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“THE UKRAINIAN ISSUE” AT THE G7 SUMMITS IN CONDITIONS OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT 2014–2022

INTRODUCTION

G7 is an unique international institution, due to its institutional framework and the enormous economic power of its members, it is able to act as a crisis manager (Bailin, 2001).

The G7 has become the face of the global security provider. They have maintained the coordinated engagement necessary for timely and well-adapted collective action to respond to threats to both global and regional security. The key role of the Group most influential democracies in the world is to make arbitrary decisions that in one way or another shape the international order.

The relevance of this research is determined by the need to analyse the impact of local conflict and regional factor on changes in the modern world order. The analysis of the G7 experience in settlement the problem of Russia’s military aggression in Ukraine from 2014 to 2022 contributes to the understanding of the achievements and gaps of the globalization factor of world politics to solve the problems of a particular state.

The key sources for this research are the Group’s public statements from 2014 to the end of 2022 related with Ukraine and Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The documents signed by member states demonstrate their public responsibility for its contents, stating that they will implement certain policies.

The objectives of the study are: analysing the documentary base of the G7 summits for references concerning Ukraine in the period 2014–2022; identifying the role of the intergovernmental political forum in the settlement of the conflict; clarifying the transformation of the position of the Group of Seven towards Ukraine during this period; tracking the course of the G7 on this issue according to changes in the leadership of the participating countries; evaluating the effectiveness of the G7 as an international mediator in this conflict.

The research methodology is based on systemic, historical, structural and political approaches to the study of the problem. Research methods are comparative analysis, content analysis, chronological and classification methods.

The hypothesis formed and verified in this paper is that since the beginning of Russian expansion on Ukraine in 2014 the G7 members have called for a negotiated process and a political solution to the conflict, but it was hardly possible to quickly

adopt and implement timely and adequately decisions to resolve the crisis in the region through the bonding of global and regional security mechanisms. Thus, a comfortable field for prolonging the conflict, which has developed into a full-scale war, was formed.

CRIMEA ANNEXATION AFTERMATH: 2014–2016

On February 23, 2014, Russian troops illegally entered Crimea. It became the first victim of Russian expansionism and in fact this day can be called the beginning of the war against the integrity of Ukraine (Pasova, 2021).

In 2014, the Russian Federation was preparing to host the summit of the most influential world leaders G7 in Sochi on June 4–5 (*Address by President...*, 2014), but the Group already on March 2, 2014, reacted to the unauthorized occupation of Crimea by gathering for an emergency meeting. By the *Statement of the G7 countries* they paused Russia's participation in the Group because of its actions in Ukraine, which contradicted the principles and values that guide the G7 and G8. World leaders condemned "the blatant violation by the Russian Federation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity" (*Statement of the G7...*, March 2, 2014).

At the meeting on March 3, G7 finance ministers discussed economic support for Ukraine and pointed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the best institution to help Ukraine address its pressing economic challenges by providing policy advice and financing, subject to the necessary reforms (*Statement by G7 Finance...*, 2014).

The following G7's reaction regarding the occupation of Crimea was issued on March 12 in the *G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine* which called on the Russian Federation to cease all efforts aimed at changing the status of Crimea contrary to Ukrainian legislation and in violation of international law, to immediately stop actions in support of the referendum on the status of Crimea (*G7 Leaders' Statement...*, 2014). But already on March 16 the alleged referendum on the status of the peninsula was held in Crimea, as a result of which Russia annexed Crimea on March 18 (Pasova, 2021).

On March 24, 2014, a special meeting was held in The Hague, where members of the Group condemned the illegal referendum and did not recognize its legality. The document of the meeting states that "the Group came together because of common beliefs and shared responsibility, and Russia's actions in recent weeks were not in line with them" (*G7: The Hague Declaration*, 2014).

On April 6, armed men invaded Donetsk Regional State Administration. Parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, under the auspices of separatist groups sponsored by the Russian Federation, declared independence from Ukraine and formed the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) and Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) (Shypanskyi, 2020).

At the special meeting of the G7 on the situation in Ukraine on April 25 participants expressed deep concern over the actions of Russia-backed separatists to destabilize eastern Ukraine threatening military maneuvers on Ukrainian border (*G7 Leaders statement on Ukraine*, 2014). Leaders agreed to proceed promptly to impose additional sanctions against Russia and to continue preparing for a transition to broader, coordinated sanctions (Ibid).

The G7 summit on June 4, held in Brussels, called on illegal armed groups in Donbas to disarm. The leaders agreed on the decision of International Monetary Fund (IMF) to approve the program for Ukraine in the amount of \$17 billion, including \$18 billion committed that day from G7 partners. During that summit the issue of diversification of gas sources for Ukraine was addressed. This day for the first time, the participants officially discussed imposing sanctions against individuals and legal entities that actively supported or committed violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine (*G7 Leaders' Communiqué...*, 2014).

The next day after the G7 summit, the first meeting of the Normandy Four as a diplomatic platform for negotiations on the war in eastern Ukraine took place. The leaders of Ukraine, Germany, France and Russia (P. Poroshenko, A. Merkel, F. Hollande and V. Putin) met in Normandy during the 70th anniversary of Operation Overlord. The first meeting did not bring concrete results: its participants only called for an early ceasefire in Donbas (*Normands'kyj...*, 2019).

On July 30, 2014, the G7 leaders met again to condemn the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 and demanded a full and independent international investigation. The leaders noted that this tragic event should have been “a turning point in this conflict, forcing Russia to suspend its support for illegal armed groups in Ukraine and stop the growing flow of weapons and fighters across the border” (*G7 Leaders Statement...*, July 30, 2014). These events became a trigger for the Group to intensify sanctions. G7 expressed support for “the OSCE and the Trilateral Contact Group (TCC) as central players in creating conditions for a ceasefire” (*Ibid*).

On September 25, the G7 foreign ministers met again for an emergency meeting on the “Ukrainian issue,” where forum members committed to help Ukraine recover from the massive economic downturn and rebuild its economy (*G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on...*, 2014).

The second Minsk agreement (The Minsk-2) was signed on February 12, 2015. It provided for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine and withdrawal of all heavy weapons by both sides at equal distances in order to create a security zone (*Mins'ki uhody...*, 2022). In this Declaration Poroshenko, Merkel, Hollande and Putin declared full commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The G7 expressed readiness to take appropriate measures “against those who violate the Minsk agreements by increasing the impact of penalties, particularly for not complying with the agreed comprehensive ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons” (*G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine*, 2015).

The Minsk-2 approved that a complete ceasefire was supposed to take place in eastern Ukraine at 00:00 on February 15, 2015, but fierce fighting began on February 16. On February 17, Debaltseve, which according to the Minsk agreements was to remain on the Ukrainian side of the contact line, was surrounded by separatists (Hay-Nyzhnyk, 2017: 260).

On June 8, 2015, *G7 Leaders' Declaration* highlighted a sub-item entitled “*The search for a solution to the conflict in Ukraine*”, where the G7 politicians approved their full support for the efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine, in particular within the Normandy Format and the TCG. They called on

all parties to fully implement the Minsk Agreements (*Leaders' Declaration...*, 2015). Also, leaders tasked the ambassadors of the G7 countries in Kyiv to establish a support group for Ukraine (G7 Ukraine Support Group) to advance the process of economic reforms in Ukraine (Ibid). At the G7 summit on May 27, 2016, this initiative was implemented and welcomed at the summit (*G7 Ise-Shima Leaders'...*, 2016).

The G7 promoted the settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict to the Normandy Format. In 2016, a regular summit of representatives of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia took place in Berlin on October 16. For almost two and a half years of its existence, the participants of this format have not settled the conflict in Donbas. After this meeting, there was a three-year silence in the Normandy Format and the next one did not take until place on December 9, 2019, in Paris, where Volodymyr Zelenskyy made his debut.

The French observer Alain Guimol admits that “The main defect is that the Minsk agreements do not clearly name the aggressor and the victim of aggression” (*Chy je maybutnye...*, 2016). According to Volodymyr Dubovyk, Director of the Center for International Studies, “Normandy Format has long been an excuse for Western countries to pretend that they are doing something in order to prevent a full-scale war between Ukraine and Russia” (Ibid).

COURSE OF POLICY CHANGED: 2017–2021

At the meeting of G7 foreign ministers in 2017 the position of commitment to the implementation of the *Minsk agreements* remained unchanged. The participants recognized the responsibility of the Russian Federation for the conflict in Ukraine (*Joint Communiqué...*, April 11, 2017).

In 2017, Emanuel Macron and Donald Trump replaced their predecessors at the G7 round table at the annual Leaders' Summit on May 26–27 in Italy and since then a new assertion has appeared “despite our differences with Russia, we are ready to engage with it to solve regional crises and common problems when it is in our interests” (*G7 Taormina...*, 2017). This statement was included in the next document of the meeting in 2018 (*The Charlevoix G7...*, 2018).

During the summit, President Donald Trump said in an interview that he expressed surprise why the leaders of the countries sided with Ukraine on this issue and that Russia should be reinstated in the G7 (*Donald Trump na...*, 2018).

In November 2018, the Russian military seized Ukrainian ships and naval personnel in the Kerch Strait. This escalation of the crisis was condemned by G7 foreign ministers and triggered a wave of new sanctions. It should be noted that in the same period, thanks to the support of the German and French delegations, a precedent was set for Russia's reintegration to the Council of Europe (PACE) after losing its voting rights in 2014 (Stovba, 2019).

During the 2019 G7 summit at a breakfast with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Biarritz, President Donald Trump said he would possibly invite Russia to next year's meeting of the Group. Although Trump favored a return to the G8 format or G7 with Russia, most G7 countries, including France, Germany, Britain and Canada,

opposed it. In their opinion, first of all, it was necessary for Moscow to implement the Minsk agreements to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine (*Trump: możliwe, że...*, 2019). President Macron called such a move a “strategic mistake” that would signal the “weakness of the G7” (Stovba, 2019). In turn, President of the European Council Donald Tusk said that he would try to assure the leaders that it would be better to invite Ukraine than Russia as a guest to the next summit (*Trump: możliwe, że...*, 2019).

In 2019, the “Ukrainian issue” in the context of the Group’s meetings was relegated to the category of far secondary importance. In the leadership communiqué, the issue was raised in one sentence: “France and Germany will organize a summit in the Normandy Format in the coming weeks to achieve tangible results” (*G7 Leaders’...*, August 28, 2019).

The problem of the pandemic in 2020 generally offset the importance of the ongoing Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, so the issue was not on the agenda of the summits.

According to Investigative Europe, France supplied the most weapons to Russia in 2015–2020 and its share in arms export from the EU to Russia was 44% for €152 million in this period (Brillaud et al., 2022). Germany exported military equipment to Russia for 121.8 million in 2015–2020, which is more than 35% of European arms exports to Russia (Ibid). Normandy Format mediators avoided the approved sanctions, finding loopholes for arms trade with Russia.

The introduction of sanctions was an important step, but Russia’s economy has certainly suffered a bit from it. Although there is considerable debate over how much – some estimates are as high as 8%, while Ukrainian analyst O. Kushch told Al Jazeera that Russia’s losses have remained below 1% of its GDP (DuBard, 2022).

FOLLOWING WAR OUTBREAK: 2022

Five days before the full-scale invasion, on February 19, 2022, a meeting of G7 foreign ministers took place, where it was announced that “Russia had unprovoked and unjustified military build-up, the largest deployment on the European continent since the end of the Cold War” (*G7 Foreign Ministers’...*, 2022). The summit continued the eight-year-long debate on the appreciation and continued support of the efforts of Germany and France in the Normandy Format.

The head of the Kremlin during a press conference on February 22, 2022, said that the *Minsk agreements* no longer exist, as Russia recognized the independence of the “DNR” and “LNR” (*Obrashcheniye...*, 2022). In response, an emergency meeting of the G7 foreign ministers was convened. They condemned Putin’s decision as well as deploying Russian troops in these territories (*G7 Chair’s Statement...*, February 22, 2022).

On February 24, 2022, the entire territory of Ukraine was bombed by Russia (Zinets, 2022). A special resolution on the situation related to Ukraine was immediately issued (*G7 Leaders’ Statement*, February 24, 2022). G7 “indignantly condemned the large-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation against the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, carried out partly from the Belarusian territory”

(*G7 Leaders' Statement on the Invasion...*, 2022). For the first time, we find a direct personal accusation "He (Putin) has put himself on the wrong side of history" (Ibid).

BREAKTHROUGH ON POLITICAL SCENE

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the G7 held numerous meetings prompted by the war on the territory of Ukraine. In *G7' Statement* President Putin's decision was recognized as a violation of the Minsk agreements (*G7 Leaders' Statement...*, February 24, 2022). In addition, the G7 stressed the consensus of joint work with NATO, the EU and their member states, as well as Ukraine.

On March 4, the G7 held President Putin, his government and supporters, as well as the Lukashenko regime, personally responsible for the sanctions (*G7 Foreign Ministers'...*, March 4, 2022). Later that year in June 28, G7 called on China "to exert pressure on Russia to cease its military aggression, immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine" (*G7 Leaders' Communiqué*, June 28, 2022). The G7 condemned Russia's provocative statements signaling the threat of the use of nuclear weapons (Ibid).

The G7 foreign ministers noted that the Group would continue to impose economic sanctions on Russia and other countries, nationals or corporations that provide military support to Moscow's war of aggression, as some members have already done in connection with Iran's provision of unmanned aerial vehicles to Russia (*G7 Foreign Ministers'...*, November 4, 2022).

ENERGY DILEMMA

In terms of energy policy, the *Ten-Point Plan* was proposed by the International Energy Agency and welcomed by the G7 energy ministers. Its main objective was to reinforce the real need and opportunity for Europe to reduce its dependence on Russia by diversifying supplies (*G7 Energy...*, 2022). G7 also condemned the deliberate damage to the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea (*G7 Statement on Ukraine*, 2022).

The G7 finance ministers and Central Bank Governors confirmed the joint political intention "to finalize and implement a comprehensive ban on services that provide sea transportation of crude oil and petroleum products of Russian origin worldwide. The provision of such services can be allowed only if the oil and petroleum products are purchased at a price not lower than the threshold price" (*G7 Foreign Ministers'...*, November 4, 2022).

German Foreign Minister Annalena Burbock, in her capacity as Chair of the G7 Foreign Ministers Council, invited the expanded G7+ group on November 29 to discuss joint efforts to provide emergency support to Ukraine and coordinating assistance efforts. The meeting was attended by over 20 foreign ministers, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba, the NATO Secretary General, representatives of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank (*Press Statement...*, 2022).

FINANCIAL BACKUP

Looking from the economic perspective, G7 committed to provide a sustainable food supply in Ukraine and to keep food markets open (*G7 Leaders’ Statement*, March 24, 2022).

On April 7, the G7 foreign ministers called on the international community to establish Agricultural Solidarity Bands to support Ukraine’s ability to export its agricultural products (*Statement of the G7...*, April 7, 2022). On the same day, G7 welcomed the establishment of the International Monetary Fund Management Account for Ukraine, supporting the World Bank Group’s aid package for Ukraine. Moreover, G7 development ministers expressed their “readiness to support the reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine’s economy on the path to a balanced and green recovery” (Ibid).

It is worth mentioning that on April 20, G7 together with the international community, provided and pledged funds in \$24 billion and have expressed their willingness to do more if needed (*G7 Finance Ministers’...*, April 20, 2022). In the same document G7 welcomed the establishment of the International Monetary Fund’s Multi-Donor Account for Ukraine and the European Union’s announcement of a Solidarity Trust Fund for Ukraine (Ibid).

On September 14 the Ukraine Creditor Group and the Government of Ukraine agreed a Memorandum of Understanding for freezing debt service until the end of 2023, that allowed to provide reducing pressure on Ukraine’s liquidity despite the war (*G7 Finance Ministers and Central...*, 2022).

On November 4, G7 reported that \$33.3 billion in budget support has been established for 2022, including \$4.5 billion by the United States, to help Ukraine close the financing gap. Additional planned support for Ukrainian state-owned enterprises and the private sector through the EBRD and the IFC amounts to \$3.4 billion. This support was in addition to the military, humanitarian and early recovery assistance provided to Ukraine by the G7 countries. The Group also made a statement on the establishment of a G7 coordination mechanism to help Ukraine repair, rebuild and protect its critical energy and water infrastructure, remaining committed to supporting Ukraine’s recovery, reconstruction and modernization (*G7 Foreign Ministers’...*, November 4, 2022).

RUSSIAN AGGRESSION UNDER INVESTIGATION

G7 supported the ongoing work on the investigation of war crimes and other atrocities, including by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the independent international commission of inquiry mandated by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the work of expert missions under the Moscow Mechanism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as national investigations conducted by the Prosecutor General’s Office of Ukraine (*G7 Statement on Support for Ukraine...*, June 27, 2022).

On March 17 foreign ministers under the chairmanship of German Foreign Minister Baerbock stressed that those responsible for war crimes, including the use of weapons indiscriminately against civilians, will be held to account, and welcomed the

ongoing work of investigation and evidence gathering, including by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (*G7 Chair's Statement*, March 17, 2022).

The G7 ministers of justice met in Berlin on November 29 with the Minister of Justice of Ukraine, the EU Commissioner for Justice, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine and the Prosecutor General of Germany. It was agreed “to coordinate the activities of investigative and prosecutorial bodies in order to avoid duplication” (*Press Statement...*, 2022).

On October 11, 2022, leaders of G7 countries met with President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy and pledged to hold President Putin and those responsible to account (*G7 Statement on Ukraine*, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates the intensity of G7 involvement in the conflict in Ukraine, which allows us to distinguish the following stages when considering the “Ukrainian issue” in the period of 2014–2022:

2014–2016 was an active phase of attempts to resolve the conflict diplomatically. Exclusion of Russia from its ranks after the annexation of the Crimea was a demonstration of its firm commitment to the G7 postulates. G7 held the initiative and support the Normandy Format of negotiations and the implementation of the *Minsk agreements*. Weak economic and personal sanctions were imposed as a political tool to put pressure on the conflict’s aggressor. The quality of the sanctions of that time was controversial.

2017–2021 was a stagnation phase. The issue of the war in eastern Ukraine has been mentioned less and less in G7 meetings and publications. During this period, we can find references regarding possible cooperation with Russia in various G7 publications. Donald Trump had a significant impact on G7 policy towards Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The Group continued to stand on the position of resolving the issue through the Normandy format, which had failed to produce results. Such delaying of the settlement only postponed the full-scale invasion, but as we learned later, it did not prevent it.

2022 can be perceived as an intensive phase of the involvement of the Group of Seven in the “Ukrainian issue,” provoked by a full-scale invasion of Russia. Since February 24, 2022, G7 has taken an extremely powerful approach to the policy of collegial assistance to Ukraine and diplomatic pressure on the aggressor. In 2022 G7 has proved to be an effective actor in successful strengthening of international efforts to support Ukraine, coordinating multi-vector aid and preventing the spread of the “Russian world” (“Russkij mir”).

The new speed of the Group’s response to the Russian threat in Ukraine is becoming a turning point in the trajectory of global politics and economics. The example of the eight-year unresolved Russian-Ukrainian conflict leading to its escalation in 2022 and sudden shift in the approach of G7 leaders, shows that local conflicts may pose an impact not only to regional, but also to global stability and there is a strong correlation between them.

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ABSTRACT

This article is aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the G7 policy towards Ukraine in the context of Russian invasion 2014–2022. The hypothesis formed and verified in this paper is that since the beginning of Russian expansion on Ukraine in 2014 the G7 members have called for a negotiated process and a political solution to the conflict, but it was hardly possible to quickly adopt and implement timely and adequately decisions to resolve the crisis in the region through the bonding of global and regional security mechanisms. Thus, a comfortable field for prolonging the conflict, which has developed into a full-scale war, was formed. The research methodology is based on systemic, historical, structural and political approaches to the study of the problem. Research methods are comparative analysis, content analysis, chronological and classification methods.

This study allows us to distinguish the stages of the G7 involvement in the “Ukrainian issue” in the period of 2014–2022. During these years, the group’s policy underwent three shifts in course, influenced in large part not only by the activities of Russia, but also by policy course changes of individual G7 members. The example of the nine-year unresolved local Russian-Ukrainian conflict shows that such crisis may pose a threat not only to regional, but also to global stability and there is a strong correlation between them.

Keywords: G7, Ukraine, Russia, Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Russian-Ukrainian war, global governance, local conflict, regional security

„KWESTIA UKRAIŃSKA” NA SZCZYTACH G7 W KONTEKŚCIE KONFLIKTU ROSYJSKO-UKRAIŃSKIEGO 2014–2022

STRESZCZENIE

Celem prezentowanego artykułu jest pogłębiona analiza polityki G7 wobec Ukrainy w kontekście rosyjskiej inwazji w latach 2014–2022. Hipoteza sformowana i zweryfikowana w pracy jest taka, że od początku rosyjskiej ekspansji na Ukrainę w 2014 roku członkowie G7 wzywali do procesu negocjacyjnego i politycznego rozwiązania konfliktu, ale praktycznie nie było możliwe szybkie przyjęcie i wdrożenie w odpowiednim czasie decyzji o rozwiązaniu kryzysu w regionie poprzez sprzęgnięcie globalnych i regionalnych mechanizmów bezpieczeństwa. W ten sposób powstało dogodne pole do przedłużania konfliktu, który przerodził się w pełnoskalową

wojnę. Metodologia badań opiera się na systemowych, historycznych, strukturalnych i politycznych podejściach do badania problemu. Metody badawcze to analiza porównawcza, analiza treści, metody chronologiczne i klasyfikacyjne.

Niniejsze opracowanie pozwala wyróżnić etapy zaangażowania G7 w „kwestię ukraińską” w okresie 2014–2022. W tych latach polityka grupy przeszła trzy zmiany kursu, na które wpływ miały nie tylko działania Rosji, ale i również zmiany w kierunkach politycznych poszczególnych członków G7. Przykład nierozwiązanego od dziesięciu lat lokalnego konfliktu rosyjsko-ukraińskiego pokazuje, że taki kryzys może stanowić zagrożenie nie tylko dla stabilności regionalnej, ale i globalnej oraz że istnieje między nimi istotna korelacja.

Słowa kluczowe: G7, Ukraina, Rosja, konflikt rosyjsko-ukraiński, wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska, globalne zarządzanie, lokalny konflikt, regionalne bezpieczeństwo