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**OPINIONS ON THE EVENTS IN EASTERN UKRAINE
IN 2014 AS AN INDICATOR OF THE GENERALISED
SOCIO-POLITICAL BELIEFS, POLISH-UKRAINIAN
COMPARISONS**

Introduction

Politicians in numerous countries are much interested in events happening in Ukraine in recent years, especially the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Crimea lasting since April 2014, they are predicting the course of events and their impact on the world. Russia's policy towards former Soviet republics has long been a matter of concern for observers, who perceive Russia's actions as a desire to subjugate the regions that it lost after 1990. Those who are not interested in politics have little knowledge about current events. Their knowledge comes primarily from popular media, where it is selective, overworked and does not give the full picture of the situation. Those who are involved in an event perceive it differently from those who do not take part in it. The residents of western Ukraine see the conflict in Crimea differently from the residents of the regions involved in the war; and their perspective is different from the perspective of Poles living in areas bordering with Ukraine, in turn, it is different from the perspective of people living nearby the western borders of Poland. Probably, the further from Crimea, and the more time passes since the beginning of the conflict, the less interested in the Crimean events societies are. The opinions are varied, but the reasons for these differences have different sources. This applies to all opinions held on various issues.

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In sociological studies opinions are usually considered to be definitional and/or inferential indicators of political beliefs, attitudes and affections, and also stereotypes and prejudices (Nowak 1973, p. 29). The article assumes that people with prejudices against Ukrainians and Ukraine as a state will be less opposed to the annexation of Crimea by Russia and more likely to assess actions taken by the Ukrainian side critically. Ukrainian students have not only greater knowledge concerning their own country, but also their opinions on the events occurring in the eastern Ukraine can be more rational and they are formulated on the basis of wider knowledge¹. In the case of Polish students, opinions about these events are rather a consequence of collective opinions and so-called collective consciousness, that is, opinions delivered by a circle of friends and acquaintances, family members, and teachers as well as opinions presented in the media, and they do not result from a fair, thorough historical-political knowledge². One personal attitude component, let's call it emotional, was analyzed in this article. A knowledge about Ukraine, or specific behaviors concerning Ukraine (e.g., signing petitions, participating in protests) were not a subject of the study. It was considered that opinions are in this case the indicator of other socio-political beliefs of students and may be associated with an individual's self-identification, a sense of hostility towards others and a sense of national identity.

Studies carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) confirmed the high degree of interest in the events among Polish society, however, it was lowering with the passage of time. This shows that a significant majority of Poles (over two thirds) feel a high sense of danger arising from the fear that the conflict in Ukraine could spread and threaten the security of Poland. Poles are worried about Russia's activities. They are worried about further events in Ukraine (the lack of predictability of the future is noticeable – almost every scenario seems to be possible), and the situation in other post-Soviet countries.

According to the CBOS data (CBOS research reports 2014a, 2014b,

¹The basis for understanding the concept of “collective consciousness” is how the term is understood by Emil Durkheim as “the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society” (see: Marshall 2004, p. 379).

²In accordance with the assumptions adopted by Stefan Nowak regarding the structure of an attitude, its components (behavioral, cognitive and affective or evaluative-emotional) can take different values. “Therefore, the attitude becomes a three-dimensional typological construct, arranging a three-dimensional space in which we can organize people's attitudes towards a certain subject matter” (Nowak, 1973, p. 29). The subject matter of attitudes in this article are the events in eastern Ukraine in 2014. Only the opinions on these events were studied, which means analyzing one, emotional component of personal attitudes.

2014c, 2016) interest in the situation in Ukraine in 2015, when the survey was carried out among students of Poland (Zielona Góra) and Ukraine (Kharkiv, Lutsk) was high and it is quite likely that even those students who are not interested in politics, heard comments on it from their families, friends, or in the media and have opinions on these events. In lubuskie voivodeship the situation in Ukraine may raise particular emotions, taking into account the fact that students of the University of Zielona Góra are mostly local residents. This means that some of them may be the descendants of those who were relocated from Ukraine and Belarus after the World War II. Stories told by their grandparents about the life of Poles in Ukraine, about their relations with the Ukrainians, about genocide in Volhynia and then their long journey to western Poland facilitated the formation of prejudices and negative stereotypes rather than positive connotations. This, in turn, may affect attitudes towards current events in Ukraine, even though it has been over 70 years since the World War 2.

In contrast, the students of Ukrainian universities (Kharkiv and Lutsk), participating in the study in 2015 declared to be of Ukrainian nationality, although some could have Russian ancestors. Kharkiv is a city located near the border with Russia. In the days of the Soviet Union it was one of the largest towns in the region, which meant it used to be under a big influence of the Soviet authorities, and it used to have a large Russian-speaking population. Lutsk is a city in western Ukraine, located near the border with Poland. Its history is closely related to the history of this country. In this publication we will not differentiate the two groups of Ukrainian students (from Kharkiv and Lutsk), because, as our analysis demonstrated, there are no significant differences between the characteristics of their consciousness and behavior, including their values. This, in our opinion, somewhat denies the known S.F. Huntington's thesis about the crisis of values in Ukraine. The attitudes of Ukrainian students towards current events may also be a consequence of the ambiguous attitude to the contemporary Russia. The size of the article does not allow for the in-depth historical and political analysis of the processes taking place in Ukraine and of those occurring in lubuskie voivodeship since the end of World War 2.

The primary purpose of the article is a representation of the differences in the opinions of the Polish and Ukrainian students on the events occurring in the eastern Ukraine since April 2014. Sociological survey, which is part of the project entitled "Academic Youth in Poland and Ukraine in the times of distrust and threats to civilization. International comparative studies" became the basis for the verification of the hypothesis of the relationship between opinions on the current political events and presented generalized

socio-political attitudes³.

Part one of the article outlines the theoretical context which gave inspiration to the formulation of the research questions and to the adoption of certain assumptions. Part two discusses selected methodological issues, describes variables and presents the results, which will be analysed. Two further parts contain statistical analyses: regression analysis and cluster analysis. The final part contains conclusions, a summary and comments.

Youth in cultural change. Theoretical inspirations

Many researchers of youth believe that youth is a litmus test of phenomena and processes occurring in a society, and the behaviour and beliefs of young people say a lot about adults and to some extent they make it possible to predict the nature of future society. According to Karl Mannheim's concept, in the youth phase of a given generation (between 19-24 years of age) its identity is constituted, and its collective habitus and way of experiencing reality are formed (Mannheim 1944, 1952, 1992/1993). This means that identity of generation is shaped by relations between older generations and the generation that is "entering" the social stage; It determines the community of attitudes towards social events. As a result of experiencing the same events in the formative stage of life, which is early adulthood, a habitual conformity of views and attitudes is born. Jürgen Habermas describes the critical potential of young people, seeing the power of youth in it (1970, 1999). He is of the opinion that a critical overview of the authorities and state institutions triggers activity and initiates a new view of reality. In principle the attitudes of young people towards current events differ from the attitudes of adults. Attitudes belong to the worldview of the individual as its elements; if a community awareness is formed, a particular worldview within one generation will become dominant and will determine the character of the given generation (Zielińska 2010, 2015).

The generation concept is worth mentioning here, because generation is not only a product of its time, as it contains the traits of previous generations and, above all, it creates a common meta-attitude towards reality as a counterpoint to the world of adults and older generations. Dilthey introduced a classic definition of a generation to sociology. It includes three elements: proximity of time, common destiny, which means similar historical, life and intellectual experiences, and spiritual likeness. Jerzy Mikułowski-Pomorski (1968, pp. 69-70) defines the generation as a category of peers who while growing up mentally have experienced certain historical events

³More information from this survey are presented in Maria Zielińska and Dorota Szaban (2016).

or have gone through similar conditions that objectively shaped their life. These common formation factors cause the community of attitudes and values.

Young people are an important part of the social structure, and university students are an important part of a group of youngsters. The fact that they go to university makes them different from other people in their age group, because in the future they may constitute part of intellectual and managerial elites, occupy higher positions, work as managers, create culture, educate new generations. It is expected that elites should generally have more expertise, competencies, skills, but also more general knowledge of the world. Being interested in current social, cultural and political events is connected with intellectual activity. Many sociological studies show that young people are not interested in politics and current events, nor they are interested in political activity through membership in political parties. If young people organize demonstrations or take part in them it is primarily because their interests are threatened (for example ACTA) or demonstrations concern directly young people.

Students are expected to present certain behaviour and attitudes. They are often a leaven and bond-forming binder of their generation who should be role models for others. At the same time, Krystyna Szafraniec claims, contemporary 19-year-olds (and hence university students) *“are often young people, who do not know modern recent history, are politically naive, but also ruthless – they will show no feeling towards authorities that cannot solve their problems. Understanding some things is connected with leniency that they no longer possess. Pragmatism with which they live is incredible and it kills their motivation and reflex of looking at the world with some reflection.”* (Szafraniec 2015, p. 15)

Patriotic attitudes (largely based on historical memory) are a function of socio-political events, which means that they are not constant but subjected to revitalisation under certain conditions. The threat of war fosters patriotic attitudes. It is possible that political events that have occurred in the last few years in Ukraine have shaped the political generation (Kosela 1999), who is living at the risk of war. The armed conflict in Crimea has already caused hundreds of deaths and it continues to kill. Definitely living in these conditions affects certain attitudes towards consent to the escalation of armed conflicts. The closer to the area where the conflict occurs, the greater the sense of threat and the greater the need for peace. Attitudes towards foreign intervention of third parties may be a consequence of a more realistic assessment of the current situation rather than well-established stereotypes and prejudices.

The socio-political situation in Poland is different. Polish young people learn about the situation in eastern Ukraine primarily from the media. Those more interested possibly use the Internet and other sources of knowledge. The media in Poland showed the events in Crimea in a particular form, with comments, often in the context of the involvement of Polish authorities in resolving the conflict. Even if young people perceive the conflict in Ukraine as a threat to Poland, the further from the eastern border of Poland they live, the less it is perceived as the real one.

Here, two significant interpreters of postmodernity should be mentioned: Ronald Inglehart (1995, 2005, Inglehart, Baker 2000) and Ulrich Beck (2002, 2012), as their concepts were the foundation of the conceptualization of the Polish-Ukrainian project. The former described the relations between the development of civilization and cultural change, the latter emphasised significant phenomena that accompany the changes in postmodern societies. Poland and Ukraine, just like other post-socialist countries, have been going through significant cultural changes. When in 2004 Poland joined the European Union it entered the path of accelerated civilizational development. Ukraine still aspires to be a member state of the EU. Inglehart listed three basic phases of social changes:

- Phase 1 – civilizational progress in the socio-economic sphere.
- Phase 2 – cultural transformation in attitudes and values.
- Phase 3 – institutional change, synonymous with democratization.

Ulrich Beck drew attention to the phenomena that accompany social change. These include: (1) a shift toward modernization; (2) multitude of risks in a society of risk, (3) change within the phase of “youth”, (4) increasing individualization and (5) increasing unpredictability of the course of social biographies.

In Poland, the economic indicators clearly reveal a large civilizational leap after 1990, and later after 2004, since the Orange Revolution Ukraine has not been able to produce leaders who would help the state to join the EU. Currently, Ukraine torn by war is not able to raise the standard of living or the economic level of the country, but still tries to apply for the EU membership. After 1989 changes in values towards cultural change began in Poland and the process of democratization occurred, which, however, may be suspended after the victory of the conservative party in 2015, which is not friendly to the European Union. Without going into details of the socio-political situations in both countries one can easily notice that the

differences are significant, which can affect the attitude of the young generation towards various social issues. It is possible that young Ukrainians are likely to be more pro-European, open, tolerant and peace-oriented than young Poles. Experiencing the closeness of war, fear of the escalation of military actions and at the same time knowing about the standard of living and relative peace in European countries may strengthen these attitudes. Current Polish university students lived their childhood and early youth in a sense of security, increasing prosperity and new opportunities arising from open borders in Europe. At the same time the current government's approval of nationalist demonstrations, xenophobia and Euroscepticism imply the growing radicalism of Polish youth.

The above briefly presented theoretical concepts concerning cultural, technological, organizational changes of postmodern society, as well as the concepts of youth and generations became the basis for a general assumption that differences in the attitudes of Polish and Ukrainian students towards events taking place in eastern Ukraine result from differences in the civilizational development of the country, functioning at a different stage of cultural change (defined by Inglehart), differences in the social situation of Poland and Ukraine (stabilization vs armed conflict and the threat of war). A more specific assumption was also accepted that the direct experience of the threat of war may be a factor deciding about students' opinions on the intervention of other countries in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict.

What is common for the surveyed communities is their phase of life – late socialization / early adulthood. Going through this phase of life in postmodern society means a lot of similarities of universal character; going through this phase in countries at different levels of development may cause differences in the perception of social phenomena. Both communities have post-communist past, which, however, may be perceived by Ukrainian students differently from Polish youth.

Within the research project⁴ students of Polish and Ukrainian univer-

⁴A series of questions in the Polish-Ukrainian survey conducted within the project “*Academic youth in Poland and Ukraine in times of distrust and threats to civilisation. Comparative studies between countries*” was devoted to study the opinion of students on the current political situation in Ukraine. The main context was the pro-Russian separatist movement in eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. This part of the survey consisted of six complex questions concerning the respondents' opinions about the importance of the events in Ukraine for the security of neighbouring countries, Europe and the world, and the attitude of the international community toward the situation in Ukraine. The young people were also asked to indicate the sources of their knowledge about the events in Ukraine and their own assumptions on the development of Ukrainian-Russian relations and possible scenarios of further events in eastern Ukraine.

sities were asked about their opinions on the events in eastern Ukraine, assuming that their responses in this regard would be indicators of their attitudes towards Ukraine as a state and as a nation.

Basic methodological assumptions and presentation of research results

A few comments on the study. Characteristics of the population

417 students from the University of Zielona Góra and 797 students of three universities in Kharkiv (Karazin Kharkiv National University, Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University and National Technical University in Lutsk) participated in the study. The study was conducted using the audit questionnaire in spring 2015 (in April – May). The field phase of the study was preceded by several months of preparing conceptualisation and the research tool was subjected to several linguistic verifications to meet the conditions of methodological equivalence. Individuals for the study were drawn from the group of third year students of undergraduate studies. This method of selecting individuals for the study allows the authors to draw conclusions at the error of the estimate of $\pm 4\%$ and the confidence level of 95%. The procedure for selecting individuals for the study started from defining the size of the population. The collected data contained information about the courses the students were doing, the number of groups and the number of students in the groups. In this way the size of the population was determined. The next step was to calculate the sample size according to the accepted assumption concerning the confidence level and the error of the estimate. The sample was varied in terms of socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, place of residence, level of affluence.

Research questions and assumptions

For the purposes of this article, it was initially assumed that the opinions of students about the interference of foreign parties (the actions of other states and international organizations) in the Crimean conflict are a component of generalized attitude towards Ukraine (as a state and a nation), and they are an indicator of other socio-political beliefs indicating a sense of civic identity, a sense of identification with one's own country and with Europe and a sense of hostility towards the members of other nationalities.

The university students from the University of Zielona Góra and three Kharkiv universities who took part in the sociological research are in the same phase of life: early adulthood (they are all about 21 years old). During this period of life an individual has fairly established attitudes towards

different social and political issues⁵. In this stage of life, regardless of living conditions and the level of the country's development, some phenomena are universal. Young people become independent from their parents, they start further education or start their professional career. They enter into partnerships, they experiment with social roles. In this regard, Ukrainian and Polish students showed a strong resemblance. In general terms student life is very similar at any latitudes. During this time young people perform the roles of students: they acquire knowledge and skills, they become involved in activities which they find important for their careers, they take examinations, but also they make friends and participate in social and cultural life.

At the time of the research the socio-political situation in Poland and Ukraine was significantly different and, according to the accepted assumption, it significantly affected the students' attitudes towards the involvement of other countries and international organizations in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian students in Kharkiv experience the effects of war every day and they fear that armed activities will be moved to the west. Every day they find out about victims, they see refugees. Help from other countries and international organizations in the form of weapon supplies, troops and even purposeful financial assistance would only intensify the conflict rather than stop it. However, people living in other countries, including Poland, perceive this situation differently. The CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre) reports revealed Poles feared that the conflict in Ukraine could spread to other European countries. Poland as a country bordering directly with Ukraine would be, in the opinion of many Poles, the most exposed to the conflict. Therefore, one could expect that Poles, and therefore Zielona Góra students would be interested in stopping armed actions, which they believe could be achieved by offering help to Ukraine in the form of weapon supplies or NATO troops sent to Ukraine UkraECL.

In order to verify the thesis about the relationship between opinions on events in eastern Ukraine and beliefs concerning the self-identification, state identity, xenophobia and nationalism, a regression model was created in which opinions on the interference of other states and international organizations in the armed conflict in Ukraine were the explained (subsidiary)

⁵Attitudes can even vary within life, but in line with the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, Passeron1990), Klaus Hurrelmann (1994), Martin Kohli (1980) and many other researchers of the course of life where the primary habitus is relatively stable. The theoretical basis for the formation of attitudes within the individual's life was also described in the articles by Hanna Malewska, Antonina Kłosowska, Irena Nowakowa, Julia Sowa, Stanisław Mika and Janusz Reykowski in the book edited by Stefan Nowak (1973).

variable. As a result of factor analysis a variable was extracted which, in further analysis, is called the support for interference of foreign parties. The independent (explanatory) variables are: sex, pride of being Polish/Ukrainian, respect for state symbols, sense of hostility towards people of other nationalities, the feeling of being a citizen of a state, the feeling of being European. The components of the second part of the regression equation in the case of the presented analyses, are the beliefs that were considered as components of the socio-political awareness. The pride of being a citizen of own's country and respect for state symbols (flag, emblem, anthem) are components of a national identity; hostility towards representatives of other nationalities is a manifestation of nationalism and xenophobia; a sense of being European and/or a world citizen can be considered as indicators of tolerance toward others, a support for the idea of multiculturalism and self-identification.

Description of empirical material – Polish-Ukrainian comparison

This section presents selected results of empirical research, which will be used to test the main hypothesis of the existence of the relation between support for the escalation of armed actions in Ukraine and the general worldview. The question containing answers indicating the proposals of assistance to Ukraine was the basis for constructing the explained variable. The regression model of support for the escalation of armed actions in Ukraine includes the following independent variables: gender, pride in being Polish / Ukrainian, respect for state symbols (as the components of the state identity), the feeling of hostility towards people of other nationalities (the components of the nationalist identity), the feeling of being a citizen of the state, a sense of being European (components of self-identification). According to the theory of R. Inglehart cultural change and modernization progress are followed by change in these values. This means that with the development of civilization and radical cultural change, emphasis on the quality of life and self-expression increases, and the attachment to traditional political, religious, moral and social norms decreases, fundamental values shift from materialism to post materialism.

World news can be found in a variety of sources. For young people today the Internet is the main medium of information. Definitely they use television or the press less often. As Figure 1 shows both students from Zielona Góra and Kharkiv learned about the events in eastern Ukraine from, respectively, Polish and Ukrainian mass media. Only every fifth student from Kharkiv acquired this knowledge from the Internet, compared to 60% of Zielona Góra students. It should be noted that talks to friends and family were an important source of knowledge about the Ukrainian events

for Polish students (64.4%). Every fifth student, regardless of the country they live in, used the western media. The data show that the knowledge of Zielona Góra students about the events in Crimea is based primarily on the comments of politicians and journalists, though the use of the Internet indicates that they search for more objectified knowledge.

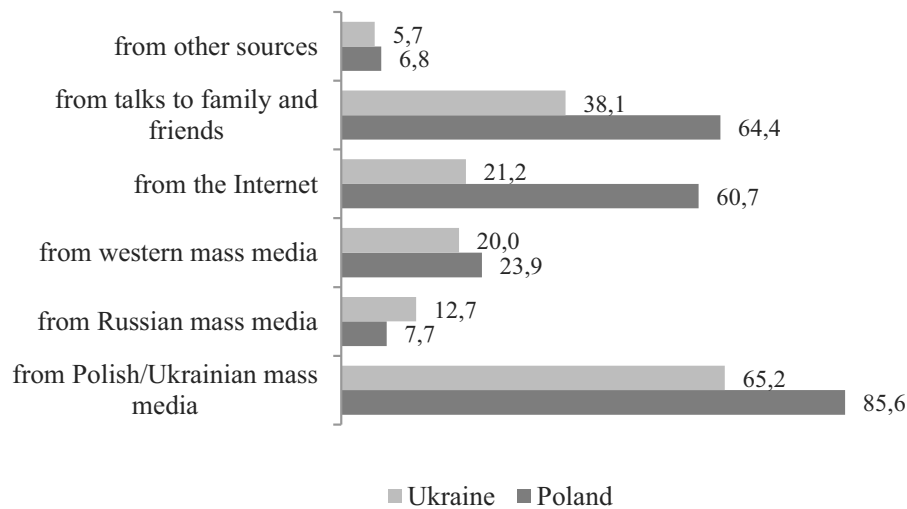


Figure 1. Sources of knowledge about the events in Ukraine among Polish and Ukrainian students (%).

Source: authors' own work.

Students' opinions about possible methods of limiting military operations in eastern Ukraine

The question about possible assistance in resolving the conflict in Ukraine was considered the index question that reveals the generalized attitude of Polish respondents to Ukraine as well as prejudice and resentment in this regard. It has already been explained in the sections above.

Figure 2 shows that the opinions of Polish and Ukrainian students about possible actions are highly diverse. The vast majority of Polish students supports all types of assistance, including financial and military support as well as stricter sanctions against Russia. Ukrainian students usually opted for easing economic sanctions imposed on Russia. Probably their opinions stem from the fear of escalation of military actions resulting from the intervention of other countries and international organizations. Polish students look at the events in eastern Ukraine through the prism of the risk of spreading the conflict into the Polish territory and it is probably the reason why

they support any assistance to end the Ukrainian-Russian conflict.



Figure 2. Students' opinions about possible actions towards Ukraine and Russia (in %).

The figure includes only the following answers: *definitely yes + probably yes*.

Source: authors' own work.

After the factor analysis (see Table 1) the number of indicators within the variable was reduced, which allowed for the creation of a single variable that was used as an explained (dependent) variable in the regression equation. Table 1 shows that all the factor loadings obtained high value, which means that their share in the structure of the variable is statistically significant and internally consistent.

Table 1

Factor analysis of the question "In the current situation, the international community should..."

Question	Poland	Ukraine
In the current situation, the international community should:		
provide financial assistance to Ukraine	0.611	0.557
put diplomatic pressure on Russia	0.692	0.869
tighten economic sanctions against Russia	0.741	0.882
arm the Ukrainian army, sell weapons and military equipment to the Ukrainian army	0.685	0.869
send troops to Ukraine	0.727	0.687

Source: authors' own work.

The new variable “*Support for the escalation of military actions*” has three dimensions, where the high level of support means that all factors that fall within the variable were indicated as strictly necessary; moderate support means that the respondents chose the middle value of the variable; low support means that they selected the lowest values of the variable (they answered “definitely not”, which means lack of consent to the intervention of other parties). Numbers for the three dimensions are shown in Figure 3. These results clearly show that most Ukrainian students are strongly against taking actions that might intensify the conflict and lead to an escalation of military actions on both sides. Compared to the Ukrainian students, more Polish students pointed to the need for taking all possible actions.

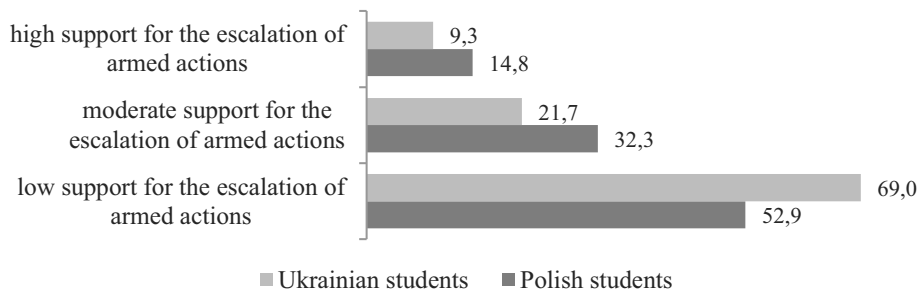


Figure 3. Support for the escalation of military actions in Ukraine among Polish and Ukrainian students (in %).

Source: authors' own work.

The following variables require a short description due to their presence in the regression model:

1. A feeling of hostility towards members of other nationalities
2. State identity
3. Self-identification.

The feeling of hostility towards members of other nationalities is a manifestation of nationalism and chauvinism. Table 2 shows that the feeling of hostility towards members of other nationalities among Ukrainian students occurs twice as often as among Polish students. However, the feeling of hostility towards members of other nationalities at a medium level (hostility felt sometimes) occurs much often (twice as often) among Polish students. It is quite difficult to interpret this result. But it should be mentioned that

Ukrainian students did not select Poles as those to whom they felt hostility, however, Polish students relatively often mentioned Ukrainians as the nation towards which they felt hostile⁶. The feeling of hostility towards Ukrainians is probably a consequence of family stories, in which the memory of Ukrainian nationalists in World War 2, responsible for the genocide on the Polish population living in Ukraine, is still alive and strongly present.

The study of self-identification included two identifications: (1) pride in being a citizen of Poland / Ukraine, (2) a sense of deep respect for state symbols. The numerical values for these two indicators are comparable, though a high level of pride in being a citizen of Poland appeared slightly more often among Zielona Góra students.

Moreover, the study of self-identification also included two identities: (1) the feeling of being a citizen of Poland / Ukraine, (2) the feeling of being European. A high level of identification with their own country and Europe occurred much more often among Polish students than the Ukrainian respondents. For both groups the identification with their own country is more important than with Europe.

Table 2

Numerical values of independent variables in the regression model (see Table 3)

	Polish students	Ukrainian students
Feeling of hostility towards members of other nationalities (a manifestation of nationalism and chauvinism):		
<i>Often</i>	5.5	11.7
<i>Sometimes</i>	4.3	23.9
<i>Seldom</i>	5.5	41.4
The feeling of being a citizen of Poland / Ukraine (responses: <i>definitely yes + mostly yes</i>)	91.3	65.1
The feeling of being European (responses: <i>definitely yes + mostly yes</i>)	64.9	44.1
Pride in being a citizen of Poland / Ukraine (responses 6 + 7 points on 7-point scale, where 7 means the highest level, 1 means the lowest level)	74.4	63.2
Feeling deep respect for the state symbols, anthem, flag (responses 6 + 7 points on 7-point scale, where 7 means the highest level, 1 means the lowest level)	65.1	65.2

Source: authors' own work.

⁶The survey contained the question: "Do you feel hostility towards people of other nationalities? If so, which ones?"

Support for the escalation of military actions in Ukraine as an indicator of socio-political beliefs

On the basis of the data presented in Table 3 it can be cautiously concluded that the hypothesis of a strong relation between opinions on current events in the eastern Ukraine and the generalized beliefs have been confirmed. The regression model constructed for the data from the Ukrainian part of the study is definitely more suited for the data from the Polish part of the study than the corresponding model. There is no reason to reject the hypothesis. However, farther analysis would be needed to verify the results achieved here, but after the preliminary analysis it can be concluded that in the case of students from Kharkiv their opinions about the intervention of foreign forces are affected by their assessment of the current situation and fear of escalation of the conflict. In the case of students from Zielona Góra prejudices and nationalist elements were the elements that affected their opinions.

In the case of Polish students distortion of the model may have caused the beliefs and opinions about the situation in eastern Ukraine, internalized in the socialization process, gained from media and heard in the own social environment. Socio-political awareness of an individual, which is shaped in the process of socialization, education, family influence and activities of the whole social environment includes a number of beliefs, more or less stable attitudes towards a variety of social issues, as well as prejudices and stereotypes. In the case of formulating opinions about current events, the elements of consciousness, that an individual uses to its expression are activated.

When Polish and Ukrainian students were asked about their attitudes towards the events taking place in eastern Ukraine in 2014 they based their opinions on the information found in various types of media, or while talking to family and friends. At the same time, other contents which have shaped the worldview of the individual also appear.

The regression analysis shows that in the case of Ukrainian students there is a linear relation between the lack of support for the intervention of other countries and international organizations and elements of the state identity, self-identification and the feeling of hostility towards representatives of other nationalities.

Those who feel pride in being a citizen of Ukraine, respect national symbols, and identify strongly with their country and with Europe do not support actions that might intensify the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine and cause its expansion to the west. This relation reflects the fact that the Ukrainian students have already experienced a situation of war and their opinions are the result of a more realistic assessment of the situation.

It is highly probable that the Polish students formulate their opinions based on the previously attained knowledge, prejudices and stereotypes. Their knowledge about Ukraine and the events in eastern Ukraine is not in-depth or reliable, they acquired it from the Internet or other media, that generally provide rather comments and processed information. The events taking place thousands of kilometres from the place of residence and the place of living are rather abstract. They have become the topic of conversation because they appeared in the media.

Table 3

Multifactorial regression model for the variable "Support for the escalation of armed actions in Ukraine"

Model	Polish students ($R^2 = 0.079$)			Ukrainian students ($R^2 = 0.239$)		
	Non-stand-ardized coefficients	Stand-ardized coefficients	Signi-ficance	Non-stand-ardized coefficients	Stand-ardized coefficients	Signi-ficance
	B	Beta		B	Beta	
(Constant)	2.499		0.000	2.939		0.000
R. feels proud of being a citizen of Poland / Ukraine to a great extent	-0.063*	-0.0117	0.039	-0.087**	-0.219	0.000
R. respects the national symbols Poland / Ukraine: the anthem, flag, emblem, etc to a great extent	0.080**	0.137	0.015	-0.029	-0.072	0.126
R. identifies with their country to a great extent	0.004	0.008	0.869	-0.0108**	-0.144	0.001
R. identifies with Europe to a great extent	-0.059*	-0.087	0.086	-0.105**	-0.200	0.000
R. often feels hostility towards people of other nationalities	-0.302**	-0.159	0.001	-0.027	-0.018	0.944
Gender 1 - Male 2 - Female	-0.157*	-0.104	0.037	-0.003	-0.070	0.591

Source: authors' own work.

Factor determinance of student's' valuations of the situation in Ukraine development perspectives

Analyzing the attitude of Ukrainian and Polish students to the current situation in Ukraine and possible options for its further development, we have attempted to identify factors that contribute to a particular position of our respondents with regard to the "Ukrainian question". The position of students is most clearly revealed in their responses on the question about the most likely scenario of Ukrainian situation development in the near future, because they, as we believe, reflect not only the assessment of the prospects of the situation in the country resolving, but also its actual state. Six of these scenarios were presented in our study questionnaire:

- the first – «Ukraine allows the autonomy of the territories, which are now controlled by separatists, but will gain control over them»;
- the second – «Ukraine returns the control over the eastern territory of the country, but the Crimea will remain outside»;
- the third – «Ukraine finally loses the territory controlled by separatists, but the rest of Ukraine will retain independence»;
- the fourth – «Ukraine regains all the lost territories»;
- the fifth – «Ukraine loses control over several areas, but will retain its independence from Russia in limited boundaries»;
- the sixth – «Russia is likely to subdue the whole Ukraine».

As evidenced by our findings, the first scenario is considered the most realistic by 12.7 % of the students surveyed in Ukraine and 11.2 % of our Polish respondents; the second – by 24.2 % and 13.1 %, respectively; the third – by 18.9 % and 17.5 %, respectively; the fourth – 15.9 % and 2.9 %, respectively; the fifth – by 8.8 % and 10.2 %, respectively; the sixth – by 2.9 % and 14.8 %, respectively. 16.6 % of Ukrainian students and 30.3 % of their Polish "colleagues" could not give a definite answer to this question (see. Fig. 4). The latter is quite natural, as the Polish students are not included directly in the situation, which possible development they were asked to identify.

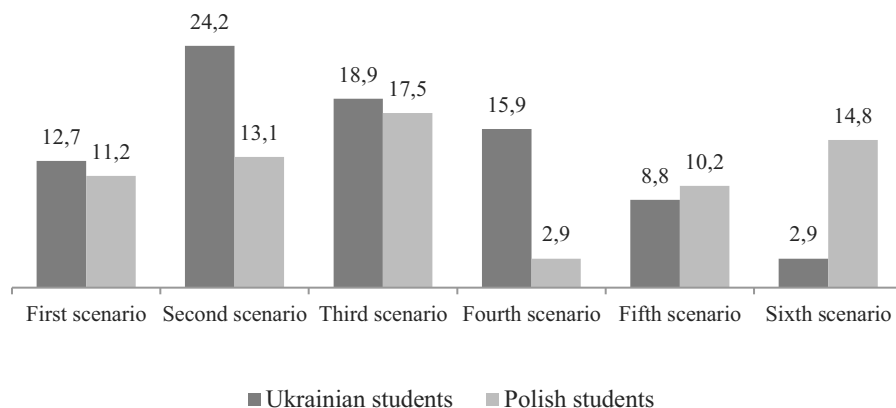


Figure 4. Ideas of Ukrainian and Polish students of the perspectives of development of Ukraine (in %).
Source: authors' own work.

As the answers to this question were alternatives, we decided to select in both groups of respondents six subgroups that differ in their attitude to the events in Ukraine, and place them on the “optimism-pessimism” axis.

We have nominated the “absolute optimists” the subgroup of students (in both arrays), who believe that Ukraine will regain all the lost territories. We have named two subgroups the “moderate optimists” as they have chosen the second and fifth scenario of change in Ukraine. The “Absolutely pessimistic” was called a subgroup of students who believe that Ukraine will be conquered by Russia, and those supporting the first and the third scenarios were called the “moderate pessimists”. Thus, in each array, we have identified three subgroups of students, perceiving Ukraine’s future in an optimistic and pessimistic way.

It turned out, that there are more “optimists” among Ukrainian students (almost 49%) and more “pessimists” among the Polish (43.5%). Accordingly, the cumulative percentage of “pessimists” among Ukrainian students amounted to 34%, and “optimists” among Polish students – 26.2%.

As it was shown by the correlation analysis, the results of which are presented below, a higher level of optimism of Ukrainian students in their ideas about the future of their country is linked to their patriotism, willingness to defend the independence and integrity of their homeland, its freedom.

Let us turn to a more detailed analysis of certain objective and subjective characteristics of selected respondents groups.

As Ukrainian and Polish versions of our research tools (the “Student’s Questionnaire”) were somewhat different, we have carried out the analysis

for each array separately. The only exceptions are some issues on which example it was possible to make a comparison. These are the financial situation of students in selected groups, their political and ideological preferences, social and territorial identification. These are issues we will begin our analysis from.

Speaking of such an objective characterization of the analyzed groups as the respondents financial situation, it turned out (see Table 4), that among students prospecting scenario of Ukrainian development pessimistically, there is more pauper (those to whom money is not enough even for the most necessary products) and poor (in whose family the entire salary is spent on the purchasing of food and needed inexpensive items) than in the “optimists” groups. The most striking example is a group of Ukrainian “absolute pessimists”, among which more than half (52.4%) present low-income layers of the population.

This link between the financial situation and the future of Ukraine assessment can be explained by a higher level of optimism among people wealthy enough in comparison with the poor. With regard to the subjective characteristics such as students’ political and ideological preferences, the correlation analysis confirmed one of the hypothesis of our study on the relationship between a pessimistic assessment of the future of Ukraine and the leftist views of the respondents. Thus, among the Ukrainian “absolute pessimists” those who profess communist ideology are met 6 times more than among the “absolute optimists” (15% vs. 2.5%) (see Table 5).

In respect that our analysis of the received data is so far preliminary, we will in the future analyze the link between optimistic / pessimistic students’ vision of the situation in Ukraine and their political and ideological preferences in more depth.

Analyzing the relation between the socio-territorial identity and ideas of students about the future of Ukraine, we found that the Ukrainian students, which are characterized by a higher level of civic, ethnic and European identity, have a higher level of optimism in the assessments of the country development prospects. Among the Ukrainian students who identify themselves with the Soviet human, “pessimistic” (especially “absolute pessimists”) are relatively more frequent.

Table 4

The financial condition of students, imagining further events in Ukraine differently (% to respondents)

The family financial condition	The students' ideas of further development of Ukraine															
	The first scenario		The second scenario		The third scenario		The fourth scenario		The fifth scenario		The sixth scenario		It is hard to answer		Total	
	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P
Money is not enough even for the most essential products	3.3	11.4	0.6	5.7	1.5	2.8	3.3	-	5.0	4.9	9.5	-	1.7	1.6	2.4	3.5
All salary is spent on food and the necessary in expensive things purchasing	16.5	6.8	11.6	9.5	24.1	9.9	11.8	8.4	21.7	4.9	42.9	11.7	25.6	6.6	18.7	8.2
In general, there is enough money, but the purchasing of durable goods (a TV, a refrigerator) is difficult	29.7	25.0	43.6	35.8	28.6	38.0	37.8	33.3	30.0	41.5	28.6	41.6	35.0	41.0	35.0	38.0
Live in prosperity, but are unable to get some expensive items (a car or apartment)	49.5	43.2	38.4	39.6	38.3	38.0	39.5	33.3	38.3	31.7	9.5	31.7	32.6	41.0	38.1	38.0
Are able to get almost anything wanted	1.0	13.6	5.8	9.4	7.5	11.3	7.6	25.0	5.0	17.0	9.5	15.0	5.1	9.8	5.8	12.3

U – Ukraine, P – Poland

Source: authors' own work.

Table 5
The political and ideological preferences of Ukrainian and Polish students, who are imagining development of Ukraine differently (% to respondents)

The political and ideological trends	The students' ideas of further development of Ukraine														Total	
	The first scenario		The second scenario		The third scenario		The fourth scenario		The fifth scenario		The sixth scenario		It is hard to answer		Total	
	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P	U	P
Communist	1.1	2.2	-	-	3.1	-	2.5	-	8.6	-	15.0	-	5.2	-	3.1	0.2
Socialist	4.3	2.2	1.7	3.8	3.1	2.8	3.4	16.7	5.2	2.4	-	8.3	7.8	0.8	3.8	2.2
Social-democratic	12.9	-	17.4	11.3	11.5	12.5	13.4	16.7	8.6	9.8	15.0	11.7	12.1	4.1	13.4	7.7
Liberal	18.3	17.8	16.3	26.4	26.0	23.6	11.8	33.3	8.6	9.8	10.0	21.7	6.9	9.9	15.2	16.3
National-democratic	28.0	26.7	21.5	17.0	22.9	15.3	30.3	16.7	19.0	22.0	-	16.7	8.6	14.0	4.2	18.1
Ecological	11.8	6.7	9.9	3.8	6.9	4.2	5.0	8.3	1.7	2.4	5.0	-	8.6	4.1	7.8	6.2
Radical nationalist	5.4	-	5.8	-	3.1	1.4	5.0	-	1.7	-	5.0	21.7	2.6	0.8	4.3	0.5
Christian democratic	6.5	20.0	12.2	13.2	5.2	16.6	12.6	-	6.9	19.5	15.0	3.2	6.9	18.2	9.0	17.6
Other (which concretely)	1.0	4.4	1.2	3.8	5.2	1.4	1.7	-	13.8	4.9	5.0	16.7	6.0	3.5	3.9	3.2
It is hard to answer	10.7	20.0	14.0	20.7	13.0	22.2	14.3	8.3	25.9	29.2	30.0	-	35.3	44.6	18.3	22.0

U – Ukraine, P – Poland

Source: authors' own work.

As for the Polish students, those who are showing the highest level of civil identification, in their assessments of the future of Ukraine demonstrated the highest level of pessimism. In our view, this can be explained by the fact that Polish students regard the pessimistic scenario of events in Ukraine the serious threat to their own country, especially a scenario in which Ukraine is conquered by Russia. Polish students-“optimists” believe that to prevent the most pessimistic options for the future of Ukraine the international community should carry out a more serious financial support of Ukraine and provide a more effective pressure on Russia to strengthen economic sanctions against the country. At the same time Polish students-“pessimists”, on the one hand, frequently articulate the need for the Ukrainian army rearmament and selling it military equipment, on the other – they say that it is not necessary to intervene in the determination of the Ukrainian borders or that economic sanctions against Russia could be eased.

Now let us turn to a more detailed analysis of certain characteristics of the Ukrainian students – the “optimists” and “pessimists”. It is quite logical that the vast majority of “optimists” (90%) are proud that they are citizens of Ukraine. They perceive it as their homeland, are eager to work for its benefit, associated with it their fate, deeply respect the state symbols of Ukraine and are ready to defend it in case of threat to its sovereignty and integrity. Among the “pessimists” such attitude towards Ukraine characterizes less than the half of the respondents.

In this context, we should emphasize that among Ukrainian students who wish to obtain citizenship of another country (in the whole sample this group comes to 27.5%), 44.4% supported the optimistic scenarios for the development of Ukraine, 38.7% – the pessimistic scenarios, 16.9% could not give a definite answer. Among those who do not want to change his citizenship (this group amounted to 50.5%), there were 53.7% of “optimists”, 31.1% of “pessimists” and 15.2% of undecided. It should be emphasized that there is almost 2.5 times more of those who would like to obtain citizenship of another country among the “pessimists”, than among the “optimists” (about 72% and 30%, respectively).

Responding to a question about how to stay in the border region impact on civil and patriotic feelings of the people, student-“optimists” often talked about how it enhances their patriotic sentiments, student-“pessimists” were closer to a neutral assessment of this factor.

It is interesting to analyze the relationship between the potential protest activity of Ukrainian students and their ideas about the future of their country. As evidenced by the materials of our study, optimism is more inherent to students with the highest level of protest activity (“actively protested

against the actions of the authorities would be causing the disturbance, even if it threatens their own security”) (one third). Among those who said that “rallies, demonstrations and pickets increase tension in society and nothing really changes”, it is more people with a higher level of pessimism.

Thus, our analysis revealed the differences, sometimes quite substantial, in the estimates by Ukrainian and Polish students of different scenarios of the situation development in Ukraine. It is conditioned by both objective and subjective factors, including, current political and economic situation in these countries.

Conclusions

The primary purpose of the article was to present the differences in the opinions of the Polish and Ukrainian students about political events in eastern Ukraine in 2014. It is also an attempt to explain the causes of the observed differences. The subject of the analysis were opinions about potential actions and interference of other countries and world organizations in Ukraine. The exposed differences in the opinions of Polish and Ukrainian students primarily derive from the degree of being involved in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. For the Polish students the events are rather abstract, they do not concern them and their close friends and family. For the Ukrainian students it is their direct experience. Their and their families' lives depend on how the situation develops and it may completely change at any time, including the need to evacuate. It can be assumed that if a similar situation occurred in Poland, students would most probably perceive a possibility of foreign interference differently.

The article also presents the relationship between opinions about the escalation of military action in eastern Ukraine with selected beliefs which constitute a socio-political awareness of an individual. For the purposes of the article, it was considered that such elements are: a sense of national identity, self-identification and a sense of hostility towards foreigners. It turned out that this relationship is stronger in the case of Ukrainian students, as it is evidenced by the value of the coefficient of R^2 (0, 239). It is possible that the situation of a direct threat of military actions activates patriotic attitudes, with their essential ingredients of a sense of pride of one's own country, respect for national symbols and identification with the country. Although the Polish and Ukrainian students are linked by the fact of experiencing youth and by the similar cultural circle, a direct experience of the war situation clearly differentiates views on the current events and affects the sense of their own identity.

The empirical material does not allow in-depth analysis of a relationship

between opinions and more permanent socio-political beliefs. The article should be considered as a contribution to this kind of reflection and inspiration for further exploration. The analysis of the results obtained in the studies conducted within the framework of the Polish-Ukrainian scientific project leads to a more general reflection about the situation of university students in Poland and Ukraine. In Poland the generation that is entering adulthood knows the country's communist past only from stories and they spent their childhood in a society that builds prosperity and security. They are the generation that can freely travel around Europe and the world where plenty of possibilities are offered to them. They were raised to openness, tolerance towards diversity, multiculturalism. It was not until recent years that world terrorism emerged in its worst form, and the increasing wave of refugees from Syria, North Africa and the Middle East showed the enormity of prejudices, xenophobic, nationalistic attitudes, resentment towards the followers of other religions (especially Islam), hatred and other negative emotions. Also, a radicalization of youth has been observed.

The empirical data gathered in the study have become an inspiration for discussion about the social role of young people in modern societies with communist experience (Poland and Ukraine) that are at different stages of development. Ukrainian youth can watch the armed conflict in their own country, experiencing violence and helplessness of modern organizations and institutions. It is possible that they perceive the problems of Europe differently from young people in Poland, who are closer to the youth of western Europe. Undoubtedly, social awareness of young people is changing, although now it is difficult to describe the direction of these changes. Any transformation should be constantly monitored to foresee the future on their basis.

Global terrorism, mass migration from countries involved in wars and the conflict caused by ISIS, as well as the Brexit will have a significant impact on the shape of contemporary societies. Due to the size of this paper this thread could not be discussed, but the attitude towards the above events should be studied in subsequent studies verifying the relations between attitudes towards current events and the general worldview of the individual.

The young Ukrainians are observing an armed conflict in their own neighbourhood, experiencing violence and helplessness of modern organizations and institutions; at the same time they present an attitude of greater openness. They might perceive problems of Europe in a different way than young people from Poland, who are closer to the youth of the Western European countries.

As evidenced by the materials of our study, Ukrainian students have a higher level of optimism in assessments of the prospects of the situation development in Ukraine, than their Polish peers do. This optimism is fed primarily by patriotism, civil attitude of the Ukrainian studentship, the desire to defend the freedom and independence of the country. Pessimism of the Ukrainian students in the assessments of Ukraine future stems from factors such as the Left (especially the Communist) attitudes and Soviet identity of some of them, the negative attitude to the protest actions, etc. The predominance of pessimism in Polish students views about the future of Ukraine can be explained by possibly more realism of the “view from outside”, as sure as the awareness of threats to Poland itself in case of realization of negative scenarios to resolve the situation in Ukraine.

It seems that our research is not only answering many questions of interest to the authors, but also actualizes the new research challenges that we face in the course of further cooperation between sociologists of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University and the University of Zielona Góra.

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**OPINIONS ON THE EVENTS IN EASTERN UKRAINE IN 2014
AS AN INDICATOR OF THE GENERALISED SOCIO-POLITICAL
BELIEFS, POLISH-UKRAINIAN COMPARISONS**

Keywords: youth, students, public awareness, worldview, social attitudes, Poland, Ukraine, armed conflict, current events.

The primary purpose of the article is a representation of the differences in the opinions of the Polish and Ukrainian students on the events occurring in eastern Ukraine since April 2014. Sociological survey, which is part of the project entitled "Academic Youth in Poland and Ukraine in the times of distrust and threats to civilization. International comparative studies" became the basis for the verification of the hypothesis of the relationship between opinions on the current political events and generalized socio-political attitudes. The project has been implemented within the framework of international cooperation between the University of Zielona Góra and the V.N. Karazin National University in Kharkiv. The initial assumption has been made that different opinions of the students are a consequence of historical circumstances, family narratives, prejudices, stereotypes, and their existing beliefs. Opinions on the current events were considered in this article as indicators of generalized political attitudes of an individual. The theoretical framework to build the conceptualization of research has been provided by concepts of cultural change of values by R. Inglehart and generational concepts by, inter alia, K. Mannheim, S. Eisenstadt, J. Habermas.