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THE SWEDISH PERCEPTION OF EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE LIGHT OF THE CRISIS IN UKRAINE

ABSTRACT: The events in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, and the Russian attitude towards Ukraine show an evident change in European relations. The escalation of conflict between Russia and Ukraine however does not affect only those two countries, but also those in the nearest vicinity. Especially in Scandinavian and Nordic countries change in social ambience can be observed. The aim of this article is essentially to analyze Swedish reaction to the Ukrainian Crisis, the change in Swedish attitude towards international security systems, especially NATO, and Swedish perception of its national safety.

KEYWORDS: Ukrainian Crisis, Crimea annexation, Swedish security policy, Swedish foreign policy

The recent events in Ukraine have made the world hold its breath. It obviously highlighted the fact that current international relations are undergoing deep changes, and that Russian ambitions concerning creation of a big and influential state are reviving. What is more, neither Europe nor United States are prepared or have the determination to respond to such actions undertaken by Russia. The unrest in Ukraine is also a turning point for this country itself. It can be a fresh start in their way towards Europe and European Union.

The first attempt to liberate Ukraine from Russian influence was undertaken by Ukrainians at the turn of 2004 and 2005. Unfortunately, the so called "Orange Revolution" did not bring the intended results. After Victor Yanukovych took the presidency in 2010, it was predictable that Ukraine would be gravitating towards Russia rather than European Union. The decision to reject the agreement negotiated by Ukraine with the European Union was the source of domestic conflict in Ukraine, which resulted in Yanukovych's abandoning Ukraine, the change of government, and ultimately, losing

Crimea to Russia. The instability visible in Ukraine is a threat not only for its own security, but could also result in destabilization in Eastern Europe or even on the whole continent.

All these events drew the attention of Europe and United States. The reactions of various states differed substantially, mostly due to diversified interests of the states within the region of Eastern Europe and Russia. In this article, the main interest will be focused on the case of Sweden and its reaction to the Ukrainian crisis. The reaction of this particular state is relevant mostly due to its close vicinity to Russia and its concerns over eventual further Russian aggression. What is more, although being a traditionally neutral state, Sweden is active in the field of international relations. Therefore, in case of significant events such as those in Ukraine, Swedish political leaders express their standpoint instead of remaining uncommitted. Sweden recently has been considered as third in the European Union's ranking of most influential countries in foreign policy and is a leader especially in aid contributions and defending human rights in Russia and Ukraine. Sweden turned out to be the leader in assisting the European Commission in suppressing Russia in its aggressive policy towards Eastern European countries. Sweden is also ranked third together with Germany among most impactful European states (*Sweden equals Germany in EU foreign policy sway*). Questions arise then: what influences the state's standpoint in foreign policy? what shapes its views on certain crisis? what are the actual possibilities of state's reactions such as introducing sanctions and what motivates the state to undertake certain actions? Therefore, it is worth considering whether actions undertaken by third side states are successful or have symbolic overtone only. The main hypothesis to be investigated is that Ukrainian crisis may have influenced the Swedish perception of European security and its own security aspects, especially in the context of NATO full participation.

The article is divided in two fundamental parts. First one is dedicated to the Ukrainian crisis itself. The most significant stages of the conflict are highlighted in this part with respect of international reactions and engagement in solving the crisis. Second part is dedicated to the core analysis concerning Swedish reaction to Ukrainian and Crimean crisis. Certain stages in the Swedish standpoint towards Russian engagement are visible in the analysis as well as shift in perceiving European security and Swedish attitude towards NATO and the general condition of Swedish militaries and defense capacities.

The research was based on the analysis of media and press reports occurring together with current events in Ukraine and Russia. This resulted naturally in conducting the research with the use of an interpretativist paradigm which allowed to interpret statements of the most important Swedish, Ukrainian, Russian and other European politicians. This paradigm was especially useful for following reactions of policy makers and changes in attitude towards the Ukrainian events. Relying on Swedish and international press articles all the needed data has been collected and analyzed. This led to certain conclusions concerning the reasons for such Swedish reactions and the background and context of Swedish anxieties concerning Russian intentions in the field of international relations and possible future steps heading towards further annexations.

Ukrainian Crisis

The Ukrainian society, at least this living in the western part of the country, for some time is visibly striving for integration with the European Union, mostly with hope of better economic and political condition as well as the warranty of democracy and liberty. Ukrainians assess their potential cooperation with European Union as more profitable than further coordination with Russia hoping for cheap loans and stock supplies. Meanwhile, President Yanukovych was much closer to Russia in his political views and aspirations. Therefore, the assumption that this oppositional expectations could result in a clash was very credible. In fact, Yanukovych's rejection of signing the Ukraine – European Union agreement on trade and cooperation caused the outburst (Grytsenko). His decision was motivated by Russian threat of limited deliveries of oil, gas, and other supplies (*EU door still open for Ukraine: Swedish MEP*). What is more, Yanukovych was politically dependent on Russia, which is supporting him and his regime.

The events began in November 2013 when the signature of an association agreement between Ukraine and European Union turned out to be endangered. Documents were supposed to be signed during the Eastern Partnership Summit but the Ukrainian side decided to withdraw. That was the reason why the first protesters appeared in Maidan demanding that the Ukrainian president sign the agreement (Kryzys Ukraiński). The probable reason for withdrawing from signing the agreement were the presumed losses

in Ukrainian-Russian trade, which were higher than potential profits from economic cooperation with European Union. It was obvious that the Russian reaction to this would result in a reluctance towards a new Ukrainian policy aimed at Western and European Integration.

Protest grew in strength rapidly spreading around the country, however, the epicenter of demonstrations remained in Kiev. Protesters demanded the immediate signage of the agreement and for keeping Ukraine on the pro-European course. After several days of silence, Yanukovych finally gave a statement on the 26th of November, in which he insisted that Ukraine is still heading towards the European Union and that he would do nothing that would stay in conflict with the society's will and expectations (Kryzys Ukrainski). The situation changed dramatically on the 30th of November, when the manifestation was dispersed by Ukrainian police. It was a turning point when pro-European manifestations changed into anti-governmental ones.

At first, the protesters refused to undertake negotiations with the authorities. All the proposals of organizing a round table addressed to the opposition were rejected until the 9th of December, when Vitali Klitschko expressed on behalf of his oppositional Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform party readiness to negotiate. Four days later the talks were terminated after Yanukovych turned down all oppositional demands, among others signing the Ukrainian-European Union agreement and government's resignation.

Further confrontations between the protesters and the police took place in January. Authorities took actions towards tightening regulations concerning the functioning of the opposition that exacerbated the situation. There were some suggesting the introduction of martial law, however, officially the government claimed there were no such plans. It was during this time that the first casualties were reported. As a result, the United States announced the introduction of sanctions with the annulment of some Ukrainian officials' visas. Russia was removed from the G8 as evidence of the disapproval of United States and its allies towards Crimea's annexation (Smale, Shear). Also, NATO decided to suspend its practical cooperation with Russia in protest against Russian behavior towards Crimea (Croft, Siebold). A proposition from the authorities to include opposition into the government was turned down as Yanukovich refused to answer to the protesters' demands concerning, among others, reinstalling the constitution and withdrawing severe anti-protest laws (Polityuk, Zinets). Although Klitschko called

protesters to suspend their fights with Berkut, aggression still remained between the two sides (Rozejm na Maidanie). At the end of January the protests remained intensive, and therefore, the authorities were forced to yield some points. Laws limiting the opposition's activity were canceled and amnesty was announced (Kryzys Ukraiński). The situation changed rapidly from ordinary protests concerning the refusal to sign the above mentioned agreement into a widespread protest against the regime.

At the beginning of February, the European Parliament passed a resolution concerning the situation in Ukraine. It exhorted to searching for political solution of the conflict and announced financial support for Ukraine. During the night of the 20th–21st of February, President Yanukovych negotiated with opposition with the assistance of Polish, German, and French foreign ministers (Nocne negocjacje. Opozycja na rozmowach z Janukowyczem). After several rounds of negotiations Yanukovych agreed to earlier presidential elections, the re-enactment of the 2004 constitution, and the creation of national unity government. After talks with Yanukovych, foreign negotiators started the meeting with the opposition (Po spotkaniu Janukowycza z szefami dyplomacji Polski, Francji i Niemiec czas na rozmowy z opozycją). Meanwhile, the unrest escalated when police decided to deploy snipers and use live ammunition against the protesters (Tranvor). According to official data, 82 people were killed and 622 were injured of which 405 were hospitalized. Yanukovych, who has been accused for being responsible for killing massive civilians tried to escape to Russia (Po spotkaniu Janukowycza z szefami dyplomacji Polski, Francji i Niemiec czas na rozmowy z opozycją). In spite of his flight from the country, Yanukovych in his official statement voiced his opinion that he still was the Ukrainian President and highlighted the illegal character of the Ukrainian political revolution and the presidential elections planned for the 25th of May (Janukovych twierdzi, że jest prezydentem).

After removing Yanukovych from his position new temporary government was created. One of the leaders of oppositional Batkivshchyna – Arsenij Yatsenyuk – was chosen to be the new prime minister and Andrii Deshchytsia as Minister of Foreign Affairs, who previously worked as an ambassador in Finland (Ukraina ma rząd. Jaceniuk premierem). Yatsenyuk was one of the Maidan Nezalezhnosti's leaders, who signed the agreement negotiated by Radosław Sikorski – Polish Foreign Minister and Frank Walter Steinmeier – German Foreign Minister (Wachnicki). The composition of the new

government has been announced in Maidan, which had a symbolic tone (Nowy rząd Ukrainy). That is the place, where all the events started and where ordinary people fought for European integration and their political rights. The new Ukrainian Prime Minister was controversial due to his past. He reached senior positions in Ukraine owing to his good relations with Ukrainian oligarchs. He worked for Victor Pinchuk, son in law of the former Ukrainian President – Leonid Kuczma. In spite of being in favor of Orange Revolution in 2004, many perceive him as being dependent on Ukrainian establishment (Wachnicki). On the other hand, it is hard to find a politician in Ukraine, who has no bonds with influential Ukrainian businessmen. Therefore, such a past should not be disqualifying. Yatsenyuk announced that in his policy, European integration and signing the Ukrainian-European Union agreement would be priorities. At the same time, he highlighted that after taking the post, he would concentrate on fighting the risk of bankruptcy by introducing severe financial cutbacks (Ukraina ma rząd).

At the end of February, the first signs of separatist tendencies in Crimea appeared. Approximately 60% of Crimea's population is of Russian origin, while only 25% are Ukrainians. The rest of the population are Tartars (Jest decyzja w sprawie referendum na Krymie). Vladimir Konstantynov, chair of Crimea's Highest Council, announced that secession is possible because of the unstable situation in Ukraine (Ukraina się rozpada? Krym chce się odłączyć). Armed forces representing the interests of the population of Crimea of Russian origin began to occupy main offices of Crimea's authorities and hoisted Russian flags. Afterwards, same troops have occupied civil airport in Sevastopol. It was presumed that those were Russian troops in spite of no clear markings on their uniforms. Due to the unstable situation, the Russian Federation Council gave its permission to use the Russian army in Crimea. The argument used to advocate such a decision based on the need to protect the health and life of Russian citizens in Crimea (Kryzys Ukraiński). Taking into consideration the disturbing information about the presence of possible Russian soldiers in Crimea, a group of OSCE observers was sent to Crimea in order to control the situation. However, they were stopped by unidentified men in military uniforms (*OSCE observes barred from entering Crimea: Polish minister*). Alongside the stoppage of OSCE observers, many cases of the harassment of journalists' were registered. Also, a Swedish journalist and his cameraman were arrested by Russian militaries, who according to the journalist's statement were aggressive and threatening. This

was just an example of such violations – many foreign journalists complained about being harassed by Russian militaries and having their equipment stolen or confiscated (*Swedish TV team freed by Russian military*).

At the same time, Interfax announced that the Russian Black Sea Navy gave the Ukrainian army in Crimea an ultimatum, demanding that they surrender by the 4th of March at 05:00 under threat of using Russian forces to solve the Crimean problem. One of the scenarios taken into consideration is that such Russian behavior was just a way of escalating the problem through a show of strength. The fact is that Russian troops in small groups had been attacking Ukrainian soldiers for some time and most of the official bureaus had already been under Russian control.

Crimea's parliament decided about organizing a referendum concerning the future of this autonomous territory. Initially, it was decided that it should take place on the 25th of May, but eventually was proceeded earlier – on the 16th of March. Tartar leader Refat Chubarov called for a boycott due to its illegal character (Brenner). Before conducting the referendum, a Crimean independence statement was essential. The document has been adopted at an extraordinary session of the parliament with the result of 78 out of 100 members in favor of separating Crimea from Ukraine. The next step – referendum – paved the way for joining Russia (*Crimea parliament declares independence from Ukraine ahead of referendum*). The document was signed by the Chairman of Crimean Parliament Vladimir Konstantynov and Chairman of Sevastopol City Council Yuriy Doynikov (*Crimea parliament declares independence from Ukraine ahead of referendum*). In the referendum more than 95% of voters expressed their support for Crimea's joining Russian Federation (*Crimea parliament declares independence from Ukraine ahead of referendum*). Officially, Crimea became part of Russian Federation on the 18th of March, when Vladimir Putin signed a bill absorbing this territory into Russia (*Ukraine crisis: Putin signs Russia-Crimea treaty*), but the Crimean parliament had voted to join the Russian Federation a day earlier (Morello, Englund). International reaction to this was a strong condemnation both in Europe and worldwide. A referendum was commented as illegal and against international law. Therefore, further sanctions were introduced, among others, travel bans and the freezing of assets.

There are broad consequences to Russia annexing Crimea. For Ukraine, it means losing a significant harbor in Sevastopol, military units, and touristic important region. It also means an open

conflict with Russia. On the other hand, economically and politically Ukraine can gain from this loss. Crimea was not a self-sufficient region and was dependent on Ukraine's support: for example, in 2013, Ukraine paid 17.7 million euro of subsidies (Kościński, Zasztowt). What is more, pro-European Ukraine will not be impeded by anti-European Crimea. For Russia, annexing Crimea meant destabilization in the region and resulted in imposing sanctions. Most of the former Soviet Union's satellite countries have a Russian minority within their societies. What is more, Russia has been widely condemned by the international community. Only a few states decided to recognize the annexation of Crimea – Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Syria (Wachnicki). The case of Ukraine and Crimea can be a warning for other countries that the same scenario can also apply to them. One of the repercussions of annexing Ukrainian territory by Russia is also the suspension of both military and civilian cooperation with Russia within NATO. The decision was made on the 1st of April at the level of foreign ministers (*NATO stops military and civilian cooperation with Russia – NATO Council says*). After Crimea, the unrest has spread into other Ukrainian regions. The eastern territories are mainly skeptical towards European integration and European Union itself. On the other hand, their bonds with Russia are much stronger.

Swedish Reaction in Media – Shift in European Security Perception

Sweden's reaction to the events in Ukraine can be divided into several stages. The first comments occurred after the Ukrainian rejection of the agreement with the EU. The second phase concerned the period of social unrest. The third phase began after Yanukovych's leaving the country when it seemed that the crisis was over. The last one began after occurrence of separatist tendencies in Crimea.

Swedish reaction to the Ukrainian crisis occurred immediately after the first signals concerning the protests on the streets. In December 2013, when social unrest was slowly spreading, the Swedish Member of European Parliament Cecilia Wikström said that Europe cannot stay passive as being democracy's and citizens' rights guarantor (*EU door still open for Ukraine: Swedish MEP*). She also highlighted the fact, that for European states the support gained

from the EU together with all the economic, educational and social benefits is something obvious and undeniable. Ukrainian society wants the same. Therefore, the role of Europe is to provide further enlargements and extending the EU's support on less developed countries (*EU door still open for Ukraine: Swedish MEP*). The support expressed by Sweden and its politicians is not surprising, given the fact that this country is famous for respecting its human and citizens' rights as well as democratic principles in politics.

Until 22nd of February, when Yanukovych was removed from power by the Ukrainian parliament, the unrest was unceasing. Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt many times in his official statements to the media accentuated that the Yanukovych's regime is responsible for all the violence and its victims (*Sweden pins violence on Ukrainian regime*). The same sentiment was repeated in February, just before Yanukovych's deposition. Carl Bildt pointed out that the Ukrainian parliament must be united in combating violence and repression towards civilians. At the same time, the Swedish Foreign Minister reaffirmed his total support for sanctions against the Ukrainian regime (*Ukrainian president has blood on his hands: Bildt*). Together with American sanctions, Sweden also voiced its disapproval for Russian behavior. In 2013, Renault Trucks Defense, owned by Swedish truck manufacturer Volvo, signed a contract with Russian Uralvagonzavod concerning development of a combat vehicle. However, the project was suspended as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea (*Volvo halts Russia tank plan over Ukraine crisis*).

At the same time, the Swedish prime minister emphasized that the Ukrainian situation was mostly a case of political and financial crisis. He expressed his worries concerning corruption and financial condition of Ukraine. Therefore, the role of Europe is to support Ukraine especially in those fields, while NATO should not be that much engaged in solving the crisis (*Crimea not question for NATO: Sweden*). What is more, Swedish politicians unequivocally stated that Russian engagement in Crimea and their actions heading towards detaching the peninsula from Ukraine was an evident violation of international law and basic European principles of international security. The most demonstrable evidence for Russian intervention in Crimea was voting in the Duma for deploying its troops there in case of such a necessity. As a way of expressing Swedish support for Ukraine, Carl Bildt joined other European foreign ministers at the beginning of March to discuss the crisis (Bildt: Russia is breaking the law in Ukraine).

In spite of all positive attitude among Swedish politicians towards Ukraine, one unfortunate statement has been noticed by press. During an official speech on 2nd of March, the Swedish prime minister said that Russian involvement in Crimea could be understood due to the Russian majority living in this region. His statement caused confusion in the Swedish media and forced the Swedish prime minister to explain himself in *Godmornon Sverige* TV show (*Swedish PM: Russian worries understandable*). The probable explanation for such an unfortunate statement is taking prime minister's words out of context, which is the most frequent excuse for political incorrectness.

In March 2014, Russians started their large scale Baltic Sea training, which concentrated over 3,500 servicemen of Russian Baltic Fleet in Kaliningrad (*Sweden plays down Russian Baltic operation*). The reception of such Russian activity widely distressed Europe. Organizing fleet training in the Baltic Sea has been perceived as a demonstration of power and potential Russian aggression in the case of more determined European reaction to Russian-Ukrainian relations. A Swedish expert at the Swedish Defense Research Agency claimed that the whole operation has been planned in advance and it is probable that has nothing in common with current Ukrainian crisis (*Sweden plays down Russian Baltic operation*). On the other hand, it is undeniable that such training can be used as a mean of propaganda and intimidation of the opponents. Such behavior is also thought as typical for the former Soviet Union, which was treating the case of security as a zero sum game.

Swedish reaction to Russian Baltic trainings, in spite of suggestions that they should not be connected to the Ukrainian crisis, was explicit. Extra air defense had been sent to the island of Gotland. Swedish Armed Forces' spokesman Göran Mårtensson highlighted that it was the state's duty to send aircrafts to protect Swedish territory and that constant monitoring of the situation in Ukraine was being conducted (*Sweden sends jets to Baltic after Russian move*). At the same time, the situation in Ukraine inspired a discussion among Swedish politicians concerning the condition of the Swedish army, its defense strategy, and army reforms. Armed Forces Supreme Commander Sverker Göransson claimed that the Swedish current strategy for building a professional army was successful and did not need any improvements. On the other hand, Jan Björklund the Swedish Deputy Prime Minister outlined that Sweden should be able to defend Götland island and therefore needs to rethink its own defense strategy (*Swedish military rejects call for new*

doctrine). Sweden plainly seems to be worried due to Russian intentions towards Ukraine. Sweden fears potential Russian aggression in ex-Soviet states – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Götland Island as an important strategic location may become a tidbit for Russia. The entire situation also exhorts Swedish politicians to reconsider the idea of becoming a NATO member, not only partner.

In accordance to Swedish concerns, their troops joined NATO training exercise in the vicinity to Russian border. 1,400 Swedish soldiers took part in the training in the northern parts of Norway. Sweden perceives the training as a great opportunity to improve defense, especially in the light of the Crimean situation. Swedish colonel Jan Mörtberg said that no one expected Russia to enter Crimea, therefore it is possible that it will go further to the Baltic States (*Swedes train with NATO on Russian border*). Although training was planned earlier, similarly to Russian training in the Baltic Sea, it can be perceived as a deterrence tool which may cool Russian intentions.

Alongside the military training exercises, both Russian and NATO's, Crimea was prepared with the final date decided on the 16th of March. The general international response was explicit – the voting would be considered illegal. Swedish foreign minister – Carl Bildt also stated that referendum conducted under the threat of using violence and presence of Russian troops cannot be considered as fair and consistent with Ukrainian or international law (*Bildt: Crimea referendum illegal whatever result*). Russian political influence on the Crimean crisis and conducting the referendum were obvious and caused both international confusion and condemnation. Unfortunately, due to economic and trade links between states, there was no decided and explicit response to Russian behavior. The introduced sanctions and conducted diplomatic talks did not manage to restrain Russia from meddling with the Ukrainian internal situation. Together with the condemnation of Russian behavior, the Swedish prime minister expressed his support for potential Ukrainian use of force against Russian troops and separatists in order to restore peace. What is more, he ensured that Sweden in alike situation would use all measures to ease the unrest (*Sweden backs Ukraine to repel militias*).

After the referendum in which Crimea's population decided on separating from Ukraine and joining Russia, Sweden pledged a will to support financially new and democratic authorities in Kiev. Sweden together with Nordic and Baltic States expressed their readiness to help Ukraine. Anders Borg, Minister of Finance,

claimed that not only financial help is important, but it should also be supported with political reforms. The social unrest resulted in an economic crisis. In order to stabilize Ukrainian economy, Ukraine might need even up to \$30–35 billion for all the required reforms and transformations (*Sweden pledges urgent loans to Ukraine; Sweden backs bilateral aid to Ukraine*). The Swedish prime minister together with other politicians hoped that their readiness to provide help for Ukraine would encourage other countries to do the same. It is characteristic for Sweden that in such situations ruling parties as well as oppositional ones speak with a united voice.

The crisis in Crimea results not only in mobilizing European countries in the context of political and financial support. Most of the countries feel the threat for international peace, and therefore most of them mobilize their forces and demonstrate readiness of undertaking adequate steps. A survey in Finland had been conducted concerning creating military union between Sweden and Finland. The union would assume the possibility of mobilizing armed forces of both countries in case of a threat or crisis situation. Over 50% of Finnish population supported such an idea, which shows that Europe recognizes the possible Russian threat (*Majority of Finns back Swedish military union*). What is more, neither Sweden nor Finland are NATO members and therefore must undertake actions in order to care for their interests and safety. Taking into consideration poor Swedish facilities to defend themselves, participation in collective defense organization becomes a more frequent subject in political discourse.

Sweden decided to take the role of an initiator in international relations. Sweden would like to inspire other nations and politicians to undertake certain actions aimed at refraining Russia. After one of the foreign ministers' meeting, Carl Bildt outlined that all the states should stay united in being firm on international law and all the rules, which Russia had violated explicitly by annexing Crimea (*Bildt on Putin: What else is in his heart?*). Sweden and the international community fear the possible furthering of Russian claims. Taking into consideration later probable Russian support for separatists in eastern Ukraine those fears do not seem to be unfounded. The Swedish security service SÄPO stated that Russia has intensified its espionage activity in Sweden and probably is including war preparations. More evidence of Russia's increased interest in Sweden has been conducted lately with simulated flight attacks on Swedish targets and attempts to recruit spies. This information was presented in the SÄPO annual intelligence assessment

(*Russian plans for war on Sweden cause concern*). Although the plans of a Russian attack on Sweden seem to be unlikely, it is not absolutely out of the question.

Sweden is becoming increasingly interested in joining NATO. Almost 30% of Swedes would support joining this organization in comparison to only 17% in 2013 (*More Swedes want to join NATO*). The survey had been conducted between October and December 2013 when the crisis in Ukraine was not that intense yet, however the situation undoubtedly could have an impact on strengthening such attitude among Swedes. What is more, the current coalition announced that in case of winning in the upcoming elections more funds would be allocated to the military. The budget would be increased by 5 billion kronor annually starting in 2015 (*Sweden to beef up air force to counter Russia*). This decision is a change in the contemporary Swedish defense policy. 15 years ago the authorities decided on decreasing the military budget as no threat to Sweden had been recognized. Sweden as a neutral country did not see a need to foster its defense capabilities before, but the Ukrainian crisis showed that Sweden should enhance its defense capabilities bearing in mind the changing character of possible conflicts. In spite of taking precise steps aimed at ensuring Sweden's safety, as for example signals concerning the increase in military expenses, and reacting to Russia's behavior in relations with Ukraine, the ruling coalition reached lowest level of voters support since its creation in 2004, which seems to be surprising (*Government hits record low in voter support*).

Conclusions

The Ukrainian crisis showed that in fact we do not live in safe and stable times. International relations seem to be unpredictable and not always rational. It also showed discord in certain states' policies. The reactions of the international society seemed to be identical – Russian assistance for Ukrainian separatists has been condemned. But in fact the actual reactions differed substantially. The United States can be considered as most determined and firm in their reaction by applying sanctions on Russia. Mostly the reason for this is poor economic ties with Russia. The commerce between those two states is much less intense than between Germany or United Kingdom and Russia. Therefore, European countries decided

on taking a rather moderate attitude. Of course, some sanctions were introduced, however no categorical or forceful actions had been undertaken. It could even be said that politics and threats of undertaking more determined actions against Russia were only theater.

The Swedish reaction to the Ukrainian crisis was immediate. Similar to other western countries, Sweden condemned Russia and voiced its support for Ukrainian protesters. Apart from that, Sweden was one of the countries that were the first to propose diplomatic and financial support. What is more, it took action in the European Union arena to motivate other member countries to do the same. Swedish activity in this field is understandable. First of all, Sweden is in quite close vicinity to Russia. What is more, Swedish neighbors – especially the Baltic States stay in natural and historical Russian interest zone. Therefore, the fear of further Russian claims does not lack justification. Russia's behavior is an expression of power and strength in a Soviet style. It can mean that Russia will no longer respect international law or customs and will be marching further in their path towards regaining its old influential position of a world power state. Swedish interest in the Ukrainian situation and in deterring Russia is visible due to their poor military condition. Sweden would not be able to protect themselves only relying on their own army. For the same reason, Sweden would not be able to undertake any more determined actions against Russia. What is more, Sweden is not a NATO member and therefore, according to international regulations other countries, would not be obliged to protect it in case of aggression. Ukrainian crisis boosted the discussion concerning joining this organization and also changed the general social attitude towards this idea. In spite of the fact that the situation is becoming more stable, at least in terms of European ground, Sweden and other countries should stay alert. They have to take into consideration the scenario where international peace that lasts in Europe since the end of World War II may be breached.

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