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Introduction: Ukraine in Fragile Security Contexts

For nearly three decades now, we have been witnessing the gradual demise of the bi-polar international order first established in a world dominated by the Cold War. This outcome was inevitable; after the collapse of the Soviet Union the global environment, along with its attendant geopolitical realities, changed markedly. But the slow-motion disintegration of this security system has ushered in the advent of a still-inchoate replacement, the parameters and meaning of which continue to be vigorously contested. Consequently, it is proving difficult to characterize the new system that is emerging, one wherein ascendant powers that do not share the values of the West are attempting to construct a multi-polar and ideologically diverse world. Illustrative of this are Russia's efforts to sway Ukraine back into its orbit. Proceeding through political and military means as well as various "hybrid" tactics, they exemplify what Poland's former Foreign Minister, Adam Rotfeld, has labelled a "new game without rules."¹

Indeed, the conflict in – and over – Ukraine dramatically illustrates the extent to which the post-Cold War international order, along with regional- and state-level dynamics in the post-communist space, have evolved since the 1990s. The essential nature of this change, as well as its practical implications, requires careful study and analysis. To this end the Ukrainian crisis provides a useful lens into wider processes, as it is not merely a domestic issue but also an international crisis, bracketed by the rivalry between two external powers – the so-called "Western world," as represented by the US and EU (though these entities do not agree with one another in many important respects) and a Russian Federation eager to restore and defend a privileged sphere of influence in what Russian officials refer to as its "near abroad." As a result, while the internal impact of events such as the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 and the outbreak of separatist violence in the Donbas region soon thereafter has been profound for Ukraine, the external

ramifications have been no less significant. Broadly speaking, the unwillingness of Russia, the US and the UK to uphold the assurances of Ukraine's territorial integrity that were agreed to in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum (in exchange for Kyiv relinquishing its nuclear arsenal and signing on to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) has devalued international security cooperation and thwarted efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Concomitantly, the imposition of sanctions resulting from Moscow's actions in Ukraine has also had a negative impact on Russia's economy, postponing its integration with Europe and hindering the implementation of the Wider Europe concept, which seeks the development of a free trade and security zone spanning from Lisbon to Vladivostok.²

As exemplified by its involvement in the Ukrainian conflict, the Russian Federation's policies over the course of the past few years suggest that Moscow is attempting to develop a security paradigm based on being able to project military power while simultaneously limiting its dependence on the international system as it is presently configured, which the Kremlin perceives as being hypocritical (e.g., insisting others adopt liberal democratic values while countries like the US pursue a *realpolitik* foreign policy, violating state sovereignty with pre-emptive military interventions, and so forth) and fundamentally antagonistic towards its interests. This has forced international and supranational organizations such as NATO and the EU to alter how they understand and approach international security, both in regard to Ukraine and the world more generally. The geopolitical tensions that have arisen from this development have had far-reaching consequences. Attesting to this is the ongoing war in Syria, which, in pitting Russian interests against those of Western states, has highlighted the global relevance of instability in Europe's immediate neighborhood. Moreover, the consequences of such distant conflicts have proven capable of turning back on Europe, with issues like the EU's migrant fiasco and the continuing threat of Islamist terrorism on European soil only emphasizing this inherent interconnectedness.

What has happened in Ukraine also calls into question the EU's eastern policy as it currently stands, as well as Russia's emerging approach towards the post-Soviet space. Effectively, the country has become an arena of contention for two rival integration projects: that of Europe, represented by the EU and normatively envisaged as liberal-democratic politically and market-driven economically, and that of Eurasia, conceived of as an alternative, Russia-led union. But this geopolitical rivalry, today frequently cast in civilizational terms, is not confined to Ukraine; the whole of Eastern Europe is in some fashion or another embroiled in it. On the one hand, this is evident in EU projects such as the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, although both initiatives have so far failed to meaningfully bolster relations between the Union and its Eastern partners. On the other hand, it is also apparent in the steps the Russian Federation has taken to undermine the independence of the erstwhile Soviet states, regarding their sovereignty as permeable and subject to Moscow's influence. As a result of these actions, systemic insecurity and regional instability have increased, developments reflected in the "frozen conflicts" that currently exist in such places as Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

Unsurprisingly, in post-Maidan Ukraine Russia's policy has followed a similar script, with the Kremlin backing separatist militias in the east of the country (officially, Russia is not involved in the Ukrainian conflict, though it openly supports the breakaway regions of Luhansk and Donetsk). However, while Russia managed to successfully annex Crimea, sporadic fighting continues in the Donbas and Ukrainian public opinion has notably soured on its larger and increasingly assertive neighbor, with a December 2017 survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology not only finding that the steep decline in the number of Ukrainians who exhibit a positive attitude towards Russia initially evinced in early 2014 continues to hold, but also that a plurality now support their country joining both the EU (49% for, 28% against) and NATO (41% for, 32% against).³ This represents the geopolitical byproduct of a Ukrainian socio-political identity that appears to be coalescing around a civic conception of nationhood.⁴ Meanwhile, bilateral and

multi-lateral relations between the Western states and Russia, catalyzed by events in Ukraine, have reached a post-Soviet nadir.

Obviously, there is much to scrutinize in this context. However, the effects of the Maidan protests have previously been analyzed mainly in terms of Ukraine's domestic politics or relative to various dyadic relationships (e.g., Ukraine/EU, Ukraine/Russia, or even Russia/EU, with Ukraine serving as a proxy). But although these are undoubtedly important categories of inquiry (and ones that our contributing authors evaluate as well), what has not taken place thus far is any sort of sustained and meaningful analysis of how the Maidan has reverberated politically through the post-communist region, and what this means for observers in Europe and throughout the world. Consequently, the goals of this book are to provide insight into the impact the crisis is having on Ukraine's internal security and the global resonances that proceed from it, as well as to shed light on how it affects proximate countries. In this respect, our project possesses an important temporal advantage, having come together at a time when we are far enough removed from the events of late 2013 and early 2014 to have achieved some measure of objectivity in analyzing them, but yet close enough that their meaning and salience has not been eroded from the minds of participants and observers. In other words, we are still at the stage of assessing them as political scientists and international relations specialists rather than as historians.

Contributors to this volume purposely span an array of empirical and methodological approaches. Yuval Weber analyzes the ambiguous end of the Cold War and the resultant mismatch between Russia's ambitions and material capabilities, using the lens of the Ukrainian crisis to examine larger cross-sectional and longitudinal processes. Tomasz Stepniowski considers how events in Ukraine have altered the role of NATO in Eastern Europe and its relationship to what he terms the region's "grey zone" of security. Jussi Laine looks at the ontological security dilemma the Ukrainian crisis has produced in Finland and evaluates how Finnish leaders and publics have responded to it. George Soroka focuses on two critical dimensions of Ukraine's internal security, namely issues of

nation-building and stateness and the degree and quality of governance, privileging their evaluation in terms of domestic dynamics but also examining how these factors relate to transnational and cross-border processes. Yuriy Matsiyevsky examines the role of external leverage over Ukraine not just from the side of the Western powers, but also from that of the Russian Federation, assessing the impact of Russian backing for the Yanukovych regime and the role played by Moscow in its subsequent breakdown. Joanna Fomina discusses the dynamics of public opinion formation in Ukraine relative to NATO accession, as well as what citizens in NATO member states think of Ukraine's potential inclusion in the defense alliance. Finally, Andrzej Szabaciuk writes about demographic factors and migration relative to domestic security and the evolving challenges Ukraine faces in this sphere.

This book is the result of an active collaboration between researchers from Finland, Poland, Russia, Ukraine and the United States. The editors would like to extend their special thanks to the contributors for the considerable time and effort they put into writing and revising these chapters. We also wish to express our gratitude to the editors and staff at *ibidem*-Verlag for their support (and forbearance, given how long this project took to complete!). Clearly, much more research is needed into Ukraine's security dynamics and their local, regional and global implications, particularly as the situation on the ground remains unresolved and fluid. As such, this book represents a starting point regarding what may be said about this topic. We therefore hope that readers will appreciate the authors' perspectives and come away feeling that the volume makes a positive contribution to the unfolding discussion concerning the future of Ukraine and the post-communist region, as well as the international order more generally.

Tomasz Stępniewski & George Soroka
Lublin (Poland) and Cambridge (USA), August 2018