IN SEARCH FOR THE POST-COLD WAR *MODUS VIVENDI* IN POST-SOVIET EASTERN EUROPE

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Abstract. The end of the 20th century was marked by a rather unexpected opening as the long-enduring Cold War came to the end and the Soviet Union collapsed, allowing fifteen new republics to appear on the political scene. Beyond the optimistic expectations of democratization and the expansion of free-market capitalism through the newly independent republics, the collapse of the Soviet Union created serious challenges for the international community in terms of international law, politics, economy, and security. One problematic challenge, which remains an open issue today, is the painful process of disintegration of the multi-ethnic Soviet federal state. By evaluating the current state of affairs of the non-NATO member, Kremlin disloyal post-Soviet states located on the western frontier of the Russian Federation, we can see that they have become a "bone of contention" between the West and Russia. By presenting brand new evidence from the Gorbachev period, once top-secret meetings of the CPSU Politburo and other Soviet governmental institutions, this article critically evaluates issues such as Gorbachev's grand compromises in Central and Eastern Europe and the Russian problem in Ukraine and probable risks of its further aggravation, and tries to draw recommendations for solving current territorial problems in the region.

Keywords: the Soviet Union, disintegration, East-Central Europe, Gorbachev, post-Soviet states, post-Cold War *modus vivendi*, Russian problem, Ukraine

GORBACHEV'S BREST-LITOVSK GAME

The Berlin Wall was both a symbolic and tangible confirmation of the East-West division. However, if its fall in 1989 indicated the end

of these tensions and the liberation of the Central and Eastern Europe from the Soviet dominance, it also appeared to be a bell ringer for the challenging process of disintegration of the multi-national Soviet federal state. To this extent, British PM Margaret Thatcher's sceptical expectations concerning the negative effects of German unification on Gorbachev's *Perestroika*, and warnings on the risk of opening a Pandora's Box of border claims through central Europe, appeared to be essentially justified (Haftendorn 2010, 343). Moscow's generous concessions in Central and Eastern Europe, which were dictated by political gridlock, embittered Gorbachev's domestic adversaries, leading the country to the edge of a *coup d'état* in August 1991. Although unsuccessful, this practically ended all efforts of reformation of the Soviet Union by revealing the political instability of Gorbachev's regime. On the other hand, whereas central Europe, excluding the Yugoslav territories, more or less survived the dangers of Pandora's Box of territorial claims, the former Soviet republics bore this problematic inheritance.

The British Prime Minister was not the only one to foresee the probable negative effects of the fall of the Berlin Wall on the stability of the Soviet Union. In early December 1989, while meeting with the Federal Republic of Germany's Foreign Minister Genscher, Gorbachev referred to Kohl's ten-point plan as a *diktat*, as he was aware of how the unification of Germany would catalyze the escalation of the Soviet crisis in Eastern Europe. As Haftendorn argues, the key to Gorbachev's concession giving up Soviet control of the GDR most probably lays in Moscow's financial problems, as Gorbachev had expected the pleased FRG to finance the modernization of the Soviet economy (Haftendorn 2010, 345). Another serious dispute between Gorbachev and the West was over the membership of a unified Germany in NATO. During a meeting with US Secretary of State Baker on 18-19 May 1990 in Moscow, Gorbachev commented that unified German membership in NATO was impossible, as this would inflame his domestic foes and kill *Perestroika*. As it appeared, however, Gorbachev was trying to raise the price of his gridlock dictated concession, which he

essentially achieved, as the Americans promised to sign a bilateral grain and trade agreement with the Soviet Union and additionally speed up the ongoing Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (Haftendorn 2010, 348-349). On the other hand, Gorbachev was promised economic aid from Bonn at an overall sum of DM 12 billion and an interest-free loan of DM 3 billion, which allowed the Soviet leader to make the concession while saving face (Haftendorn 2010, 350).

It is not a coincidence that as early as August 1989, western scholars were able to draw historical parallels between the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and Gorbachev's assent for grand compromises in Eastern Europe. As Aron put it, Eastern Europe was a financial burden that the Soviet Union was no longer able to afford, setting the conditions for Gorbachev's grand compromise – besides the annual 11 to 15 billion USD normally spent to keep the region afloat, he wrote, an additional 26 billion USD was needed annually to maintain over half a million Soviet troops in the region (Aron 1989, 13).

In his landmark survey of 20th-century international history, Keylor shares this same opinion, arguing that the Soviet satellites in Central and Eastern Europe were a financial burden for Kremlin and that getting rid of them would have allowed Gorbachev to mobilize all available resources for the success of *Perestroika* (Keylor 2015, 651). Accordingly, the situation as put by Békés was a "life-or-death fight for the survival of the Soviet Union". It should be noted that Békés was first to coin the term *Brest-Litovsk syndrome*, indicating the state when Kremlin, for the first time since the Russian Civil War, "found itself in a situation, in which its own survival was at stake", and chose to compromise its periphery for the sake of saving the imperial "centre" (Békés 2002, 245).

According to this theory, Lenin's motivation for accepting the signature of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in 1918 was to stop the further invasion of the Central Powers by formally compromising the western and south-western territories of Soviet Russia, maintaining control of which was too costly for Kremlin, which created favourable conditions for achieving Bolshevik success in the

Russian Civil War. On the other hand, Gorbachev's motivation for ending the Brezhnev Doctrine in the Soviet Bloc (risking the collapse of Kremlin's strategically important yet too costly satellite system in Central and Eastern Europe), was achieving stable relations with the West by settling all international political disputes, which would allow him to mobilize foreign and domestic resources for the successful implementation of *Perestroika* and the reformation of the Soviet Union, without which the future existence of the whole Soviet state seemed impossible.

Gorbachev's Brest-Litovsk game started as early as the spring of 1985. In an interview with the Spanish daily "El País," on 26 October 1990, during a visit to Madrid, Gorbachev admitted that Kremlin had announced the non-interventionist policy in the internal affairs of Central and Eastern Europe five years prior (Gorbachev 2013, 305). The credibility of this comment can be easily confirmed by looking at Gorbachev's televised interviews and addresses in 1985. In an interview with Pravda on 7 April 1985, Gorbachev noted that while building Kremlin's foreign policy, it was inadmissible to violate the sovereign rights of other states and essential to consider their state interests (Gorbachev 2008a, 169). In this interview, Gorbachev presented himself as a supporter of the Millian concept on the margins of liberty, basically declaring that Kremlin's sovereignty ends where the sovereignty of other states begins. In an address to the people of France through the French television "TF1" on 30 September 1985, Gorbachev shared this same opinion, declaring that the main basis for the construction of Kremlin's foreign affairs should be the respect for the sovereign rights of other states (Gorbachev 2008b, 541).

By analysing Gorbachev's spoken language, we can see that he was even literally comparing the situation in the Soviet Union to the "Brest Peace". At a Politburo meeting on 2 January 1990, Gorbachev noted that, in 1918, Kremlin had needed to make such principled decisions that were unimaginable even for Lenin's inner circle, but had created the "Brest Peace" settlement. Therefore, we should not panic and act accordingly, he said (Gorbachev 2010b,

63). On 26 January 1990, during an inner circle meeting concerning the German question in Kremlin, Gorbachev admitted that the situation of the Soviet Union was the "Brest peace number two. If we do not cope with it, half of our country will be taken away from us again", he said (Gorbachev 2010b, 192). In an address in the Odesa military district on 17 August 1990, Gorbachev declared that Kremlin's politics in Eastern Europe resulted in the strengthening of Soviet security. We would have otherwise appeared at the edge of military conflict with NATO, he said (Gorbachev 2012, 379). By looking at these comments, it is not difficult to understand Gorbachev's motivations behind his generous compromises in Central and Eastern Europe.

As we discovered from Politburo archival documents, the story went even further. On 6 September 1991, when Kremlin decided finally to recognize the political independence of the Baltic Republics given their specific historical foundations, Yelstin commented that the decision was supposed to solve Kremlin's international problems (Gorbachev 2018, 104). Accordingly, regardless of Gorbachev's acknowledgement to Margaret Thatcher that Russia could not so simply give up the Baltic region, as it had been trying to gain access to the sea for centuries (Gorbachev 2015, 120), Kremlin decided to give up its *de facto* and *de jure* control of the Baltic region once the integrity of the imperial "centre" came under threat. Furthermore, if we take Cohen's argument for granted, even as a small number as seven republics grouped around Russia (except the Baltic and Transcaucasian republics and Moldova) would have been adequate to form a new reformed Soviet state – "Union of Soviet Sovereign Republics", as the "remaining eight […] republics constituted more than 90 per cent of the old Union's territory, population and resources" (Cohen 2009, 37). If we apply this argument to the *Brest-Litovsk syndrome* theory, we can argue that Gorbachev would have been ready to compromise not only Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic region to save the Soviet imperial "centre," but the South Caucasus and Moldova too. Furthermore, we can see that the argument of the four republic-based new Union

was also popular among the Soviet political elite. As Cohen notes, "according to a non-Russian leader who participated in the abolition of the Soviet state" (most probably he means Nazarbayev), a new Union could have consisted of four republics (Cohen 2009, 37).

We believe that what essentially appeared to be fateful for the Soviet state was not the failure of its foreign policy, nor the failure of the Novo-Ogarevo negotiations, but the exposure of internal instability by the August coup. As Thatcher and Gorbachev foresaw, German unification and membership in NATO inflamed Gorbachev's internal foes in Kremlin, achieving the paroxysm during the August coup that assured the reformist forces in Kremlin and supporters abroad of the instability within Gorbachev's regime, eventually shifting their *de facto* support to Yeltsin's persona and finally resulting in the signing of the Belovezha Accords and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Eventually, as Békés notes, if Lenin had proven to be right when compromising the Western frontiers of Soviet Russia to save the imperial "centre," while adopting the same strategy, Gorbachev was overtaken by history (Békés 2002, 245).

In Search for the Post-Cold War *Modus Vivendi*

Analysing the events of the end of the 1980s from this angle gives us an understanding of how the fall of the Berlin Wall, undoubtedly a victorious achievement for both the German nation and European security, triggered brand new challenges yet again *inter alia* for European security, this time more Eastwards, in its eastern neighbourhood. Every global opening in world history creates its own chaos of conflicts of interest, and the fall of the Berlin Wall was no exception. What the European continent experiences now in several spots of its eastern neighbourhood (more precisely in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan), is the inexistence of the post-Cold War *modus vivendi* in the region, what really turns the

respected states in this region into a bone of contention between the West and Russia (in addition, we should also consider the growing influence of China).

The collapse of Soviet hegemony in Europe, a remarkable symbol of which was the fall of the Berlin Wall, shifted the Cold War affairs eastward to the Western frontiers of the former Soviet territory. And even if the Cold War formally ended at least as late as December 1991, factually in many ways it proceeds on a rather smaller, regionally localized scale in military, political, economic and propagandistic dimensions.

This new post-Cold War Russia-West competition over obtaining influence on the territory of six post-Soviet states of the European Eastern Partnership is most visible when looking at the current state of affairs in Georgia and Ukraine. Both are countries that suffered, and still do, of military conflicts with the Russian Federation, and which have withdrawn their memberships from the CIS because of these conflicts. Classical elements of Cold War affairs can be observed here, such as the blended elements of hybrid warfare (such as political warfare, conventional warfare, irregular warfare, and cyber warfare), even the classical geopolitical borderization strategies, manipulation of state and non-state actors (such as political parties, NGOs, mass media, the Church, Business sector), etc. The classical element of the Cold War missing so far is a missile crisis, however analysing the state of affairs in the region, we are not convinced that the realization of this scenario is impossible.

The new post-Cold War competition in the region is defined on the one hand by the Russian Federation's ambitions and efforts to establish a new chain of post-Soviet Kremlin satellite states on its Western frontiers, in order to redraw the new post-Cold War red lines or at least to halt the post-Cold War Eastern enlargement of NATO. On the other hand, the ambitions of some of the states on Russia's Western frontier, willing to integrate to the European Union and NATO, along with the support in many ways of their aspirations from the western institutions and states, primarily

NATO and the EU, as well as the USA, establishes the current state of affairs in the region.

Russian ties, and accordingly the Russian leverage to manipulate the situation in the region, are tremendous: there is huge economic dependence on the Russian market, Russian language still dominates as the first spoken foreign language in the region, and there is a reasonable amount of political, religious, and cultural groups and entities with considerable legitimacy that singlehandedly see the further development of the region only along the lines of Kremlin. However, the most efficient Russian tools to take control of the situation in the region are the ethnic Russian minorities and other Kremlin-loyal ethnic minorities in these respective states. It should, therefore, be noted that this circumstance is not artificially created, as long as we do not consider the traditional Soviet system of hierarchically inter-dependent nationalities to be artificial. The collapse of the Soviet Union left up to 66 million citizens beyond the borders of their traditional homelands, and this was a logical and natural consequence of the collapse of the multi-ethnic federal state. To this extent, the Russian question became one of the problematic cornerstones of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It was, therefore, not surprising that, as was narrated by President George Bush Senior in his memoirs, during an official dinner with the King of Spain Juan Carlos on 29 October 1991 in Madrid, Gorbachev referred to this circumstance as a "Russian problem" (Loginov 2007, 362). Due to the breadth of this issue, in this article we will be mainly concentrated on the most relevant part of it – the Russian problem in Ukraine and its possible effects on the integrity of the Ukrainian state.

Some Noteworthy Cases of the Russian Problem in the Former Soviet Space

The Russian problem has been a critical cornerstone of the disintegration of the Soviet Union since the late 1980s. In many

ways, Kremlin has attempted to use the Russian national minority populations as an indirect tool of manipulating the political climate in neighbouring countries. Besides the famous cases of Ukraine (which will be discussed in more detail below) and Moldova, which resulted in tremendous conflicts and crises, there is the iconic case of Lithuania, which illustrates an ideal example of Kremlin's indirect and direct territorial blackmailing strategy. Luckily for Lithuania, these efforts by Kremlin turned out to be unsuccessful.

What happened is the following: once the Lithuanian Union republic decided to secede, at least three different parties – Belarusians, Russians, and Poles – activated territorial claims to Lithuania. Belarusians demanded the return of five south-eastern Lithuanian districts granted to Lithuania from Belarus in 1940 by Stalin – this demand was officially posed by the Belarussian government as well, although it was later recalled. The population of the Kaliningrad Oblast demanded the return of Klaipeda, and the Poles residing in Vilnius asked Kremlin to take the areas of their residence under its control. This threat was to be realized if Lithuania continued the process of secession. Gorbachev spoke about these issues while meeting with President Bush in Novo-Ogarevo on 31st July 1991 (Gorbachev 2017, 184). It is technically problematic to accuse Kremlin of making up of these territorial claims, however considering Moscow's behaviour in Vilnius during the events of January 1991, and elsewhere (in disloyal neighbouring countries), during the Gorbachev period and afterwards, it is not difficult to identify the traditional "handwriting" of Kremlin.

Besides the Lithuanian case, there is also a rather understudied case of the Russian problem in Kazakhstan. On 26th August 1991, Pavel Voshanov, the press secretary of the president of the RSFSR, stated at a briefing with journalists that Russia supported the self-determination of every republic; however, it also reserved the right to raise the issue of reconsidering borders. In response to the question from journalists on whether Voshanov could name the countries whose borders might be reconsidered, he mentioned Crimea, Donbass, and North Kazakhstan. These comments

triggered sharp reactions in Kyiv and Alma-Ata. The sharp reactions were handled by drawing up communicates between Russia and Ukraine and between Russia and Kazakhstan. The Russia-Ukraine communique was drawn up on 28th August and the Russia-Kazakhstan on 29th August. Vice President Rutskoy paid visits to Kyiv and Alma-Ata. The communicates *inter alia* touched upon the mutual respect of territorial integrity (Gorbachev 2017, 600-603).

Concerning the above-mentioned incident, in his conversation with German Foreign Affairs Minister Genscher on 9th September 1991, Gorbachev stated that Kazakhstan and Ukraine were frightened by Yeltsin's statement on reconsidering borders (Gorbachev 2018, 145). He mentioned that if the situation moved towards separation in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, it could end up in tremendous conflict (Gorbachev 2018, 140-141). Gorbachev also commented on this incident in a conversation with President Bush on 29th October 1991, during the meeting in Madrid. The statement aggravated separatist tendencies in Ukraine and talks on imperial claims have again been restored, noted Gorbachev. It has forced Nazarbayev to make a statement condemning any kind of territorial claims, noted Gorbachev further (Loginov 2007, 356).

This episode in Russo-Kazakh relations, what we metaphorically like to refer to as a demonstration of Russia's clutches, depicts the Russian Federation's leverage over the political climate in neighbouring Kazakhstan. If the Kazakh government were to attempt to pursue, or somehow imitate, the "Ukrainian way" of disloyalty to Kremlin, it should be no wonder that the frozen issue of the Russian problem would be activated there. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the position of the Kazakh government concerning Crimea reflects the interests of Moscow.

The Russian Problem in Ukraine

In studying the topic of current territorial conflicts in the former Soviet republics, we find it crucial to focus on the basic aspect of these problems during the Gorbachev era. It was the time of the

"end of the Soviet Union" when multiple ethnic conflicts surfaced, and to this extent, this exact period of Soviet history is abundant with data that compose the cornerstone of the current state of affairs in the region. Accordingly, we are assured that if one is willing to conduct comprehensive research on the current territorial conflicts in the former Soviet republics, a complete picture of the developments could not be constructed without delving deep into the 1985-1991 Soviet nationality politics. This whole process of historical investigation into the Soviet past is somehow like the conduction of anatomical pathological research on the Soviet body, the important findings of which might cure the modern-day diseases of the former Soviet republics.

Since its transfer to Ukraine in 1954, Crimea had more or less remained under the radar until as late as July 1987, when the first demonstrations by Crimean Tatars were held at the Red Square in Moscow. The first such demonstration was held on 6th July 1987 with the participation of 120 delegates. The demonstration's motto was "Bring Crimean Tatars back to their Homeland! Democracy and Openness to Crimean Tatars!". At the Politburo meeting held on 9th July 1987, Lukianov noted that 350,000 people stood behind this demand (Loginov 2007, 18).

It is interesting to have a closer look at the opinions concerning the status of Crimea presented at the abovementioned Politburo meeting. Solomontsev recalled the moment Khrushchev handed Crimea over to Ukraine, noting that this decision was not received with great admiration in Russia. Sevastopol is certainly a city of Russia's glory, he said. He suggested referring to the decree signed by Lenin to return Crimea to Russia. Do we try to follow Lenin's path in our lives? Then we must bring this decree as evidence and no one will remain annoyed, Solomontsev stated. In response, Gorbachev noted that it would be correct from both historical and political standpoints to return Crimea to Russia (Gorbachev 2008c, 593-594), but Ukraine would oppose the move (Loginov 2007, 19). Vorotnikov suggested the postponement of this subject for the time being. It would be too much trouble to experience another

"Ukrainian problem", he said. Yakovlev offered to uphold a 15 to 20-years transitional period for resettlement from Uzbekistan to Crimea. Gromyko stated that there was not much to worry about it, saying, let us leave this problem to be settled by life and history. In final remarks, Gorbachev noted that if Crimea were to be returned to Russia, it would trigger additional unneeded challenges, as it would weaken Slavic unity in the "Socialist Empire". He suggested the establishment of normal living conditions for Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan and, additionally, a delay in the process of their resettlement back to Crimea (Loginov 2007, 20). At the Politburo meeting on 6th August 1987, Gorbachev commented that the idea of turning Crimea into a Russian "federal district" was worth attention, but it could not be fulfilled suddenly, without the support of the people's will (Gorbachev 2008c, 367-368).

As we can see from the above-cited excerpts from Politburo meetings, even Gorbachev was considering the idea of returning the Crimean Peninsula back to its historical Russian homeland, however, considering Kremlin's options at that time, he chose, as was stated by Gromyko, to leave the problem for settlement by life and history.

By examining the Politburo documents, we can understand that Crimea and Donbass were demanding that Moscow review the internal borders of Ukraine - Chebrikov discussed this issue at a meeting on 27th April 1989 (Gorbachev 2010a, 559). Kharkiv's population immediately raised the same separation demands when, on 6th June 1989, Ukraine adopted a new law diminishing the status of Russian to the language of intra-national communication, noted Gorbachev on the issue at a Politburo meeting on 4th October 1989 (Loginov 2007, 96). As far as the issue of separatist aspirations of Kharkiv's population is concerned, it worth recalling a comment from Gorbachev in an interview with the Belarusian "People's Newspaper" on 28th November 1991, in which he reminded the public that Kharkov (in the case we use the Russian toponym) was joined to Ukraine by the Bolsheviks in order to gain a majority in the Rada (Loginov 2007, 412).

At a meeting with the participants of the XXI[st] Congress of Komsomol on 10th April 1990, Gorbachev stated that when public movements had raised the issue of language in Ukraine, a collection of signatures had started in Crimea to request the return of Crimea to Russia. Half a million signatures were collected, he said; the same happened in Donbass where 11 million Russians were residing (Gorbachev 2011, 212).

During a visit to Sweden, in conversation with Swedish PM Ingvar Karlsson on 6th June 1991, Gorbachev noted that it would be sufficient in Ukraine to pressure the Russian speaking population for disagreements to simultaneously arise in several places. Gorbachev said that in Crimea, where there are many Russians, two-thirds of the population had voted for autonomy and that the situation was quite acute in Donbass. If the developments were to carry on the same way, Ukraine might remain with nothing but Galicia, he noted (Gorbachev 2015, 204).

While talking with President Bush in Novo-Ogarevo on 31st July 1991, Gorbachev noted that when Ukraine began talks on independence, Crimea had announced that it would prefer to join Russia. Moreover, stated Gorbachev, it was recalled at the Donetsk Basin that after the revolution, the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic had been founded there. People considered it possible to raise the subject of renewing the Soviet Republic, he said (Gorbachev 2017, 184).

We can discover from the official documents that, besides Crimea, Donbass, and Kharkiv, the Odessa and Nikolaev (currently Mikolaev) Oblasts also have a history of separatism from Kiev. Following Ukraine's declaration of independence, a delegation of the Donbass Strike Committee arrived in Moscow on 25th August 1991 to state that if Kyiv were to tolerate separatist moods, then Donbass would go on a total strike; Odessa and Nikolaev joined their demands shortly thereafter (Gorbachev 2018, 556).

In an interview with a Ukrainian TV Company on 8th December 1991, Gorbachev declared that the violation of national minorities' rights would begin in Ukraine if it were to separate from the Soviet

Union. "I greatly desire to retain Ukraine in the way it is right now, but I am sure, if it steps forward for separation, then the processes generating there, will be… The situation of Yugoslavia has plunged me in thought" (Loginov 2007, 429).

From the above-presented excerpts of the archival documents, we can understand that the populations of Crimea, Donbass, Kharkiv, Odessa, and Mikolaev were in many ways expressing their discontent for Ukrainian separatism from Kremlin, and most of them were demanding the joining of their territories to Russia as early as the late 1980s and early 1990s. Accordingly, it is not a coincidence that almost 30 years later, the Crimean peninsula would be annexed by the Russian Federation, the Russian satellite Donetsk and Lugansk self-declared separatist republics would take off in the Donbass region and groups of separatists would attempt to establish a Krakiv People's Republic. Most probably, it was neither a coincidence that as early as December 1991, Gorbachev was considering realistic the risk of the realization of the Yugoslav scenario in Ukraine. By reviewing the above-presented information, we can definitely see that unsurprisingly, Russia's traditional geopolitics have not changed so far.

Ethnic composition and the ratio of Russians to Ukrainians in the regions of Ukraine also shed light on the current state of affairs in the country. According to the most recent 2001 population census, the currently problematic regions of Crimea, Lugansk, and Donetsk demonstrate the highest ratios of Russian ethnic populations. In Crimea, ethnic Russians compose 58% of the local population, whereas Ukrainians make up only 24%. In Lugansk, the ethnic-Russian population composes 39%, whereas the Ukrainian – 58%. 38 to 57 is the ratio in Donetsk. The next Ukrainian region with the highest share of ethnic Russian population is Kharkiv (26 to 71), and subsequently Zaporizhzhia (25 to 71) and Odessa (21 to 63). The Russian-Ukrainian ratio in the Mikolaev region composes 14 to 82, which is similar to the composition of Kherson. Only the Dnipropetrovsk region has a higher ratio of ethnic-Russian to Ukrainian population (18 to 79) than the latter two (State Statistics

Committee of Ukraine 2003-2004).

Taking into consideration all above-presented data, we can suppose that if Russo-Ukrainian relations do not achieve a functional *modus vivendi*, the successful settlement of which is being attempted by the Normandy Four, it will not be surprising if, aiming to put more pressure on Kiev, Moscow intensifies its hybrid warfare in the regions of Kharkiv, Odessa, and elsewhere with comparably significant shares of ethnic-Russian populations. Most problematic to this extent could be the Kharkiv region as, recalling the above-presented comment from Gorbachev, it was within the composition of Russia for centuries and was joined to Ukraine by the Bolsheviks only in order to gain a majority in the Rada.

Conclusion

Considering the current state of affairs in Ukraine and in other Kremlin disloyal post-Soviet states on the European Eastern Partnership territory, we are assured that the pragmatic position of these "states of contention" is essentially important for achieving a credible post-Cold War *modus vivendi* in the region. Taking into account the real options these states have today and analysing historically proven efficient strategies and methods of solving similar problems, we are convinced that the most credible example they can follow is the path of Willy Brand's *Ostpolitik*. As far as the current position of these respective states towards their problematic regions is concerned, it is somehow identical to the *Hallstein Doctrine*. Total non-recognition of the adversary party is indeed a principled position, however, the question is whether these states are ready to bear the price of this position, as these territorial disputes put a great burden on their economic and social development. To this extent, we argue that the only credible way out should be to imitate Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, rather than what appeared to be a doctrine of Walter Hallstein.

We are therefore assured that the only path to genuine

independence, and the restoration or maintenance of the principles of individual liberty and free institutions in the region, rest largely, as was mentioned in the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, "upon the establishment of sound economic conditions, stable international economic relationships and the achievement […] of a healthy economy" (Hitchcock 2010, 158). On the other hand, the establishment of long-lasting economic stability is almost impossible under the conditions of active or "frozen" conflicts in the region. It is therefore clear that some kind of stable *modus vivendi* must be achieved for the disputed territories between all interested parties, which will make way for a real economic recovery in the region.

The governments in official Kyiv, Tbilisi, and elsewhere in the region, and their respective populations, should understand that if they desire to pursue the "European way" of development, they should arm themselves with pragmatic policies and, to some extent, get ready to recognize the interests of breakaway entities and the Russian Federation. To this end, Willy Brand's *Ostpolitik* and Lenin's grand compromise in Brest-Litovsk are not that different, as both leaders pragmatically recognized the existence of a problem and, by wanting or not wanting it, made significant compromises that allowed their respective states to move forward.

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