers to the base in Sevastopol commences²⁴.
 - 27 February - the parliament and local government buildings are seized by self-defence units, which results in the takeover of power by the local Russian population and the initiation of the secession process from Ukraine.
 - 27 February - Berkut units²⁵ take over the main border points on the Perekop Isthmus, thus assuming control of the land border traffic between Crimea and mainland Ukraine. The peninsula was blocked to prevent the transfer of additional Ukrainian troops overland to Crimea, which Kiev had no intention of doing anyway.
 - 28 February - unmarked soldiers (the so-called *little green men*) appear, whose uniforms and equipment clearly indicate that they are from the Russian army, which, however, Moscow strongly denies²⁶.
 - 28 February - Russian soldiers take over the military airport in Sevastopol and block the Ukrainian border post near the port in Sevastopol.
 - 10 March - Russian and Crimean self-defence forces lift the blockade of all Ukrainian units in Crimea and take control of airports and seaports.

²⁴ By 1 March about 6,000 soldiers, 10 helicopters and 30 armoured personnel carriers had been deployed. In the following days, 5,000 more Russian soldiers arrived in Crimea.

²⁵ Berkut - a specialised unit of the Ukrainian militia reporting to the Ministry of the Interior, established as the successor of the Soviet OMON police force. Initially, it specialised mainly in fighting organised crime and enforcing civil order, especially during mass public events, such as gatherings and demonstrations. In 2013-2014, Berkut was directly involved in suppressing protests. After the attack by a Berkut special police unit on February 18, 2014 caused the deaths of 10 protesters, the unit was officially dissolved one week later, on February 25, 2014. Most of the Berkut police officers fled to the occupied Crimea and Russia, where they formed a unit under the same name ("Berkut") as part of the Russian Interior Ministry.

²⁶ Despite photographic evidence and recordings posted online and in other media showing Russian soldiers in Crimea, Moscow claimed that all actions were taken by self-defence units, which is proof that the Russian authorities were confident that neither Ukraine nor the international community would take decisive actions with regard to the Crimea issue.

-
- 11 March - a joint resolution is adopted by the dissolved Supreme Council of Crimea and the Sevastopol City Council that proclaims the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol a sovereign state - the Republic of Crimea²⁷.
 - 16 March - the Crimean status referendum is held.
 - 17 March - the results of the referendum are announced²⁸.
 - 18 March - Moscow signs a treaty on the incorporation of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation.
 - 21 March - amendments are introduced to the constitution of the Russian Federation, adding two new entities - the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol, both of which form the newly established Crimean Federal District.
 - 28 March - the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, Sergei Shoygu, reports²⁹ that all military bases in Crimea are under Russian control, and all Ukrainian military loyal to Kiev have left Crimea.

The reactions of the Ukrainian state authorities were significantly delayed and inadequate to the situation in Crimea:

- 2 March - the Ukrainian government announces full military mobilisation without taking any specific actions.
- 12 March - The Acting President declares that the Ukrainian army will not go on the offensive into Crimea, instead focusing on defending the country's eastern oblasts and the border with Russia. In fact, it was an act of surrendering Crimea to Russia by Ukraine.
- 21 March - Ukraine's Prime Minister declares that the conflict has escalated to a military phase, and the Defence Minister has allowed the troops to use weapons; in fact, no actions involving the use of weapons were undertaken³⁰.

²⁷ It referred to the case of Kosovo and the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 22 July 2010, in which the Court found that the unilateral declaration of independence did not infringe international law.

²⁸ According to the pro-Russian Crimean authorities, 83.1% of eligible voters took part in the referendum, out of which 96.8% voted in favour of annexing Crimea to the Russian Federation.

²⁹ After the completion of the symbolic inspection of Crimea that started on 24 March.

³⁰ Most of the Ukrainian military officers were graduates of Soviet and Russian military academies. This explains to some extent the passive approach of Ukrainians, but should in no way be treated as an excuse, either for passivity nor for desertion and betrayal within the ranks of the Ukrainian army.

It should be considered at this point why Ukraine lost Crimea in such a short period of time. Many factors were involved here.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine took over most of the military facilities in Crimea that did not belong to the Russian Black Sea Fleet. It should be emphasised that both when it comes to Crimean, as well as the entire armed forces of Ukraine, no changes were introduced in the military. Therefore, it can be said that Ukraine, in a way, preserved the state which it was left with after the collapse of the USSR, which was the reason for the country's failure.

Ukrainian subdivisions, blocked by Russians and separatists troops, were cut off from any information about the external situation, as well as instructions and orders from Kiev regarding further actions. This resulted in the takeover of their barracks without any resistance from the soldiers. In addition, in the first days of the conflict, two Ukrainian battalions immediately deserted to the Russian side.

Proof of the weakness of the Ukrainian forces was the small size of the Russian troops sent against them, estimated at no more than a few hundred soldiers. Such forces would be too weak to successfully oppose a decisive military and police operation by the Ukrainian side, but such an operation was not undertaken. Ukrainians were passive³¹ and did not oppose the invaders. The Ukrainian armed forces turned out to be unable to conduct large-scale operations³². The Ukrainian army in Crimea was neither crushed nor defeated, but simply ousted from the barracks. Ukraine lost all military infrastructure and equipment in Crimea, with the exception of the few ships that were taken to Odessa before the blockade. Several days later, most of the units raised the Russian flag without resistance.

It should be emphasised that the crisis in Ukraine has lasted long enough for the Russian administration to undertake not only organisational and logistic measures in advance, but also to thoroughly analyse various scenarios and options. As mentioned earlier, in the initial phase of the conflict, soldiers without symbols indicating their national identity were deployed, which allowed to keep Russia officially away from the conflict for propaganda purposes. The failure to react by the international community prompted Moscow to continue the operation.

What was of particular importance for the course of events, was the fact that the opposition that took power in Kiev did not show any interest in the situation of the soldiers

³¹ As a rule, Russians were not allowed onto the premises of the units, although nothing was done to break the blockade, even if it was made up of only a few unarmed inhabitants of Crimea.

³² Russian forces managed to disarm Ukrainian soldiers by sending weapons to facilities already under their control or by locking them in arsenals under Russian guard - all this with the consent of Ukrainian commanders.

deployed in Crimea for weeks. During key moments and days, the Crimean commanders were left without any guidelines or orders from the state authorities. The commander of the air brigade from the Belbek base even made a public speech that was uploaded on the Internet, in which he demanded written orders from Kiev. All Ukrainian units in blocked military facilities were also in a similar situation. The army's trust in politicians, which had always been fragile, was thus ultimately lost. Kiev's lack of action at the end of February and the beginning of March led to undermining the potential of military units in Crimea. After the referendum, an increasing number of soldiers in blocked facilities followed in the footsteps of Rear Admiral Berezovsky³³, declaring their willingness to join the armed forces of Russia. According to Ukrainian sources, by March 23, there were 189 of them. However, a veritable avalanche of defections followed after the decision of the Ukrainian authorities to evacuate military personnel from Crimea. On April 2, only 1095 military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine chose to leave the peninsula, the rest remaining to serve under new banners³⁴. Approximately 80% of Ukrainian soldiers defected to the Russian side. This cannot be solely explained by nationality issues, nor by the more promising financial aspect (salaries received by Russian soldiers were much higher). It is a sign of a deep crisis of national identity and a deep-seated distrust of the state authorities, which was the result of the weakness of state institutions and internal divisions. When trying to explain what happened to the Ukrainian forces deployed in Crimea, one encounters a serious problem related to nomenclature. They were neither crushed nor destroyed, as they were not involved in combat; they were not interned either. One should rather compare this process to a gradual deactivation.

The operation of Crimea annexation by Russia significantly changed the nature of the conflict from purely political to a political and military one. Theoretically, this operation does not fit the definition of *armed conflict* (let alone *war*), as no organised armed combat was involved (there were only minor armed incidents). On the other hand, the Crimean conflict

³³ Admiral Denis Berezovsky was appointed commander of the Ukrainian Black Sea Fleet on Saturday, and on Sunday he defected to the Russian side.

³⁴ Initially, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence reported that approx. 25,000 soldiers and their families would be evacuated from the peninsula. Later, the number dropped to 6,500, and - according to information from 2 April - eventually only 1,095 people chose to leave Crimea out of all the military personnel and their families stationed there. This means that the rest must have defected. This sparked off malicious comments in the Ukrainian press describing the real condition of the Ukrainian army. One of such comments mentioned that 42 hryvnia were allocated as the daily food ration of a conscription soldier, while chimpanzees in a zoo received twice as much - 98 hryvnia.

undoubtedly involved the use of military force against the territorial integrity of Ukraine on a relatively large scale³⁵, though it was used through various types of indirect actions.

To summarise, it can be agreed that the strategic goal of seizing Crimea was achieved without firing a single shot and with nothing but faint opposition from the states that were the guarantors of the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The loss of Crimea proved the weakness of Ukraine, the lack of a clear concept of defence against foreign aggression, and the tacit agreement to view Crimea more as a Russian territory than a Ukrainian one. The additional factors were the aforementioned weakness of the armed forces, as well as the entire defence system. Moscow chose a very convenient time for the implementation of the operation – a period of the transition of power after the Euromaidan, which brought about organisational chaos at the central and local administration levels, changes in key positions in the state administration and the escalation of the internal conflict within Ukraine. Through the annexation of Crimea, Russia solved a number of strategic problems - it improved its strategic position in the Black Sea and it arbitrarily resolved the problem of delimiting territorial waters in the Sea of Azov.

Due to the refusal by the international community to recognise Crimea as part of Russia, from the political perspective, Crimea should still be treated as part of Ukraine. However, considering the facts and the inability of the Ukrainian authorities to maintain the territorial integrity of Crimea, it should be said that Ukraine has definitely lost Crimea as part of its own territory, despite the condemnation and lack of acceptance for the annexation by the international community. Apart from Russia, the countries that have officially recognised the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol as part of the Russian Federation include: Afghanistan, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea, Syria and Venezuela.

Identification of the factors that prevented Ukraine from defeating separatist groups and ending the war on its territory

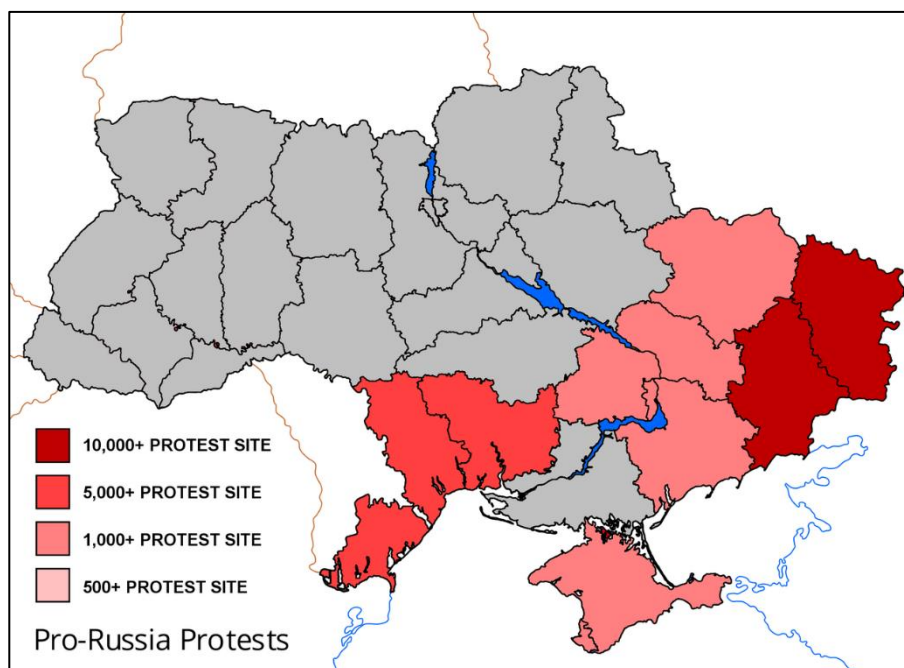
The major cause of the armed conflict in the Donbass region was a change in public sentiment, resulting from a number of events - from the suspension of the procedures related to the signing of the association agreement with the EU, to the annexation of Crimea by Russia. The armed conflict in Donbass was the result of a clash between the *Euro-revolution* in the west and the so-called *Russian spring* in the east of Ukraine. From the beginning of the Euromaidan

³⁵ Russian operations in Crimea fully fit the UN definition of *armed aggression*. See: General Assembly Resolution 3314 (XXIX), *Annex Definition of Aggression*, 14 December 1974, <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF>, [access 06.12.2020].

protests until the outbreak of the armed conflict, the voice of the people of the eastern regions of Ukraine seemed disregarded, especially from the point of view of Western countries. The media reports presented a narrative that seemed to indicate that the voices heard during the Maidan in Kiev were the voice of the entire Ukrainian nation, which was not the case. The southeast of the country feared the involvement of the Right Sector³⁶ and Svoboda³⁷ parties in their regions. The reaction to the perceived threat was the mobilisation of separatist groups supported by Russia. The majority of the Donbass population was opposed to Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Miners and smelters in Donbass, two major professional groups in the region, feared competition from the West, loss of jobs and deterioration of the region's relations with Russia, which is not regarded as a foreign country for eastern Ukrainians, as most look back on the times of the USSR with great fondness. After the events in Crimea in March 2014, the shadow of the Bandera threat was felt in the east due to numerous statements made by the Right Sector and Svoboda, who declared that the east would be next, after Kiev. The outbreak of the Russian spring in the southeast of the country was triggered by the abolition of the Law on Regional Languages by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which made it practically impossible for Russian-speaking Ukrainians to use Russian as an official language. Radical groups in those regions, inspired and supported by Moscow, started protesting and rioting, like in the west of Ukraine (Figure 7).

³⁶ A radical, ultra-nationalist Ukrainian organisation that was established at the end of November 2013 through the merger of several right-wing extremist political groups and paramilitary associations. It played a major role during the Euromaidan protests, protecting the demonstrators. In March 2014, it was transformed into a political party. The organisation has an armed wing -- the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps - which took part in the fighting against the separatists in eastern Ukraine.

³⁷ A Ukrainian right-wing extremist and nationalist political party, operating since the beginning of the 90s, mainly in the west of Ukraine. It is in favour of close political and economic cooperation with the countries in the strip from the Baltic to the Black Sea. During the Euromaidan, it turned into the third political force. In June 2014, it formed the *Sich* battalion, which became part of the special-purpose forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and took part in security and order operations in the areas recaptured by separatists in the Donbass region.

Figure 7. Pro-Russian protest sites in Ukraine - 2014

Source: www.mediarnbo.org, [access 24.04.2014].

Apart from the demonstrations, there were also acts of blockades and takeovers of the headquarters of the district administration and buildings of security services and the Ministry of the Interior. Despite similarities, the protests in the east gradually took on a different nature - instead of the opposition to the transfer of power, voices calling for the separation from Ukraine and joining Russia started to be heard, which was undoubtedly the result of actions by Russia after having completely infiltrated the eastern opposition circles. Gradually, the situation began to deteriorate and eventually, it got out of control. First, fights and skirmishes erupted. Anti-government forces began to organise into paramilitary formations, armed and equipped by sources of “unknown origin”. This paved the way to a full armed conflict.

In March 2014, the conflict could have been avoided if the reaction of the new Ukrainian government had been more decisive. Unfortunately for Ukraine, the new government, which at the beginning of March still had temporary status³⁸ and did not have time to take hold of the country, was facing serious dilemmas that made it difficult to make a decision to initiate armed resistance in Crimea and the Donbass region. Due to the nature of the conflict, it was not clear

³⁸ On 22 February 2014, the Verkhovna Rada appointed Oleksandr Turchynov as its chairman, which meant taking over the duties of the President of Ukraine until early elections, the date of which was announced on 25 May. On 27 February, the Verkhovna Rada appointed Arseniy Yatsenyuk as Prime Minister, who was to hold office at least until the early parliamentary elections scheduled for 26 October 2014.

back then who the opponent exactly was, what the motives behind it (separatists, external aggression, or perhaps simply social unrest?) and the intentions of the opponent were. All these uncertainties resulted from the way the conflict was conducted by the Russian side, which differed from the conventional or even asymmetric model of conflict development. Uncertainty regarding the opponent, their forces and intentions, caused a significant delay in taking any actions by the Ukrainian side. Obviously, the delay was also due to the aforementioned dramatic condition of the armed forces, not capable of taking effective action - which both sides were well aware of - and due to the engagement of Russian secret services in Ukraine, which successfully crushed any resistance.

During the Crimean crisis, anti-government, pro-Russian protests, resembling the course of events in Crimea, intensified in the eastern regions of Ukraine, likely inspired and organised by Moscow. It can also be assumed that the bloodless and quick takeover of Crimea encouraged Russia to proceed with the further destabilisation of Ukraine. The escalation of separatist sentiments, which was directly related to the annexation of Crimea, led to the outbreak of a pro-Russian rebellion in early April. The *modus operandi* resembled the Crimean scenario: the appearance of the *little green men* and armed groups of (un)known origin forming the self-proclaimed self-defence units³⁹, followed by the takeover by “unknown perpetrators” of the offices of the District Councils and the Security Service, the confiscation of weapons and the announcement of self-proclaimed authorities, on behalf of which the self-defence units acted. The media reported that the usurpers were professionally prepared in terms of organisation, in contrast to the Ukrainian law enforcement services or the army, who initially failed to react accordingly. According to the above-mentioned scenario, on 7 April, one day after mass demonstrations in Donetsk, separatists from the People's Militia of Donbass proclaimed the Donetsk People's Republic, and on April 27, under similar circumstances, the “independence” of the Luhansk People's Republic was proclaimed (Figure 8).

³⁹ Since 6 April 2014, with the participation of some pro-Russian Ukrainian citizens, these units tried to provoke riots in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Odessa oblasts, as well as in Slavyansk and Mariupol.

Figure 8. Disengagement zones in the Donbas

Source: www.gov.ua, [access 05.04.2014].

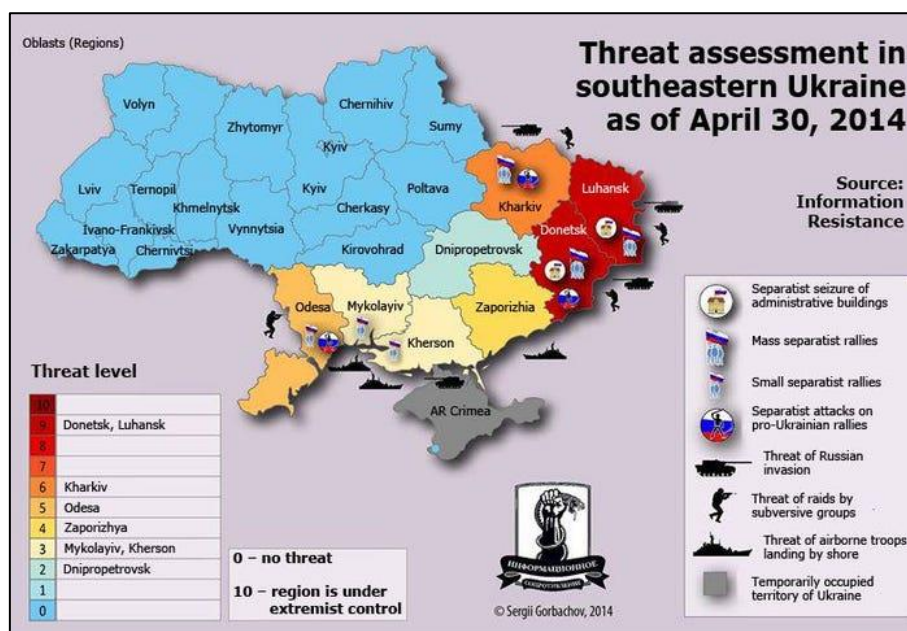
On May 11, a staged referendum for independence was held in both oblasts, which was recognised neither by the Ukrainian authorities, nor by the international community⁴⁰. It was only after these events that Kiev finally decided to initiate an armed operation against the separatists.

As a result of actions in those two districts, the separatists gained control over the majority of Donbass (around 60%), as well as of the military and economic infrastructure located there (Figure 9). Although the regions cover approx. 4.4% of the whole territory of Ukraine, they have approx. 20% of all industrial plants in the country and 9.6% of the Ukrainian population.

⁴⁰ According to the statements made by the self-proclaimed authorities of separatist republics, 89.07% of the inhabitants in the Donetsk oblast and 90% in the Lugansk region very in favour of independence from Ukraine.

protect Russian citizens living in the rebel regions. Ukraine's forces were not strong enough at that time to repel any possible aggression, which resulted in a lack of action by the state authorities.

Figure 10. Threat assessment in south-eastern Ukraine - 30 April 2014



Source: www.mil.gov.ua, [access 10.05.2014].

On 5 September 2014, in Minsk, the Trilateral Contact Group⁴² signed an international agreement on a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine after the direct invasion of Russian regular troops into Donbass and intensive military operations near Ilovaik - the site of one of the most heinous crimes committed by Russian troops in the Donbass region. At least 366 Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 429 were injured while leaving the city through the so-called “green corridor”, which was agreed with the commanders of the Russian troops to guarantee a safety route. Despite signing the *Minsk Protocol on a bilateral ceasefire in eastern Ukraine*, Russia notoriously violated the provisions of this agreement. A few days after the agreement was signed, separatist groups supported by Russian soldiers attacked Ukrainian posts (Figure 11).

⁴² Russian Ambassador to Ukraine, President of Ukraine, OSCE representative and self-proclaimed leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

Figure 11. The situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine - 11 September 2014



Source: www.mediarnbo.org, [access 24.11.2014].

In the first half of 2014, the Russian Federation mobilised around 45,000 soldiers near the border with Ukraine. The purpose of the military exercises was to prepare for the invasion of Ukraine. It was also meant as a threat to Kiev and the entire civilised world, unprepared for such a situation, as well as a warning against using any force against the separatists (Figure 12). In addition, Russia used the forces deployed along the uncontrolled border with Ukraine to deliver weapons, ammunition and fuel to the occupied territories in order to strengthen its own units and separatist groups operating in the Donbass region. The number of regular Russian troops in Donbass in the first half of 2014 ranged from 3,600 to 4,200 soldiers⁴³.

⁴³ The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine repeatedly informed about the presence of weapons and military equipment from Russia in Donbass. It was through the uncontrolled part of the Ukrainian-Russian border that Russian regular troops and mercenaries entered Donbass from Russia.

Figure 12. The location of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine - May 2014



Source: www.mil.gov.ua, [access 15.12.2014].

In addition, along the border with Ukraine, Russia deployed firearms capable of reaching Ukrainian troops along the entire conflict zone (Figure 13), which gave yet another warning to the Ukrainian forces.

Figure 13. Russian heavy weapons



Source: www.mil.gov.ua, [access 02.02.2015].

Summing up the situation in the Donbass region, it can be said that Ukraine has been unable to regain its eastern territories for several reasons, often due to external factors. They included:

- the weakness of the national security structures of Ukraine;
- the lack of firm response from the international community;

-
- decisive actions on the part of Moscow.

The ramifications of the conflict in Ukraine for the security of Europe

The conflict in eastern Ukraine clearly showed the weakness of the European structures in terms of resolving conflicts, where one side is a European power.

The reaction of the international community to the annexation of Crimea was very limited and not decisive enough, which is perplexing, given that the conflict in Ukraine and the actions of Russia have a direct impact on the state of security in Europe. What was lacking was the agreement as to a uniform strategy with regard to the conflict, or more specifically - with regard to Russia. The German weekly "Die Welt" wrote that Europeans were standing in a corner, completely lost, while the biggest drama since the break-up of Yugoslavia was taking place on the EU's doorstep. *The EU looks like a "chicken coop". "While Eastern Europe and Sweden are pushing for strict punitive measures (against Russia), countries of Southern Europe want nothing to do with it, Great Britain is dodging the issue, and countries such as Germany and France are in between the front lines" - writes "Die Welt"*⁴⁴. As pointed out by commentators, Putin knows well what is happening in Europe and is constantly one step ahead of the USA and the EU. *"So far, Putin has not stepped back even by a hair's width. Eastern Ukraine is being eroded, and Europeans are merely watching, while the Russian people are brought together by the president" - concludes the German newspaper*⁴⁵.

In light of the above, Europe's reaction to the Ukrainian conflict should be regarded as ineffective, delayed, and most importantly - too limited. The crisis in Ukraine and the resulting armed conflict were to some extent caused by the actions of the EU and NATO⁴⁶, encouraging Ukraine to join them, offering an attractive vision of development for the country. What was lacking, however, were decisive actions, adapted to the Ukrainian realities, which necessitated changes to the entire political and economic system in order for the integration to become feasible. Aware of the inevitable confrontation with the Russian Federation, which has a firm grip on its influence in Ukraine, NATO and EU member states were neither willing nor ready

⁴⁴ www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata/die-welt-ue-jak-sklocony-kurnik-putin-silny-slaboscia-europy, [Access: 08.06.2016].

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ In his article *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, John J. Mearsheimer states that it is the USA and its European allies that are to blame for the outbreak of this conflict, as they accepted the coup in Ukraine, neglected the geopolitical position and role of Russia in the region, promoting concepts of further expansion of NATO and the EU as far as Russia's borders, thereby violating Russia's vital interests and forcing it to react in a harsh way. See: J. J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, „Foreign Affairs”, vol. 93, no. 5.

to satisfy the Ukrainian hopes. The process of accession to NATO and the EU requires the applying country to meet numerous requirements, which Ukraine was not ready to fulfil at that time. Both organisations demanded a reform of the Ukrainian political, military, economic and financial systems, decisive measures against corruption, the introduction of democratic standards and the protection of human rights. Nevertheless, the aid programs offered turned out to be inadequate to the needs and, in the perception of some Ukrainian political elites, less attractive than the benefits offered by the Russian side⁴⁷. Besides, according to the report of the British parliamentary committee, the EU was not aware of the scale of Russia's hostility towards Brussels' plans to strengthen the EU's relations with Ukraine. The report states that the relations between the EU and Moscow have long been based on the "optimistic assumption" that Russia was heading towards a democratic system. *Britain and the European Union are guilty of "sleepwalking" into the crisis in Ukraine*, criticised head of the EU Committee of the House of Lords, Christopher Tugendhat⁴⁸.

It could be said that the reaction of NATO and the EU to the events in Ukraine, especially in the face of direct Russian involvement, provocative military actions aimed not only at Ukraine, but also at the unity of Europe, as well as Putin's harsh anti-Western rhetoric, leaves much to be desired and comes as a serious disappointment. Both NATO and the EU showed that they were not ready for a confrontation with Russia, and certainly were not ready to defend Ukraine. The actions of both organisations were rather limited to sanctions imposed on Russia and attempts at mitigating the conflict by refraining from provoking Putin. A somewhat harsher reaction by the West was sparked off by the downing of Malaysia Airlines' Boeing 777 passenger plane flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur by pro-Russian separatists⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ When suggesting to Ukraine the establishment of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, the EU did not ensure adequate financial coverage for the required reforms. By offering economic aid through the IMF, the EU anticipated that Ukraine would have to undertake extremely costly reforms, which the country simply could not afford. Meanwhile, the Russian offers turned out to be more favourable for Ukraine. Vladimir Putin's suggestion to work out a tripartite agreement between Ukraine, the EU and Russia was rejected by the West.

⁴⁸ www.polskieradio/Konflikt-na-Ukrainie-Brytyjski-raport-katastrofalne-bledy-UE [access: 28.05.2016].

⁴⁹ This event slightly changed the approach of EU Member States and allowed for the imposition of limited annual sectoral sanctions on the energy and defence sectors, as well as selected state-owned companies and banks. It should, however, be emphasised that limiting these sanctions only to new bilateral agreements, ignoring the already concluded ones, was a sign of protection of the particular interests of individual states (such as France, which at that time was scheduled to provide Russia with Mistral-class amphibious assault ships), which meant that the sanctions did not have any significant impact on curbing Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Another institution that failed in the face of the conflict in Ukraine is the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)⁵⁰. Its mechanisms, which should in theory prevent conflicts, proved ineffective in this case. The organisation lacks adequate instruments to force states to take actions aimed at de-escalating conflicts and is not taken seriously, as evidenced by the kidnapping of its observers by separatists in Slavyansk in April 2014. Since the beginning of the conflict, the observers had restricted access to the regions affected by it. The visits by OSCE observers have been irregular and mostly short-term, carried out in the presence of representatives of the Russian side.

In order to ensure the security of Europe, Russia's financial condition has to be taken into account. Its assessment can be used by analysts of European structures to assess potential threats from Russia. On the basis of an analysis of the conflicts in which the Russian Federation was involved, as well as observation of the dynamics of changes in Russia's GDP (Figure 14), it can be concluded that Moscow tends to provoke conflicts whenever GDP dynamics show a downward trend. The Russian economy depends on global oil and natural gas prices. It can be argued that when prices of these raw materials fall, Russia intentionally provokes armed conflicts in order to inflate them and stimulate its own economy⁵¹.

Figure 14. Graph showing the dynamics of Russia's GDP between 1996-2013



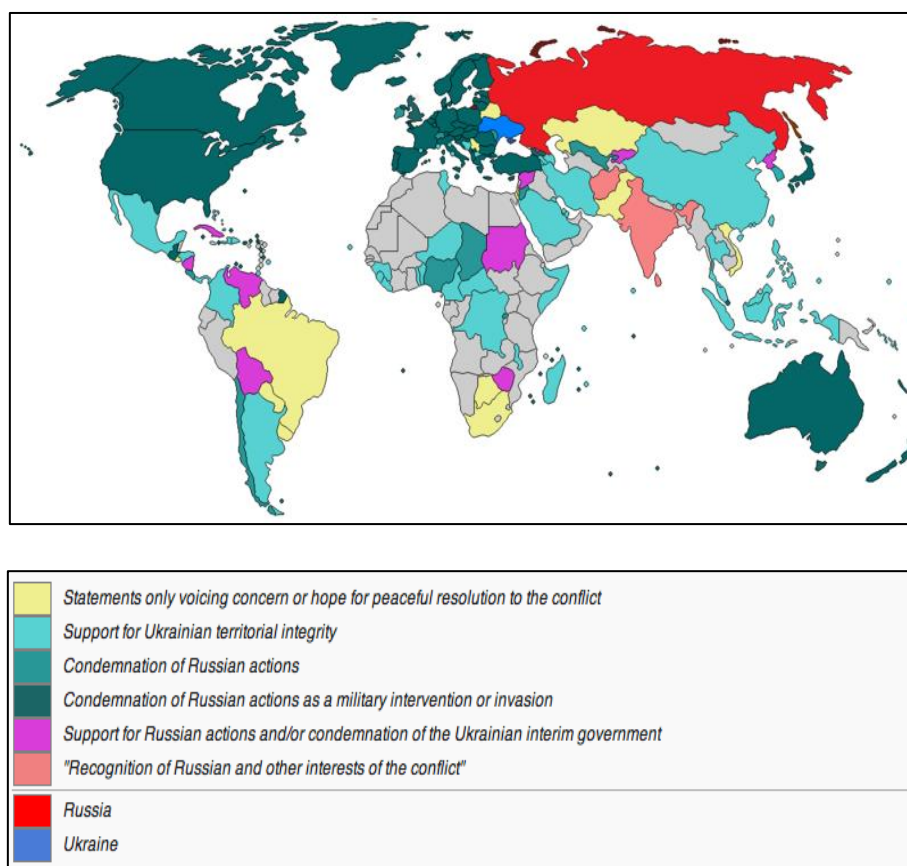
⁵⁰ An international organisation recognised as a regional organisation as understood in Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Its purpose is to prevent conflicts in Europe.

⁵¹ It should be pointed out, however, that in order to prove the thesis, more extensive economic research, going beyond the scope of this article would be required, although it is undoubtedly an interesting factor in the discussion on the causes of the conflict in Ukraine.

Source: www.michalstopka.pl/przyczyny-i-skutki-konfliktu-rosja-ukraina-gospodarka-i-gielda/
[access: 24.05.2016].

Analysing the stance of individual countries with regard to the conflict in Ukraine, it can be said that only the countries of Europe, as well as the United States, Canada and Australia, clearly condemned the military intervention by Russia. African, South American and Middle Eastern countries supported Russia's actions (Figure 15). This shows that the security of Europe is the region's own internal problem, and Europe cannot count on the support of other states.

Figure 15. The attitude of the world to the conflict in Ukraine



Source: www.mil.gov.ua, [access 15.12.2014].

When analysing the political ramifications of the conflict in Ukraine on the security of Europe, attention should be paid to the stance of the United States and European member states. On 17 April 2014 in Geneva, diplomatic representatives of Russia, the United States, Ukraine and the European Union adopted a joint statement with a list of steps to end the conflict⁵².

⁵² The statement says that: "all parties" undertake to refrain from any form of violence, intimidation or provocation; all illegal armed groups must be disarmed; all illegally seized buildings must be returned to legitimate owners; all illegally occupied streets, squares and other public places in Ukrainian cities and towns must be vacated; amnesty

However, it was of a very general nature, allowing the parties to the conflict various options of interpretation of its provisions, including the very phrase “all parties” to the conflict. In fact, from the very beginning, none of the countries that participated in the meeting had high hopes for any positive and definite resolutions. The document signed in Geneva was not a breakthrough in the Ukrainian crisis, nor did it indicate that its signatories had agreed on the normalisation of the situation. For this reason, the agreement had no real impact on the further development of the crisis in eastern Ukraine. Far from it, the signed document was basically only a Russian victory. **First of all**, it contains the Russian definition of the conflict in the Donbass region as an internal Ukrainian conflict (Russia was not recognised as a party to it, despite its evident political and military involvement)⁵³. **Secondly**, the government in Kiev was obliged not to use force against armed separatists, while the West was obliged to influence the Ukrainian government in this regard. Russia, as a signatory to this agreement, but not regarded as a party to the conflict, gained the opportunity to interfere with the process of introducing reforms in Ukraine and review it. Nonetheless, Russia's greatest success at this stage seems to be the complete disregard of the Crimea issue in the agreement, which was considered as a sign of acceptance of the annexation by the international community. From Moscow's point of view, this meant that the issue of the status of the peninsula was closed and that its revision does not condition the end of the conflict. The document did not include the demand for the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Russian-Ukrainian border⁵⁴, made by Western and Ukrainian diplomacy, which later had a significant impact on the course of military operations in the

will be granted to protestors and to those who have left buildings and other public places and surrendered weapons, with the exception of those found guilty of capital crimes. The parties also agreed that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission would play a leading role in providing assistance to the Ukrainian authorities and “local communities” in the immediate de-escalation of the conflict. The USA, the EU and Russia pledged to support the OSCE Mission. The document also states that the constitutional reform in Ukraine under preparation will be transparent, will take into account the interests of all regions, public opinions and the possibility of introducing amendments to it. Moreover, it was agreed that Ukraine needs economic and financial stabilisation, and that the parties are ready to discuss further aid along with the implementation of the provisions of the adopted document. www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2014-04-24, [access: 11.06.2016].

⁵³ What is noteworthy is that in the initial phase after the so-called separatist republics were established, citizens of the Russian Federation played a key role in their governments, including FSB Colonel Igor “Strelkov” Girkin, field commandant of Slavyansk or Aleksandr Borodai, prime minister of the DPR for some time. Only with time, when revolutionary sentiments were well-established in the society, the citizens of Donbass were placed in the highest positions to authenticate the official version of the “grassroots movement”.

⁵⁴ Army Europe Commander Ben Hodges - the U.S. military estimates around 12,000 Russian soldiers are supporting pro-Moscow separatists in eastern Ukraine, The Russian forces are made up of military advisers, weapons operators and combat troops, further 29,000 soldiers were stationed in the Crimea peninsula. In addition, 50,000 troops are positioned on the Russian side of the border with Ukraine in case the separatists suffer a severe setback and the Ukrainian army gains the upper hand. www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-soldiers [access 09.1.2020]

Donbass region and the failure of operations against the separatists. Russia made use of the short period of truce during the talks in Geneva to regroup its forces and strengthen the position of the separatists so as to facilitate the support of the Russian subversive and reconnaissance groups operating in the border areas. Hence, it can be said that the talks in Geneva turned out to be a total failure on the part of the international community, and only improved the Russian strategic position.

Conclusions

The causes of the Ukrainian conflict lie in the weakness of the central government and Ukrainian power structures. It can be argued that the main reason for that weakness stems from the short-sighted mindset of Ukrainian leaders after 1991, for whom politics was a means to get rich through corrupt business deals and organised crime. Mass-scale money laundering and corruption⁵⁵ was the reality of the Ukrainian state.

Another reason is the weakness of the Ukrainian defence structures. The condition of the Ukrainian armed forces at the outbreak of the conflict was basically the same as that of the political system. From the very beginning, the statistically strong and theoretically well-armed forces suffered a series of defeats against the much weaker forces of the separatists. The morale of the soldiers is best reflected by the scale of desertion, especially in the first stage of the conflict. The media reported on mass desertions of entire battalions⁵⁶. The President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, revealed that 30% of the soldiers deserted after the first phase of mobilisation⁵⁷. There were also reports about senior officers switching sides⁵⁸. The Armed Forces of Ukraine were only a shadow of the former military superpower, which had not yet managed to transform into the army of a sovereign state, neither in terms of organisation nor in terms of its cadre. What proved detrimental to the success of operations against separatists was an unprecedented level of infiltration by the Russian secret services. It was probably this factor that prevented the organisation of resistance in Crimea, and perhaps also delayed the decision to take military action against separatists in the east of the country. The cadre, equipment, facilities and, above all, mindset of the armed forces of independent Ukraine had post-Soviet foundations. The politicians of all the governments in power since 1992 have neglected,

⁵⁵ In 2013, at the beginning of the conflict, Ukraine was ranked 144th (out of 177 countries assessed) in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. www.transparency.org, [access: 22.05.2016].

⁵⁶ www.kresy24.pl/57095/szok-na-ukrainie-masowa-dezercja-oddzialow, [access: 20.05.2016].

⁵⁷ www.natemat.pl/137393,ukrainska-armia-miala-powazne-problemy-poroszenko, [access: 22.05.2016].

⁵⁸ The most notorious example is the case of Admiral Denis Berezhovsky, who after being appointed commander of the Ukrainian Black Sea Fleet on Saturday, defected to the Russian side the very next day.

disregarded and treated the army with a mixture of fear and contempt. This made it impossible for a modern military ethos and full identification with the idea of Ukrainian statehood to crystallise. Due to all these factors, Moscow assessed the probability of a decisive military action by Ukrainian forces in Crimea as slight, all the more that armed resistance most likely entailed Russian intervention in other parts of the country as well, and Kiev was completely unprepared for such a scenario, especially in February and March. The actual state of the Ukrainian Armed Forces was revealed by the annexation of Crimea by Russia and during the first weeks of the war in Donbass - they were a fossilised structure incapable of any efficient operation, even in the face of minimum involvement by the enemy.

When considering the security situation in contemporary Europe in the context of the conflict in Ukraine, the following conclusions can be drawn: the West is unable to predict how far Russia can go, while Russia is perfectly aware what the West will certainly not do. In the context of Ukraine, Russia showed that it is ready to use open armed violence, while the West proved that it is unable to do so for the purpose of defending the countries it has tried to incorporate into its sphere of influence.

In summary, the following assumptions can be made:

1. NATO and the EU have not learned their lessons from the Balkan Wars.
2. The approach of NATO and the EU allows other countries, such as Russia, to treat them as mere puppets in the sphere of European and global security.
3. Ukraine's weakness in the initial phase of the conflict can be treated as advantageous for European security. It is likely that more decisive actions on the part of Ukraine could have provoked an armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which Europe was not prepared for. It can be said that Europe managed to secure its peace at the expense of Ukraine.
4. Europe's attitude towards the Moscow authorities could lead to its dependence on Russia. As a result, it is not completely unlikely that it may lead to Europe becoming part of Russia one day.

The considerations presented in the article allow to confirm the hypothesis adopted at the beginning of the discussion, namely that the weakness of the security system of Ukraine, the passive approach of the Euro-Atlantic countries and international organisations, as well as Russia's impunity in its actions against Ukraine have led to the current situation in the country.

Streszczenie:

Przedmiotem niniejszego artykułu jest sytuacja na Ukrainie w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku i jej wpływ na bezpieczeństwo w Europie. Celem natomiast, zdefiniowanie węzłowych problemów w obszarze bezpieczeństwa Ukrainy w tym okresie. Do prezentacji wyników badań zastosowano metodę obserwacyjną. Materiał badawczy uzyskano w wyniku analizy dostępnej literatury oraz w efekcie obserwacji niestandardyzowanej. Struktura artykułu obejmuje pięć zasadniczych zagadnień. Pierwsze to uwarunkowania polityczne konfliktu na Ukrainie. Drugie to poszukiwanie przyczyn utraty przez Ukrainę swoich zdolności obronnych po uzyskaniu suwerenności. Trzecie zagadnienie koncentruje się na przyczynach utraty półwyspu krymskiego. Czwarte to analiza wydarzeń na utraconych przez Ukrainę terenach wschodnich. Elementem dopełniającym całość prowadzonych rozważań jest poszukiwanie implikacji dla bezpieczeństwa europejskiego a wynikających z konfliktu na Ukrainie.

Słowa kluczowe:

bezpieczeństwo Ukrainy, bezpieczeństwo w Europie, separatysty.

Key words:

security of Ukraine, security of Europe, separatists

Bibliografia:

1. Drabik K., Tradycyjne rozumienie zjawiska wojny a charakter współczesnych konfliktów zbrojnych, [w:] Międzynarodowe konsekwencje konfliktu zbrojnego na Ukrainie, red. M. Adamiec-Sięmiątkowski, Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 2016.
2. Kosior Cz., Potencjał militarny Ukrainy w obliczu rosyjskiej agresji, Ośrodek Analiz Strategicznych, 23.06.2015.
3. Martel W.C., Why Ukraine gave up nuclear weapons: nonproliferation incentives and disincentives, [w]: B.R. Schneider, W.L. Dowdy, Pulling Back from the Nuclear Brink: Reducing and Countering Nuclear Threats, Psychology Press 1998.
4. Pikayev A.A., Post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine: Who can push the Button?, The Nonproliferation Review/Spring-Summer 1994.
5. Ramsay S., Ukraine: Militia Controls A Million Weapons, Sky News, 30.04.2014.
6. Sherr J., Ukraine's Defence Reform: An Update, Conflict Studies Research Centre.
7. SIPRI Yearbook 2016. Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security. Summary, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – SIPRI.
8. Taras K., Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism, Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara 2015.

9. The Lisbon Protocol At a Glance, Arms Control Association, 11.04.2014.
10. Вяткин Я., К миру без принуждения. Состояние украинской армии является одним из главных аргументов против военного решения крымского конфликта, Взгляд (интернет-газета), 11.03.2014.
11. Закон України Про внесення змін до деяких законодавчих актів України щодо посилення матеріально-фінансового забезпечення обороноздатності держави, 8.04.2014.
12. Закон України Про внесення змін до деяких законодавчих актів України щодо проходження військової служби у Збройних Силах України іноземцями та особами без громадянства, 6.10.2015.
13. Закон України Про внесення змін до деяких законів України з питань оборони, 16.06.2016.
14. Александров А., „Партизанской тропой” в НАТО. Создаваемые на Украине силы спецопераций готовятся вести партизанскую войну и подрывную деятельность в „тылу врага”, Красная звезда, 10.03.2016.
15. Александров А., Курсом милитаризации, Красная звезда, 5.11.2015.
16. Президент України Петро Порошенко, Указ Президента України №555/2015 Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 2 вересня 2015 року „Про нову редакцію Воєнної доктрини України”, Офіційне інтернет-представництво, 2.09.2015.
17. Порошенко: Нинішня неоголошена війна може стати Вітчизняною для українців, Інформаційна Агенція 112.ua, 24.08.2014.
18. Путін веде гібридну війну в Україні – експерт, Сегодня, 27.04.2014.
19. United States Senate, Hearing to Receive Testimony on Russian Influence and Unconventional Warfare Operations in the “Grey Zone”: Lessons from Ukraine, 29.03.2017.
20. Romaniec R., Raport holenderskich ekspertów potwierdza: MH17 zestrzelony przez rosyjską rakietę Buk, DW, 13.10.2015.

Źródła internetowe:

1. www.bleackseandcaspian.com
2. www.businessinsider.com
3. www.kyivpost.com
4. www.gov.ua
5. www.mil.gov.ua
6. www.mediarnbo.org
7. www.polgeonow.com