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POLISH-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS AND THE ISSUE OF HISTORICAL GRIEVANCES IN THE SOCIETIES OF TWO COUNTRIES

Kyrylo Mieliekiestsev

The article depicts the difference between the official format of the relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Poland with how said relations are perceived by the politically active parts of society in both countries. Analyzing both media trends and political events, the articles shows the existing signs of a conflict, still rising in its earliest stages, in the context of Polish-Ukrainian relations, which has not yet been resolved. The research suggests that there is an issue of rising nationalism-oriented anger in the societies of both Ukraine and the Republic of Poland and that so far there is no solution to the conflict coming from either the society or

the political elite that all sides could agree on; although the Ukrainian authorities' initiative of an official apology have received praise from the Polish side. The practical recommendations of this research concern not only politicians and other decision-makers, but the historians of Ukraine and Poland too: the author muses that the historians could not only build local nationalism, but acknowledge how certain deeds of the local groups were perceived by the neighbors. Otherwise, the two nations will continue seeing each other, on some level, as "the Other", even while the official format of international relations is about unity on the path of European Integration.

Key words: *historical retrospective, country studies, foreign policy, nationalism, identity politics, international relations,*

Relevance of the article in the year 2017 would seem self-evident, yet there's a plethora of particularly important points related to the topic that need to be discussed beforehand. As Ukraine faces a time of troubles in the matters both political and economical, not to mention the ongoing military conflict that affects the whole country, it's quite important to review all of its contacts with the neighboring nations and look at how the international relations, both bilateral and multi-lateral, affect Ukraine's standing in regards to the aforementioned major issues. It is incredibly important to analyze the positions of said neighbors in regards to Ukraine, whether they have any demands or aspirations of their own, something that either coincides, supersedes or supports Ukrainian interests. In a number of my previous articles I've outlined how Poland was to be Ukraine's natural ally on the path of European Integration, and had, indeed, acted in this role ever since the Orange Revolution of 2004 brought the countries' positions over European aspirations closely. I've also noted that the Republic of Poland would, naturally, also pursue interests of their own in that matter, leading to a few moments of crises in the relations, most notably the year of "historical review" in 2009 [9].

Previously, I presumed strategic pragmatism was gradually "replaced by" the problems of "common historical memory" as the "main topic" of relations, merely because the Polish side felt no longer obligated to ignore those issues and thus risk losing support of their own voters, as I tried to explain the changes in Polish international policy through them being relevant to the changes of its internal political matters. Although said changes played their part, the full truth was much more sinister from the Ukrainian viewpoint. As it turned out almost a decade later, the shift in Polish-Ukrainian relations in 2009 was not only a matter of the two countries changing their foreign policy interests, but a case of the Russian Federation expanding its influence in Polish foreign policy. Such an explanation would seem

outrageous for the Poles prior to the year 2017, when the Polish Foreign Minister, Witold Waszczykowski declassified a document from the year 2008, known officially as “Theses on the Polish policy towards Russia and Ukraine”, March 4th, 2008. Waszczykowski commented on the contents, mentioning that, only four people had access to the document in 2008, among them Radosław Sikorski, who was at that time the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, and usually tried to show himself as the ally of Ukraine in the EU. The document itself comes after Donald Tusk’s two visits to Moscow and Kyiv at the start of 2008. During the official visit of Donald Tusk in Kyiv, despite his declarations of commitment to further Polish-Ukrainian strategic partnership, the public opinion in both Ukraine and Poland had little to no confidence about the success of such partnership in the context of his previous visit to Moscow in January 2008 with similar statements. Even then, during the negotiations of the Polish Prime Minister in Moscow, Leonid Kravchuk and Aleksander Kwasniewski criticized his actions as “unfair” towards Ukraine [7, 69].

I discussed said document in more detail and looked at the retrospective of Polish-Ukrainian relations during the final years of Viktor Yushchenko’s presidency (with the declassified theses in mind) in a recent article for the Scientific and theoretical almanac «Grani» [3, 103–108]. For the topic at hand it establishes relevancy and the need for reevaluation of Polish-Ukrainian relations, free of unburdened optimism.

Finally, there is also the matter of popular opinion among the Poles and the Ukrainians, and how it affects official political matters. Even a lone man can affect the intricate web of politics, and bring the unresolved ethnic grievances back to the negotiations table, as a recent attack on the Polish Consulate in Lutsk has shown. While the Ukrainian officials probed for terrorist threat and declared unconditional support of the Polish side against the “hooligans”, the Republic of Poland has suspended all of its consulates in Ukraine “until the proper security can be provided” [10; 11].

Materials and methods. The primary sources for the research are documents related to the international cooperation between the countries. Among those one could name both country-specific documents created for internal use (like the aforementioned classified theses) and the actual bilateral treaties between Ukraine and the Republic of Poland and non-classified documents relevant to both internal and external affairs. Works on the topic come from both Polish and authors. Additionally, information from multiple news media is also convenient for the research, as it allows to show how the society at large views Polish-Ukrainian relations, and also brings “facts on the ground” to contrast the context of state diplomacy.

Along with the “native” Polish and Ukrainian perspectives, there have also been works from nations far abroad, such as a series of country studies from Stephen R. Burant. For the researchers of Polish-Ukrainian issues, his works like *International Relations in a Regional Context: Poland and Its Eastern Neighbours. Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine*, as well as *Poland, Ukraine, and the Idea of Strategic Partnership*, are of high interest, as they do well to show the Polish perspective on dealing with the Republic’s neighbors, Ukraine included, showing the continuity in Polish interests and its use of international influence [13].

The analysis of literature, both native and foreign, suggest that the clash of the Poles and the Ukrainians in the ideological sphere is understood by a number of researchers, but the reasoning for such a clash is seen as the introduction of pure populism into political discourse. Ukrainian researchers specifically are noted to view the issue as “unneeded reliance on history”, generally seeing it as something negative, something that removes the focus from the things that really matter in the international relations (usually concentrating on their economical element) [2]. Polish researchers, as well as politicians, however, consider such issues quite important and relevant to the ascent of both the Poles and the Ukrainians into the “European society”, as well as the adoption of European values as they perceive them [6].

Aspects of the topic that could benefit from further research would be the cultural and societal sides of the Polish-Ukrainian relations. As we dwell on the works of historians and political science researchers, or the treaties and memorandums declaring unquestioned support and “strategic partnership”, we often forget the human side to history – often a cynical, simplistic and detached, yet an important side nevertheless: when the actions of a single rocket launcher-armed hooligan are enough to throw the diplomatic network of two countries into panic and disarray, one can easily see the importance of the “little man”. And whether the gunman acted out of some beliefs, or in desire for the provocation of a conflict, not everyone agreed with the professional problem-solving attitude of Ukrainian officials, picking up sides and grievances instead. Therefore, it’s a historian’s duty to not ignore the “facts on the ground” and look at the popular perspective for the “high political” events. Showing the contrast between official political discourse and how the society reacted to it is this article’s goal and subject.

Results and discussion. Through the overview of literature on history and political science, author POV articles as published in the media outlets, and of course direct sources such as documents related to international cooperation and reports on the current events, we can determine such results of the study as:

1. There is an issue of rising nationalism-oriented anger in the societies of both Ukraine and the Republic of Poland.

2. In the scope of that, the contemporary Polish-Ukrainian relations include a conflict with at least four sides: the governments of Ukraine and Poland, and the parts of their respective societies invested in the historical Polish-Ukrainian grievances.

3. There is no solution coming from either the society or the political elite that all sides could agree on; although the Ukrainian authorities' initiative of an official apology might resonate well with the Polish.

Discussion of the first point, the rise of “angry nationalism” is already underway throughout the world's media outlets, with both political journalists and historians investigating the process and its related problems, both past and current.

Peter Dickinson, publisher of *Business Ukraine* magazine and *Lviv Today* notes on the plethora of youth-drive nationalist protests of the year 2016 in Poland, saying that the Polish system includes “...a right-wing government that feeds nationalist sentiment is that the support is coming a lot from the youth” (*sic*), yet said nationalism also leads to protests against “the loss of sovereignty to EU”, “globalization” and other anger-worthy buzz-words as soon as the government shows weakness or signs of corruption; as such, the Polish government tries to turn the process against the EU authorities rather than themselves, which culminated after the European Commission issued an official warning to Warsaw when the Polish government weakened the Constitutional Court through controversial legal reforms. Nevertheless, while noting the rise of nationalism, Mr. Dickinson says that “the Ukrainians never felt more welcome in Poland”, and when questioned on the Volhynian Tragedy debacle with Poland recognizing it as an act of genocide in 2016 notes that the Ukrainians “shouldn't take it as an affront to them directly necessarily” and that “It's certainly bad timing from a Ukrainian point of view and from a general united Europe against Russian aggression point of view”. Peter Dickinson asks to look at the other side of the coin, with Polish and Ukrainian parliaments recently both issuing a joint resolution recognizing the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany as the initiators and responsible actors for sparking World War II, and generally asks for a hopeful perspective on the Polish-Ukrainian relations, noting President Poroshenko's initiative: “Poroshenko was in Poland for the Warsaw Summit and he went to memorials to the Volyn Massacres and paid his respects in a very respectful manner. I think this was an important gesture” [12].

However, not all perspectives on the brewing conflict are as optimistic. In his article for *Foreign Policy* Ian Bateson calls the conflict “a gift for Putin” and describes the core of misunderstanding in the troubles of nation-building in Ukraine, noting: “Ukraine has been in desperate search of heroes to inspire the country. At least one of those national inspirations is now threatening a critical, but increasingly fragile, international relationship when Ukraine can least afford it. The Ukrainian

hero is Stepan Bandera, and the relationship in question is Ukraine's partnership with Poland" [16].

This opinion is echoed in the other *Foreign Policy*-published article of Adam Zamoyski is a British historian and author of *Poland: A History*. Commenting on the newly elected Polish government Mr. Zamoyski writes that it had "given Polish nationalism a bad name. "Nationalistic" has joined the epithets used by Western commentators to describe the Law and Justice party, alongside "xenophobic" and "populist." It's easy to understand why the term has been applied. But it's important to understand that the Polish government, in trying to pose as the defender of Polish sovereignty, has abused and distorted Polish nationalism." He noted the abuse of the aforementioned "angry nationalism" in government's interests, turning many young people invested in the past and future of the Polish nation against its own European neighbors. Like Mr. Bateson, Adam Zamoyski calls it a part of a Moscow-orchestrated scenario, and further comments on it that the very slogans of mission, martyrdom, and sovereignty come from Poland's postwar Communist past, also designed in Moscow, yet managed fit the Nationalist mission as much as a Communist one, as they worked on masses of "people who find the idea of the secular, liberal Western world too challenging and seek comfort in a sort of provincialism that wraps itself in religious and patriotic slogans" [14].

Interestingly, whereas before such caution at the face of Russian influence would be denounced as "manipulating the facts to favor an anti-Russian narrative", after the 2017 revelation of the "Theses on the Polish policy towards Russia and Ukraine" it does not seem so farfetched. And although the commentators criticize the newly elected Polish government for encouraging "the wrong kind of nationalism", it should be noted that the very same government revealed the Theses and attacked their abandonment of Ukraine.

Of course, we can't forget that it wasn't simply Polish nationalism that was criticized for "mucking up the waters", but the Ukrainian one as well, particularly that of Stepan Bandera and his rise to the hero status in today's Ukraine. Yaroslav Kaczyński, formerly a long-time ally of the "pro-European forces" in Ukraine's political system declared: "I plainly told President Poroshenko that they won't make it to Europe with Bandera. It's absolutely clear to me. We've already shown great patience, but everything has its limits" [8].

Jacek Kluczkowski, a Polish diplomat and an ambassador to Ukraine in 2010 said this to a UNIAN interviewer regarding Stepan Bandera's "Hero of Ukraine" status: "It is certainly untrue that Bandera was a German collaborator and thus should not be condemned for collaboration. But are Bandera's slogans adequate for a modern democratic state?! Could such a very controversial figure be a modern

example for the people that aspire to continue on the path of European integration?! Therefore, we were concerned about this award. [...] You see, we in Europe created the European Union as a community of values. I would not want the people who opposed democracy and civil society to be a part of our heritage” [5]

Discussing the second point, one might shy away from the word “conflict”. Although usually historians and political science researchers think of an armed confrontation, a diplomatic crisis or a trade blockade when they write the words “international conflict”; but from the conflictological point of view that would be too specific. Conflict science would decry such an event as the culmination of a conflict, but its beginnings are not so apparent. For example, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict culminated with the occupation of Crimea and the subsequent war in Ukraine, but the beginnings of the conflict were seeded earlier, in Ukraine’s nation-building that made it unified and ready to fight for its sovereignty, and in Russia’s propaganda campaign against said nation-building, without which there would be no ideological justification for the invasion before Russia’s own citizens, no rile-up to make them willing to fight. Similarly, the rise of ethnic grievances in the nationalisms of Ukraine and Poland, would be the beginning of a conflict – with luck, its culmination could be negated, with the conflict ending before it could have reached the active stage. Recognizing that the prerequisites for said “active stage” exist already is quite important for the decision-makers, as a full-blown conflict could easily destroy the optimistic strategic partnership perspective.

As for the sides, the distinction between government and society is quite important, as the messages spread by official decision-makers and popular opinion-makers do exist in the Polish-Ukrainian context, along with different desires for the conflict’s resolution. One could argue that additional sides could be added on the societal front, particularly those supporting the governmental neutrality towards the historical issues, as well as those without a defined position. However, because of the nature of conflicts, through their inaction these actors would support the governmental side of the conflict, though in the event of the conflict “heating up” the undecided could also pick other sides.

On the third point, despite President Petro Poroshenko’s decision to finally address the Polish-Ukrainian issues regarding shared history in 2014 and 2016 (which even included a public apology before the Polish people), both anti-Ukrainian and pro-Ukrainian voices in Poland are growing ever stronger. Radical talking point on both sides demand the opponent to take full responsibility for the Volhynian Tragedy and denounce a part of their own historical heritage associated with it. by 2009, the economic and strategic pragmatism was gradually “replaced by” the problems “common historical memory” as the “main topic” of relations, since the

Polish side felt no longer obligated to ignore those issues and thus risk losing support of their own voters. Now that we have access to previously classified documents, we can also note that the political conflict was not simply a result of Poland's "policy of strength" regarding its new position in the EU, but also a part of the new foreign policy doctrine, intending to increase Polish influence in Russia at the expense of Ukraine. The fact that such a shift happened during the later years of Viktor Yushchenko's presidency highlights the fact that even his personal friend President Kaczyński considered Yushchenko's platform of a pro-Western Ukraine a "lost cause" at that time, and saw the promise of economical partnership in Russia as that of more value than the ideological one in Ukraine – especially when there was plenty of ground to build a case on the ideological difference between Poland and Ukraine, particularly regarding shared history. With the end of Viktor Yushchenko's presidency approaching, Poland starts to depart from the idea of "common history" and the forgiveness of "sins of our ancestors" from both sides, and instead starts (on official level) the condemnation of the actions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (who, on the other hand, were repeatedly characterized as heroes by the President of Ukraine – it is the context of the whole situation that caused a political resonance). On July 15, 2009 Polish Sejm adopted a resolution accusing the OUN and the UPA "in the massacres that have the characteristic of ethnic cleansing and the signs of genocide". In addition, the resolution says that the parliament "honors the memory of the fighters of the Home Army, Self-Defense of East Lands and Peasants' Battalions who rose to wage dramatic struggle in defense of the Polish civilian population and remembers with pain victims among the Ukrainian civilian population" [15].

As was suggested in *Gazeta Wyborcza*: "Although Kaczyński made some significant gestures toward Ukraine, now he is primarily thinking about the next year's elections. And his electorate believes that the conflict between two peoples during the war was only Ukrainians' fault" [1].

Yushchenko was succeeded by Viktor Yanukovich, who had, during his presidential campaign, declared preference for more economy-related treaties, instead of the historical-cultural dialogue, completely satisfied the Polish leadership, which perfectly understood Polish electorate's rejection of the reconciliation (as presented by the Ukrainian side) regarding the Volhynian massacres of 1943, and also its unwillingness to recognize any of AK's responsibility for similar crimes against the Ukrainians. Seeing Yanukovich as a target for easy manipulation in this regard, the Polish side was prepared to see their woes regarding history finally made official in Ukraine as well. In the words of Bronislaw Komorowski during his visit to Kyiv, "in many controversial issues of Polish-Ukrainian relations it's easier to commu-

nicate with Ukrainians originating from Eastern Ukraine, rather than with the Western Ukrainians, who still have negative emotions about the Polish-Ukrainian past” [4].

However, Petro Poroshenko’s initiative was mostly applauded by the Polish side and the liberal audience in Ukraine, including the aforementioned authors, but cost him support from radicalized politicians in the homeland, such as Oleg Liashko, who called his apology “disgraceful”.

Conclusion and recommendations. With the advance of nation-building in Ukraine and a revival of the “culture of remembrance” in Poland, the patriotic spirit in the societies of two countries has arisen stronger than ever. Young, politically active people came up with questions not only towards their own governments, but to those of neighboring countries, fervently believing themselves to be in the right. While the politicians exploited such feelings for political gain (establishing a “more independent” Poland in the European Union, gathering support for the elections, showing to the electorate how the parties keep their promises etc.) an uneasy situation has also arisen in the Polish-Ukrainian relations, with nationalistically-minded and politically active people refusing the idea of “forgive and forget”, demanding satisfaction from the opposing side, and thus sabotaging the intricate process of relations-building and European Integration for both countries, extremely important at the time when the ideas of European unity and Ukrainian independence as whole were challenged by the rising influence of the Russian Federation. As a result, the governments now have to walk upon a line between nationalism (needed to appease the politically active parts of population and opposition politicians) and pluralism (needed to keep the official relations strong and developed at the face of geopolitical concerns).

The recommendations would be for the Ukrainian government to continue their method of praising Ukraine and Ukrainian heroes in Ukraine, while paying respects to the grievances of Ukraine’s partners, particularly the Polish, when abroad. Said method plays well with the Polish expectations, while the societal-electoral concerns in the homeland can be resolved via other means. The only part hard to predict is how the Polish side will keep their own nationalistic groups in check, enough for the satisfaction of both sides. Additionally, perhaps the writing of history in both countries would benefit from a more unbiased look, showcasing that both the Polish and the Ukrainians were sure of their heroism and hating each other for ethnic crimes at certain point of history, instead of merely praising our own heroes, AK for Poland and UPA for Ukraine, respectively.

Анотація

У статті показана різниця між офіційним форматом відносин між Україною і Республікою Польща й тим, як ці відносини сприймаються політично активними частинами суспільства в обох країнах. Аналізуючи як тенденції в ЗМІ, так і конкретні політичні події, автор відображає ознаки існуючого конфлікту, який все ще знаходиться на ранніх етапах, у контексті польсько-українських відносин, причому, рішення конфлікту поки що не знайдено. Дослідження показує, що в суспільствах як України, так і Польщі постає питання про наростання «гнівного націоналізму», і що все ще немає такого проекту рішення конфлікту в суспільстві чи серед політичної еліти, який був би прийнятним для всіх сторін; хоча офіційні вибачення української влади отримали схвалення польської сторони. Практичні рекомендації цього дослідження стосуються не тільки політиків та інших осіб, від яких залежить прийняття рішень, але й істориків України і Польщі. Автор розмірковує про те, що історики могли б не тільки концентруватися на підтримці націоналізму всередині країни, а й визнавати у своїх роботах, що певні вчинки місцевих груп сприймалися сусідами по-іншому. В іншому випадку обидві нації будуть продовжувати бачити один одного як «інших» на певному рівні, навіть якщо офіційний формат міжнародних відносин двох країн – це єдність на шляху європейської інтеграції.

Ключові слова: історична ретроспектива, країнознавство, зовнішня політика, націоналізм, політика ідентичності, міжнародні відносини.

Аннотация

В статье показана разница между официальным форматом отношений между Украиной и Республикой Польша с тем, как эти отношения воспринимаются политически активными частями общества в обеих странах. Анализируя как тенденции в СМИ, так и конкретные политические события, автор отображает признаки существующего конфликта, все еще находящегося на самых ранних этапах, в контексте польско-украинских отношений, решение которого пока ещё не найдено. Исследование показывает, что в обществах как Украины, так и Республики Польша встает вопрос о нарастании «гневного национализма», и что до сих пор нет такого проекта решения конфликта ни у общества, ни у политической элиты, который был бы приемлем для всех сторон; хотя официальные извинения украинских властей получили одобрение польской стороны. Практические рекомендации этого исследования касаются не только политиков и других лиц, от которых зависит принятие решений, но и историков Украины и Польши. Автор размышляет о том, что историки могли бы не только концентрироваться на поддержке

внутреннего национализма, но и признавать в своих работах, что определенные поступки местных групп воспринимались соседями по-другому. В противном случае обе нации продолжают видеть друг друга как «других» на каком-то уровне, даже если официальный формат международных отношений двух стран – это единство на пути европейской интеграции.

Ключевые слова: *историческая ретроспектива, страноведение, внешняя политика, национализм, политика идентичности, международные отношения.*

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УКРАЇНСЬКІ ІМІГРАНТИ В ІСПАНІЇ: ОСНОВНІ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ НА ШЛЯХУ ДО ІНТЕГРАЦІЇ У ПРИЙМАЮЧЕ СУСПІЛЬСТВО

Мачітідзе Іванна

Стаття має на меті проаналізувати характерні риси української спільноти в Іспанії, серед яких, зокрема, початок імміграції, чисельність української спільноти, час прибуття, вікові категорії, спосіб розселення, вид працевлаштування. На сьогоднішній момент українська імміграція до Іспанії має переважно трудовий характер, і попри посилення наслідків економічної кризи та намагання уряду зменшити кількість іммігрантів шляхом виплати компенсацій усім охочим повернутися додому, українці все ж не поспішають залишити Іспанію. Неостанню роль у цьому відіграє незадовільне економічне становище в Україні і нездатність держави запропонувати емігрантам, які хочуть повернутися на батьківщину, достойні умови роботи.

Ключові слова: *українська спільнота, трудова імміграція, Іспанія, показники інтеграції.*

«Для всіх бажаних просто не вистачає місця» – такими словами Алісія Санчез-Камачо, голова Народної партії Каталонії, висловила настрої як пересічних іспанських громадян, так і правлячих кіл країни [2]. Дійсно, за останні понад два десятиліття Іспанія перетворилася на справжній «едем» для шукаючих кращої долі з усіх кінців світу, і в цьому випадку українці не стали винятком. Протягом останніх трьох–чотирьох років, коли потік іммігрантів до країни нарешті почав знижуватися, українська спільнота іммігрантів тільки збільшується. Очевидно, їх не лякають ані економічна криза, ані підвищення рівня безробіття до критичних 20 %, ані погіршення ставлення до іммігрантів, особливо, що стосується жінок.

У цьому контексті є недивним, що питання адаптації такої армії іммігрантів, і ще важливіше, забезпечення для них пристойних умов інтеграції спону-