

Tomasz Olejarz*

JÓZEF M. FISZER, TOMASZ STĘPNIEWSKI,
*POLSKA I UKRAINA W PROCESIE TRANSFORMACJI, INTEGRACJI I WYZWAŃ
DLA BEZPIECZEŃSTWA EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ*
[*POLAND AND UKRAINE IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION, INTEGRATION
AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SECURITY OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE*]
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Polska i Ukraina w procesie transformacji, integracji i wyzwań dla bezpieczeństwa Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej [*Poland and Ukraine in the Process of Transformation, Integration and Challenges for the Security of Central and Eastern Europe*] – an analysis by prof. Józef M. Fiszer and Tomasz Stępniewski, PhD, prof. of the Catholic University of Lublin is devoted to the problems of the evolution of the position of Poland and Ukraine from the point of view of the specificity and dynamics of three processes: political, systemic and economic transformation, European integration and the safety deficit of Central and Eastern Europe identified and analysed in the geopolitical scale. The work consists of 6 substantive chapters (chapter 1 – „Transformacja ustrojowa i integracja państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej z Unią Europejską. Sukcesy i porażki” [‘Systemic transformation and integration of Central and Eastern European countries with the European Union. Successes and failures’]; chapter 2 – „Polityka zagraniczna Polski po 1989 roku wobec małych państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej” [‘Polish foreign policy after 1989 towards small countries of Central and Eastern Europe’]; chapter 3 –

* Tomasz Olejarz – Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Vocational University in Przemyśl, tomek_olejarz@poczta.fm

„Kryzys Unii Europejskiej i jej przyszłość. Nowe wyzwania i zagrożenia dla integracji i bezpieczeństwa Europy” [‘The crisis of the European Union and its future. New challenges and threats to Europe’s integration and security’]; chapter 4 – „Wojna Ukrainy o niepodległość, pamięć i tożsamość” [‘Ukraine’s war for independence, memory and identity’]; chapter 5 – „NATO, ukraiński kryzys i szara strefa bezpieczeństwa Europy Wschodniej” [‘NATO, the Ukrainian crisis and the grey security zone of Eastern Europe’]; chapter 6 – „Polityka wschodnia Unii Europejskiej w dobie kryzysu ukraińskiego” [‘Eastern policy of the European Union at the time of the Ukrainian crisis’]; initial and final reflections of the authors, as well as a bibliography and a bilingual resume in English and Russian. An important substantive value of the book is its analytical ‘horizon’ and temporal dimension. The beginning of the period under consideration is the geopolitical reevaluation of 1991 (the collapse of the USSR and the departure from the bipolar system of international relations), and the emergence of independent Poland and Ukraine (1989–1991). The end of that period is constituted by current internal events in Ukraine and the European Union, but first of all by an analysis of the impact of external threats characterising the post-Soviet area en masse, from the point of view of the current phase of the course and consequences of the conflict caused by Russia in Ukraine (and other so-called ‘frozen’ conflicts). Regarding the workshop and the methodological aspect, it should be noted that the work is widely documented, both in terms of quantity and quality (the most up-to-date documents, reports, analyses, monographs, collective works, articles and scientific papers, journalistic and popular science materials, press articles and websites found by authors during a meticulous query at home and abroad are referred to in the book). The literature of the subject is thus pluralised and interdisciplinary, characteristic of the fields of political science, International Relations, economics, sociology, etc.

The first three chapters of the study by Józef M. Fiszer characterise and analyse (without avoiding unequivocal appraisals and assessments) the specificity of systemic changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, thus leading to the statement (the author’s main thesis) that after the initial euphoria resulting from the recovered freedom and sovereignty there have come – as inevitable and unavoidable – difficulties of the transformation period, and the path to a democratic system and free market economy has turned out to be more complicated in social and political reality than previously anticipated and assumed. It is exemplified by the example of Poland, where the political transformation after 1989 and the economic reforms

introduced at that time caused a shocking rise in prices, and at the same time generated the effect of a decline in real income and standard of living of a large part of Polish citizens (an increasing scale of stratification of income and material resources and the actual pauperisation of society). In Józef Fiszer's opinion, after the overthrow of communism the remaining countries of Central and Eastern Europe either adopted the transformation direction similar to that of Poland (Poland was perceived as a positive 'model' of transformation and democratisation), or considerably attenuated it, limiting consciously and intentionally the growing social and political costs. At the same time, they made smaller or larger mistakes, which still spark off political and intellectual disputes and spontaneous discussions 'inside' these countries (including Poland).

Thus, the evolution of Central and Eastern European countries and the transition from communism to parliamentary democracy and free market economy – through the transformation of the political, social, economic and cultural system that took place in 1989–1991 and later through their Europeanisation (the processes of 'anchoring' CEE countries in the EU) were neither simple nor easy. It certainly did not run in a linear and uninterrupted manner. On the contrary, it was a highly complex, complicated process, even now arousing intense social and political emotions. Moreover, according to the authors of the book, there is still no real, participative (civic) democracy in the new EU Member States, despite the quarter-century of political transformation and progressing Europeanisation processes. The quality and difficulties resulting from the condition of Central and Eastern democracies today, despite high hopes and optimism accompanying their creation, still leave wide field and space for further assessments, reconstruction of results or even (re-)interpretation of their character and specificity, as evidenced by this study.

In the next part of the book Tomasz Stepniewski's analysis of the dynamics and nature of the processes of Europeanisation and the related effects of the so-called 'great enlargement' of the European Union in 2004 to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is important in explanative and cognitive terms. In this volume, not only an in-depth attempt to reflect on the significance of EU enlargement for Central European Member States is made, but also specific systemic problems of Eastern European countries, as well as political, economic, socio-cultural difficulties in transformation processes are indicated and mental challenges are highlighted – the legacy of *homo sovieticus* which permanently hinders tightening of multilateral

cooperation, for example between Ukraine and the European Union. The third area of the analysis concerns security problems in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular Russia's war with Ukraine. A reference is made here to the causes, course and possible consequences of the conflict for Ukraine (for its 'outside-the-bloc' status, for its 'unitary' state character, for the future of its 'multi-vector' foreign policy), as well as for the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe and for the collective security system within NATO. The *per procura* war between Russia and Ukraine has implications not only directly for Ukraine, it also poses a challenge to the security of the entire post-Soviet area, to European and transatlantic security, and questions the shape of future relations between the Russian Federation (*politique du fait accompli*), the European Union and the entire transatlantic environment.

The presentation of the evolution and redefinition of the state of security in the region of Central and Eastern Europe is a separate chord of the study. The way of exemplifying and grading problems related to the typology of threats and the assessment of the state of security in Central and Eastern Europe draws the reader's attention. It should be stressed that the main intention of the author (Tomasz Stępniewski) in the second phase of the analysis and the specific *idée fixe* of this part of the book appears to be a synthetic look at the problem of the security deficit, primarily through the prism of regional conflicts, the war between Russia and Ukraine, from the point of view of the confrontation carried out by Ukraine over its full independence, memory and identity. According to the political scientist, a stake in the political-military 'hybrid' confrontation between Russia and Ukraine is the real nature of independence and subjectivity of the modern Ukrainian state, but also an attempt to break with the eternal and permanent dependence on the Russian Federation – on the socio-cultural plane (in the matter of common memory, history, religion, etc.) and on the political and economic ones (the specificity of the political regime of Ukraine and the problem of energy security and transit of raw materials to/via Ukraine). According to the author, as a result of the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of south-eastern Ukraine the 'divorce' of Ukraine from Russia assumed a lasting and deeply polarising nature. Thus, we are witnessing gradual 'signing out' of Ukraine and Ukrainians from the post-Soviet political space. More importantly, permanent crises in Ukraine (successive 'revolutions'), and above all the armed conflict lasting since 2014, have changed the way of thinking about the security of Eastern Europe and, more broadly, entire Europe (one can even say that the conflict in Ukraine is a symbolic ending and epilogue of the interna-

tional order established after the Cold War). Secondly, according to Tomasz Stępniewski, the lack of reflection on the change of the security situation in Eastern Europe may have far-reaching consequences for the entire collective security system of states functioning within NATO. The security system of Eastern Europe (more widely of the post-Soviet area and the related Black Sea area) is perceived as extremely complicated, above all due to its multi-dimensionality and complexity (military, energy, ethno-political, geo-cultural aspects, etc.). As a result of the growth of the geostrategic importance of this area, there appear and accumulate further problems complicating the already complex situation in the region. As a consequence, the lack of a coherent NATO strategy towards the post-Soviet area does not contribute to stabilising and increasing the sense of security of this part of the world still vulnerable to turbulence and sensitive to destabilisation.

As far as the analysis of the European Union's eastern policy in the twenty first century is concerned (to which the author devotes a separate chapter), it should be noted that it is constantly modified due to changes in its 'parameters' and processes taking place 'inside' the EU. The extension of the geopolitical azimuths of the European Union to the countries of Central Europe (in particular to Poland) contributed – according to Stępniewski – to a change in the Community's approach to the entire post-Soviet area. Until the enlargement of the EU towards the East, the Community did not see the need to strengthen relations with the post-Soviet states, because Russia-first philosophy dominated in its policy. After 2004 and after the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, we have been observing a slow change of the 'eastern paradigm' of the EU and its attitude to the problem of the Eastern Neighbourhood. In this phase of the study, the author analyses in a synthetic way the European Union's policy towards selectively chosen entities, showing the lability of the internal situation of the EU (crises faced by the Community), and then investigates the situation of the eastern neighbourhood countries (through the prism of the Eastern Partnership policy), stressing the so-called 'Ukrainian crisis'.

It is worth emphasising that the study by Józef M. Fiszer and Tomasz Stępniewski entitled *Polska i Ukraina w procesie transformacji, integracji i wyzwań dla bezpieczeństwa Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* [*Poland and Ukraine in the Process of Transformation, Integration and Challenges for the Security of Central and Eastern Europe*] deserves recognition and appreciation not only in the scientific environment because of the importance of the issues it undertakes, the complexity of structure, the specificity of problems and dilemmas it describes, the high level of culture of narration and the analytical

qualifications of the authors. The analysis succinctly clarifies and explains to the reader often difficult and complicated research matter regarding the addressed problems and issues. A merit of the study, which does not require special promotion, is the high analytical competence and intellectual courage of the authors, especially in the process of formulating specific diagnoses, hypotheses and assessments of the studied social and political phenomena and processes. The book is, therefore, a valuable and authoritative voice and a contribution to the discussion on the ‘condition’, challenges and political future of the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

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