Editorial
A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of war

By Angelantonio ROSATO[*]

After decades of peace, people believed that war has been banned from Europe. Then, all of a sudden, the harsh reality of Ukraine crisis slapped our faces. Nobody was ready for that, and presumably nobody wanted this result. But it happened, and it is still here, a burning shame. There are few chances it will fade away by itself. Indeed, it could worsen and expand further, if the right strategy is not implemented. Therefore, it is worth and necessary promoting debate and research on the issue, especially in the current geopolitical context when the Ukraine crisis seems forgotten in the media headlines and all international attention is focused on the Greater Middle East and the Islamic State's threat.

Until recently, almost everyone assumed that it was unconceivable for warfare to erupt in Eastern Europe. In fact, the genie of open conflict escaped briefly from the lamp in August 2008 not far away, in Georgia, Caucasus, but it was forced back in again after just five days. This time the story is completely different: the crisis has been raging in Ukraine since 2014, provoking thousands of casualties, massive damages of infrastructures and deepening the already severe multiple cleavages in the region. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to find the best way to exorcise this spectre. The first task is to *think* the shaping of Eastern Europe: which are the directions, the scenarios, the options for the ongoing crisis in Ukraine?

In this quest for peace and security, resilience concept is a tool that could effectively help to analyze, assess and forecast not only the Ukrainian crisis, but also the whole Eastern Europe's priorities and outcomes. Resilience analysis can outline the vulnerabilities within a system in relation to various types of shocks, which may further explain its capacity to resist, to recover and to ultimately undergo a series of transformations by adopting a new development pattern.

Of course, resilience analysis cannot exclude the geostrategic context: Eastern Europe's (EE's) countries do not exist and act in an empty space but are inextricably integrated in the geopolitical and international relations' environment. In order to measure their resilience capacity (resistance, absorption, adaptation, transformation) to external shocks, it is necessary to

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know the geostrategic milieu in the Eastern Neighbourhood (EN) region and in the global arena.

For instance, to appreciate EE's countries' resilience capacity in the economic sphere is worth considering EU-Russia energy relations which depend on geopolitical factors, too: Moscow and USA positions and policies towards Europe; Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran war by proxy, the evolving geostrategic situation in the Greater Middle East etc.

Besides, EE's countries' perspectives are strongly influenced by the global roles played by Russia and USA, by new EU member States' (Poland, Baltic States, Romania, etc) positions towards Russia, by NATO policy in the EN, and, last but not least, by the current Ukraine crisis.

By applying resilience analysis to Eastern Europe, we can imagine three scenarios for the Ukraine crisis:

1. Frozen conflict (status quo)
2. Minsk-2 agreement full implementation
3. From deterrence to open confrontation.

1. Apparently, it would be the favourable scenario for Moscow. Indeed, the frozen conflict (status quo) scenario may look interesting for someone in Kiev, too, with the aim to definitely cut bridges with Donbass region and build up a fully national Ukrainian State, detached from the ethnic-Russian areas; a ethnically pure country willing to enter NATO and EU as soon as possible. This is a very risky scenario, for Russia will likely response with "Jacuzzi destabilization", i.e. intermittent but constant, low intensity jets of hybrid destabilization in Ukraine, ranging from psychological war to *little green men* irregular military actions in order to move further west the borders of self-proclaimed Novorossija.
2. Integral implementation of Minsk-2 agreement is the best scenario for all actors involved, a positive sum game: Ukraine full sovereignty and territorial integrity restored, together with salient autonomy for Ukraine eastern regions through Constitutional reforms leading to a true Federation State. All this will end warfare, will melt the frozen conflict, and will lead to normalization in Russia-Ukraine and Russia-NATO relations. Last but not least, it will eventually re-establish Ukraine's historical role as geopolitical, economic and cultural bridge between East and West, according to the etymological meaning of *U-Kraijne*, land at the borderline.
3. The third scenario is the most dangerous one: current deterrence slipping into open confrontation with Russia may escalate in *hot* war, and it could eventually drag NATO into the battlefield. The consequences would be catastrophic for everyone. This is clearly a scenario to avoid with all means.

In conclusion, the diplomatic solution is clearly the best one: Minsk 2, formally signed in February 2015, must be completely - we would say *literally* – implemented by all parts, as soon as possible. Negotiations and dialogue with Moscow must continue, based on the solid rock of Ukraine's full sovereignty and territorial integrity. Ukrainian citizens, and all EU citizens, could not feel safe until relations with Russia are normalized.

Ukraine's accession to NATO should not be officially excluded, but postponed to better times. On the other end, offering EU membership to Kiev may help: it will lead Ukraine to a clear path of political and economic reforms, contribute to fight corruption (the most serious Kiev's domestic problem), and give sound hope to Ukrainian people who have been fighting in Euro-Maidan. Of course, EU membership cannot be granted to Kiev for nothing: it must be the final prize for its serious efforts and reform implementations.

Most important, EU-Ukraine Association Agreement – true starting point of the present crisis, strongly objected by Moscow in 2013, then rejected by former president Janukovyč, finally signed last June, into force on 31 December 2015 - may change from bone of contention to peace pipe between Moscow and the West. This time Russia should not oppose Ukraine's EU membership, especially if we inform, explain and engage Moscow in the right way. EU accession process for Serbia could be an effective narrative and a virtuous pattern. Ukraine, like Serbia, can become again a geopolitical bridge; not a failing but a successful Ukrainian State, a reliable partner for both Moscow and Brussels/Washington. Nobody has anything to gain from open confrontation in Ukraine, while we all need a bridge to connect, to bond East and West. A bridge that leads to Europe.

The current issue of Eastern Journal of European Studies, which brings to the forefront the crisis in Ukraine, includes articles that address both social-economic and political component. Visions on this topic were expressed by researchers belonging to different cultural and scientific environments, starting from Western Europe to China. Alongside the quality of all research papers selected, an important contribution of the Journal, with significant added value, also possible to be transmitted to the further research, is the possibility offered to the reader of a quick comparative analysis of various positions and attitudes of both decisional and academic environments in Eurasia.