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SEVERAL COMMENTS ON POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS AFTER RUSSIA'S ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF POLITICAL SCIENCES

The annexation of Ukrainian Crimea by Russia and its activities in the eastern part of Ukraine encourage political scientists and experts in international relations and security to conduct diverse analyses. This article aims to reflect on the problem of how, from the point of view of political science, Polish-Ukraine relations should be shaped as well as how Russia's actions could be explained. Concepts of the following researchers have been used in the analysis: Adolf Bocheński, Hannah Arendt, Hans Morgenthau, Sigmund Freud and the paradigm of realism and romanticism in politics. The conclusions of the discussion are as follows: the course adopted by Polish decision-makers towards Ukraine (and hence against Russia), although understandable in some respects and having a theoretical justification, seems to be in line with the current of the romantic and idealistic political thought. These trends, generally speaking, are discredited in international relations.

Key words: Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Polish-Ukrainian relations, international relations, Adolf Bocheński, Hannah Arendt, Hans Morgenthau, Sigmund Freud, romantic, idealistic and realistic currents in the realm of politics.

Historia (vero) testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis. Cicero,

De oratore, recogn. G. Friedrich, Lipsiae 1906, 2, 9, 36.

Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea and its activities in the eastern part of Ukraine has led to various analyses by political scientists, as well as experts in international relations and security. It is relevant to participate in this scientific discourse and reflect, from the perspective of political sciences, on Polish and Ukrainian relations – the way they should be and how they might be? Also, how can science explain Russia's actions? The results of these findings should be compared with the foreign policies actually implemented by Poland, Ukraine and Russia, and from this comparison it is possible to establish concrete conclusions and findings.

Vladimir Putin's first actions of expanding his sphere of influence in Ukraine consisted in the annexation of Crimea. This event can be approached from several points of view, from the perspective of several theoretical concepts.

At the beginning, it would be useful to address the phenomenon of historical analogy as a tool used for analysis in political science. The aforementioned is related to the comparisons that appeared right after the annexation of Crimea by Russia, with suggestions that we might be dealing with actions similar to those of the 1930s in Europe. Firstly, the example of actions taken by the Third Reich against Austria in 1938 was given. The Anschluss of Austria, similarly to Crimea, had also been sealed with a referendum held on the territory in question. The events connected with the Munich conference (also in 1938) and the annexation of lands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia by the Third Reich were the second exemplum cited from history. The arrangements of the Munich Agreement were received with joy in France and the United Kingdom, as the eruption of war had been prevented¹.

The theoretical aspects of using historical analogies should firstly be explored. Two opposing positions can be presented on this subject.

The first is represented by Adolf Maria Bocheński, one of the most brilliant political writers of the twentieth century. The author of *Tendencje samobójcze narodu polskiego* [Suicidal Tendencies of the Polish Nation] argued that one can point to two types of historical arguments in foreign policy in order to justify a political programme. *Primo*: indicating an action that has in the past resulted in a certain outcome, thus leading to the conclusion that repeating it should lead to similar or comparable effects. *Secundo*: history shows that a specific cause engenders a specific effect. This allows us to determine the political

¹ Moreover, what we see as a defeat of Great Britain, a prominent journalist - Stanislaw Cat-Mackiewicz - considers its great victory. The United Kingdom gave itself the time required to prepare for war, while Germany was already ready for it. The delay worked to Hitler's disadvantage. See S. Cat-Mackiewicz, *O jedenastej – powiada aktor – sztuka jest skończona*, polityka Józefa Becka, Kraków 2012.

principles². Given these two observations by Adolf Bocheński, comparisons to actions taken by the Third Reich in 1938 seem fully justified. Especially since the secessionist actions taken by Vladimir Putin against Crimea have yielded the result he expected. In this sense, the role of history in conducting foreign policy has been proved completely. It should be noted that historical analogy can also be used by the aggressor. Thanks to historical knowledge (more precisely: the events of the late 1930s) Putin could assume, with high probability, that no western society would want to lay down its life for Ukraine³. Just as in the 1930s, none of the countries provided military support to the attacked country (we shall return to this issue below) and the state of annexation was de facto approved and sealed by the relative⁴ passivity of the countries.

The second, opposite view, is represented in history by the ideas of Hannah Arendt. In *Responsibility and Judgment* she put down a thesis that analogies from the past cannot help in solving current crises. In this particular Ukrainian case, the solution may not be manifesting itself, but it is clear that on the basis of historical knowledge one can take on the ambitious task of attempting to outline possible scenarios for the situation's development, which is the hardest thing in politics – anticipating. Arendt argues that a political action that is characterised by randomness limits the use of analogies. She emphasises its dependence on particular circumstances. At the same time, what should be underlined, she did not depreciate the importance of the past: “The world we live in at the moment is a world of the past; it consists of monuments and relics of what has been done by men for better or worse”⁵. She opposes, however, the possibility of using “lessons from history” to predict the future and ironically states: if history teaches anything, it is as vague as the prophecies of the Delphic oracle. Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with her, as the facts themselves refute her thesis. Particular activities of the Russian president brought about the expected effect (the annexation of Crimea), just as in the past particular activities of Adolf Hitler led him to his objective (*Anschluß* of Austria, partition of Czechoslovakia).

Next, one should – continuing to use historical analogy - look at the international situation. The issue of other countries' reactions is also multi-faceted. On the one hand, we can analyse the passivity of other countries. In this case – again using historical parallels – one can recall the actions of one of the heads of contemporary governments – Neville Chamberlain. His, generally speaking, pacifist moves, demonstrate that paradoxically, the policies of appeasement between countries led to the outbreak of the Second World War⁶. To put it more bluntly: good intentions do not ensure effectiveness in politics. This idea is formulated by Hans Morgenthau in the discussion of the second of his famous six principles of political realism. This realistic approach leads to the realisation that one cannot focus on the motives of a politician's actions as this is misleading and futile. Motivations are one of the most enigmatic data elements, eluding both external observation and the knowledge of the person performing the actions. We cannot always and clearly define the motives behind our own actions, let alone comment on other people's motivations⁷. A political scientist, an expert on international relations, must therefore focus on the activities themselves and try to abstract from the

² See A. Bocheński, *Między Niemcami a Rosją*, Kraków 2009.

³ Of course, the situation would be more complicated, if Ukraine was bound with the West under a political and military alliance.

⁴ The concept of “relative” refers to sanctions, which from the beginning were considered too mild. However, we must bear in mind that sanctions are a double-edged sword and, in the era of globalisation, severely impact other national economies. It is impossible to punish only the aggressor.

⁵ H. Arendt, *Odpowiedzialność i władza sądenia*, transl. W. Madej and M. Godyń, Warszawa 2006, p. 299.

⁶ Of course, this policy's background is a lot more complex. A simplified representation of these events serves only to exemplify the stated thesis.

⁷ See H.J. Morgenthau, *Polityka między narodami. Walka o potęgę i pokój*, transl. R. Włoch, Warszawa 2010.

motivations guiding politicians. What conclusion comes from this for current state policies in light of the Kremlin's moves? In essence, history has shown that a tactic of not antagonising relations with the aggressor may, paradoxically, lead to encouraging further moves, and ultimately, to rising tensions in relations with its neighbours and allied countries. We should remember that the decisions taken at the Munich conference were received with applause, since their intentions were good (meaning: peaceful), but the effects of those efforts yielded the opposite results.

At this stage of the discussion it is already possible to make some general conclusions on history as a foundation for political thought. The discussed issues corroborate common theses regarding history. Namely: *historia est magistra vitae* and – what is particularly important for predictions in politics – *historia nuntia vetustatis*. This naturally leads to one repeating the thought that *historiam nescire hoc est semper puerum esse*.

Returning to the relatively mild treatment of Russia's actions against Ukraine by the international community, we should also note that these actions can be explained from both theoretical and practical perspectives. This is the other aspect of the problem of non-engagement of other countries and their passive acceptance of the annexation of Crimea. How to justify the lack of military support for Ukraine from a political sciences' perspective? The case is evident from a geopolitical point of view: the weaker party can provide support in so far as it is not in conflict with a stronger country. What are the real chances of Poland taking a stand and defeating Russia in defence of a sovereign Ukraine? None. Will our allies support, in the particular geographical area, the weaker ally against the stronger? No. This, of course, explains Polish diplomacy's endeavours aimed at building a larger coalition of countries opposed to Russia. There question of whether these actions will have the desired result remains. The answer according to geopolitical theory is again: no. This in turn leads us to – as it has been said earlier – the practical reasons for the lack of decisive actions of the West. The issue, of course, is the global nature of business in today's world. Angela Merkel's actions are strongly countered by German businessmen opposed to the sanctions imposed on Russia, as these strongly impact their business activities. On this occasion, it is worth pointing to a problem related to international law. Indeed, some researchers emphasise the difficulties in calling this law a *sensu stricto* law because there is no classic form of sanctions.

Within the scope of political sciences, the justification of current political events should be subjected to a brief analysis of Vladimir Putin's actions. His move – looking at the matter in a very rudimentary dimension⁸ – can be justified by means of the aforementioned second principle of political realism of Hans Morgenthau. In its light the most important focal point in foreign policy is the concept of interest, defined in terms of strength. This explains the past actions of politicians who act specifically because of interest defined in terms of strength, making it possible to anticipate their future moves. Thanks to this category, political reality appears to be more rational, ordered and theoretically understandable⁹. Furthermore, it explains the continuity and internal consistency of – in this case – Russia's foreign policy. In light of the second principle of political realism neither the neoimperial nor postimperial trends in Russia are surprising¹⁰. The first is related to the Eurasianism ideology, which promotes a vision of building an empire in Eurasia, simultaneously criticising Western civilization and defending traditional values. The second one, meanwhile, not so much proclaims the restoration of the Russian empire, but wants to maintain the independence of the country from the West, while focusing on economic and social development. Interest defined in terms of strength is thus a key concept facilitating the understanding of Russia's actions.

Let us now turn to another issue. How can the difficult relations between Poles and Ukrainians be explained? Why is the history of our relations so full of difficult moments? Of course, the basic answer to this question refers to particular historical events (for example, the massacre of Volhynia, but also the pacification of the "Ukrainian element" by the Polish Army during the Second Polish Republic), but our aim is to provide an explanation of the causes behind these complex relationships with the eastern neighbours. Why did such dramatic events occur? One possible answer is an idea of Sigmund Freud. In the essay *Civilization as a Source of Our Unhappiness* Freud formulated a thesis regarding the drive for

⁸ There are many interpretations of the politics pursued by Vladimir Putin. The following book has recently been published: P. Rojek, *Przekleństwo imperium. Źródła rosyjskiego zachowania*, Kraków 2014.

⁹ See H.J. Morgenthau, *Polityka...*

¹⁰ Bronisław Łagowski is of the opinion that it is not so much imperialist (neo- or post-) ideas that drive Putin, but nationalist ideas. Łagowski substantiates his view by the historical circumstances under which, for example, Crimea - inhabited by Russians in a vast majority - was and is Russian. The gifting it to the Ukrainian SSR by Khrushchev was, of course, a meaningless gesture, since the collapse of the USSR at the time was inconceivable.

destruction inherent to human nature. He called it Thanatos. In general, he noticed that a person is ready to harm another without thinking, if he sees any benefit in this. Furthermore, this person does not consider in detail whether this benefit is adequate to the harm being caused. A person willingly manifests his power, feeling more confident as the other feels more helpless. We give free reign to our aggressive tendencies, for example by abusing the work of others. We are capable not only of defending, but also attacking, because other people are potential objects of our desires. Human aggression waits only for provocation, even if it is employed in the service of other intentions. Aggression is curbed by culture which, because of this, is constantly threatened by dissolution. It tries to suppress our instincts, setting tasks opposed to the primal human nature, such as love thy neighbour as thyself. How does Freud's diagnosis refer to the approach of Poles towards Ukrainians and vice versa? The Austrian psychoanalyst observed that people forming a cultural circle feel aggression towards people who are outside of it. Love binds people within the circle, with aggression directed outwards. Hence – as Freud notes – neighbouring communities usually fight each other. He refers to this phenomenon as “narcissism of small differences”¹¹.

Another interesting aspect in the context of the subject matter pertains to the theoretical justification for the Polish stance on Ukraine on the international arena. Two facts stand out among our actions. First, the immediate, very firm and unequivocal support by Poland of the activities at Maidan square. Second, an equally firm voice from Poland regarding this issue within the European Union. These activities, let us emphasise this very clearly, had strong anti-Russian overtones. As it has already been mentioned, supporting the weaker entity against the stronger one is not, from a strategic point of view, a manifestation of political prudence. However, Polish actions to the benefit of Ukraine within the framework of international relations also contain other elements. How to justify such loud and clear support for only one side of the conflict? The answer is simple: our politics are conducted in a spirit typical for the political romantic paradigm. This manifests itself in a number of aspects. The first is missionism. This concept is derived from the word “mission” and in politics refers to a belief in a nation's special mission. This phenomenon is known in the history of political thought. For example, even Hegel expressed the idea of a historical mission of every nation. According to the philosopher, a particular nation acts within a given historical situation, developing a consciousness of freedom, contributing to the interests of the world spirit. This concept is of course more complex, but even this basic thesis sheds light on Polish activities in Europe looking for strong support for Ukrainian affairs on the one hand, but, on the other hand, it can also refer to the actions of Ukraine itself, which on Maidan square showed a state of consciousness of freedom by rebelling against the authorities' refusal to sign an association agreement with the European Union. Pursuing this doctrinal approach further, one could conclude that as per the Hegelian dialectic, the Ukrainian people are passing through the stage of maturation (Hegel draws a diagram that goes from childhood, through maturation to old age and the end)¹². One can count Mazzini among other supporters of missionism. He claimed that each nation has been assigned a different task, which results from the specific nature of individual nations. US policy also contains elements of missionism. Since 1845, the idea of Manifest Destiny formulated by J. L. O'Sullivan in the daily “Morning News” has existed there. He proclaimed that America has a special mission in the Western Hemisphere and this view soon penetrated the American vision of international relations and could be seen in “a large part of American history, especially in the foreign policy of this country”¹³. President Wilson continued this idea, believing that the promotion of democracy will make it possible to guarantee peace and that the actions of nations can be assessed, similarly to the actions of individuals, from the point of view of ethics. As a result, a fair international order was to come about and the world was to be relieved

¹¹ S. Freud, *Kultura jako źródło cierpienia*, transl. J. Prokopiuk, Warszawa 1992, p. 97. Freud gives examples of such adjacent communities whose relationships are not easy. He includes among them, the Spanish and the Portuguese, or Germans from the south and north.

¹² See G.W.F. Hegel, *Wykłady z filozofii dziejów*, t. 1-2, przeł. J. Grabowski and A. Landman, Warszawa 1958.

¹³ L. Pastusiak, *Dyplomacja Stanów Zjednoczonych*, Warszawa 1978, p. 354.

of threats. It is worth highlighting a belief in the healing power of democracy common to Poland and America in the early twentieth century. The belief that a liberal-democratic order is able to guarantee peace is a well-known theme in political thought. Such theses were expressed by Bertrand Russell or¹⁴ Karl Jaspers¹⁵, for example. For a time Fukuyama also believed in it, in his famous book announcing an end of history through liberal democracy and market economy becoming a reality everywhere¹⁶. However, one thing should be borne in mind in connection with this issue: political systems cannot be imposed. The classics taught this, Montesquieu for example, America experienced this in practice when trying to bring democracy to Iraq.

The aforementioned issues included the notion of Polish politicians building a European coalition for Ukrainian affairs. At the beginning we took part in discussions within the European Union, along with Germany, France and, of course, Ukraine itself. However, over time we have been side-lined from these discussions. Why? Because of an overly radical anti-Russian position. In interpreting these facts, it is again worth turning to the classics. Adolf Bocheński taught that: politics is not the realm of dogmatism (Russia is bad, Russia is our enemy), but relativism, which is a need for a flexible approach to individual issues: “The state’s interests require frequent changes to the programme – either in foreign policy or in economic matters. It is bad, if the majority of the nation lives and breathes one slogan, behind which hides one particular political programme”¹⁷ and further: “In politics, as in strategy, one should avoid overly doctrinal principles”¹⁸. Therefore, we cannot always and everywhere proclaim that Russia is bad and is our enemy. Here are some other conclusions about politics, which strongly deviate from the actions of Polish politicians in the international arena regarding Ukraine: Max Weber teaches that politics is like a calm, cold calculation, not the domain of sentiment, politics is conducted using one’s head, no other part of the body or soul. How to explain that the Ukrainians did not and do not (because further discussions are to take place) request that we should be present at subsequent negotiations with Russia, at the side of the Germans and the French. Why did they give up on our presence at the negotiating table? It is because Polish politicians have forgotten that gratitude in politics matters little. On the contrary, it often interferes in relations between countries and, most importantly, usually loses out to interests. “Experience shows that obligations stemming from gratitude, both in private life and in international relations, are more likely to sour the atmosphere than clear it”¹⁹. It was not in the interest of Ukraine, nor Germany (strongly linked economically with Russia), nor France (involved, for example, in the sale of Mistral warships to Russia) to negotiate alongside Poland with its dogmatic approach towards Russia. Polish politicians should derive at least one conclusion from this difficult lesson: in politics there are no eternal allies, neither are there eternal enemies. In the words of Henry Temple, 3rd Viscount of Palmerston: “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow”.

From the point of view of political romanticism Vladimir Putin’s perspective on the position of his nation towards other nations can be also explained. It is a sense of messianism, evidenced by a feeling of uniqueness of one’s nation, faith in its historic mission and an imminent transformation. The associated social criticism, typical for messianism, presents the West as a propagator of fallen values, as opposed to the Russian people, maintaining unadulterated, traditional values. Politicians operating within the category of political romanticism aspire to a universal renewal, socio-political transformation of life, the dawn of a new stage in the development of the public sphere. Such slogans can be heard today in Russia. Another issue connected to political romanticism is the lonely struggle against the majority. This is exactly the position currently occupied by Russia on the international stage. Its loneliness not only has a political dimension (especially clear at the November G20 Summit), but primarily an economic one (sanctions, depreciation of the ruble). To this point one can also add: sacrifice for an ideal, the stigmatisation of seeking compromise – intermediate solutions seem to be immoral. A political romantic enjoys esteem, even if he fails to achieve his goal (with the opposite true in realism, where effectiveness is a political virtue). In

¹⁴ See B. Russell, *Przebudowa społeczna*, transl. A. Pański, Warszawa 1932.

¹⁵ See K. Jaspers, *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen*, München 1958.

¹⁶ F. Fukuyama, *Koniec historii*, transl. T. Bieroń, M. Wichrowski, Poznań 1997.

¹⁷ Adolf Bocheński o ustroju i racji stanu Rzeczypospolitej, prep. A. Kosicka-Pajewska, Warszawa 2000, p. 180.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

¹⁹ A. Bocheński, *Między Niemcami a Rosją*, Warszawa 1994, p. 47.

addition, the reason behind policy is perceived to be a fight that leads to a division of the world into one's friends and enemies (the classical distinction by Carl Schmitt), which has been heard in the Kremlin's rhetoric for a long time. Who is responsible for the decline in oil prices, on which the Russian economy is based? Of course, a conspiracy by Western countries. The Kremlin propaganda also features discussions on the justness of the cause, but not an answer to the question of what to do next, which is again a manifestation of a typically romantic attitude to conducting politics.

In summary, the course adopted by Polish policy-makers towards Ukraine (and thus towards Russia), though understandable in some respects and theoretically justified, falls generally in line with romantic and idealistic currents in the realm of politics. These currents, in general, are largely discredited in international relations. Their validity was particularly strongly verified by World War II, which showed countries rather stuck in a Hobbesian state of nature²⁰ than ready to spread the idea of good, cooperation, respect for international law. Therefore, a realistic paradigm of international relations appeared after the Second World War²¹. It is highly desirable for our decision-makers to absorb these important ideas, as they not only have consequences (Richard M. Weaver), but there is no country that could ignore ideas and be guided directly and exclusively by interests (though of course in Polish politics lofty and noble ideas prevail over the practical implementation of objectives that can be achieved at a given time).

Finally, this gives rise to the conclusion that Thrasymachus' idea of the advantage of the stronger is universal, timeless and still in force. International law is not violated by the weak, but by the strongest²². This substantiates the actions of both Russia towards Ukraine or other countries, and explains the position of Germany in the European Union.

In conclusion, it would be good to consider the direction that should be taken by Polish policy towards Ukraine, and thus towards Russia. In politics, as in private life, it is impossible to realise all goals simultaneously, so one should learn to make sacrifices. It is impossible to have good relations with both Russia and Ukraine. The classics are again useful in giving advice and suggestions. As Napoleon taught, one must know when to sacrifice a single province; he who wants to defend everything shall save nothing. One should also keep one fact in mind: the mutual convergence of countries' interests (their *raison d'état*) defeats the existing ideological incompatibilities between them. National interests should be seen as a dark horse, always winning. And another conclusion: we cannot feel outraged by the violation of the law, the existing order and established agreements by strong countries. Indeed, as Machiavelli taught: the prince should not keep his word, if keeping it would turn against him and the causes for giving his word expired, which is why he used to say that treaties are in force *rebus sic stantibus*²³.

²⁰ This interpretation is suggested in an article by Piotr Kimla. See P. Kimla, *Polityka Hobbesa przebrzmiały mit?*, in: *Zrozumieć politykę. Główne problemy teorii polityki i współczesnej myśli politycznej*, ed. R. Bäcker, J. Marszałek-Kawy, J. Modrzyńskiej, Toruń 2003.

²¹ The doctrinal ancestors of this current include: Thucydides, Nicolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, Carl von Clausewitz. Contemporary theorists: Reinhold Niebuhr, Edward Carr, Hans Morgenthau, Arnold Wolfers, Kenneth Waltz, John H. Herz, Henry Kissinger, Raymond Aron, Max Weber.

²² It is impossible not to refer at this juncture to the CIA report on secret prisons, in Poland among others, which shown human rights abused by a superpower in the name of an overriding interest - safety.

²³ See N. Machiavelli, *Książę*, transl. W. Rzymowski, Warszawa 2001.