

IVAN AT THE GATES! – ARMED CONFLICT IN UKRAINE AND THE MORAL PANIC IN POLAND?

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Abstract. The authors describe the issue of moral panic in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine and the way it is reflected in the behavior, opinions, fears, approaches and beliefs of the respondents. The notion is described through the perspective of the moral panic features, enumerated by Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, such as concerns, disproportionality and volatility. Such approach allows to analyze the cumulated data on people's reaction in the face of the potential threat they perceive as highly probable. The authors ask what implications moral panic brings for the safety of the country neighboring the area of the conflict.

Keywords: conflict in Ukraine, hybrid war, moral panic, safety of Poland

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1. Introduction

At the very start of considering the notion of moral panic there appears the issue of its sources and the reasons why Polish people started to be afraid – fear appeared when they were surprised at the armed conflict in Ukraine – as the result of a lack of vigilance of Poland itself and of NATO structures. In the face of the conflict, common and uncritical faith in peace in the Middle-East Europe turned out to be a Utopian perspective, and prioritizing fighting the terrorism there did not seem entirely right or justified. The voices, until recently claiming that Poland's priority is mainly to fulfill its duties of the treaties, usually abroad, and that the activities of the armed forces ought to follow the rules of an expedition realized within peacemaking or stabilization operations, unveiled the weaknesses of the defense system of the country, thus pressing the citizens to form their own opinion on potential war taking place in their homeland and express their reaction to such threat, even if only a potential one.

Such weakness, as many seem to perceive the newly evoked threat in the area that seemed completely free of the fear or possibility of an armed conflict, has many reasons. What is more, the most important of them derives from the situation where bi-polar power balance in the world has been destroyed, and also, from the common peace euphoria that has been proclaimed by politicians, scientists and business people. When the Iron Curtain disappeared, it evoked Utopian words Henry Ford said after World War I: “People are becoming too intelligent ever to have another big war” (Bodziany 2010:89). Was this right? Surely not, especially when taking into consideration the fact that from 1990 to 2000 there were 41 local and regional conflicts, and just in 1997 there were as many as 19 such conflicts (Bodziany 2014:7).

Despite clear signs that the worldwide peace is not such an obvious issue, nobody had predicted that near the Polish border, in Ukraine, there the conflict of new character would begin. Although certain safety perception paradigm collapsed, the problem became difficult to solve as it refused to fit any known, or commonly used, definitions. There is some paradox in such situation, as in the light of international law, there is no conflict – neither Russia nor Ukraine proclaimed war. Nonetheless, the conflict is a fact and it is commonly called a hybrid one. It is dangerous to be in some sort of political fiction, dominated by the game of pretenses and propaganda, and lies Russia tells. What is important is characterized by the lack of clear directions for development and for its borders. Such state describes it as the conflict of ‘new dimension’, and this, in consequence, due to the lack of precedent as far as the possibilities to solve it are concerned, evokes understandable fear and the feeling of dread perceived by many.

The raised issues make us consider the activities designed to prepare the Polish Armed Forces for war, activities which are accompanied by widespread actions to overcome the neglects as far as structures optimization and armament modernization and equipping of Polish Armed Forces are concerned.

Many times such actions have been reckless and sometimes even convulsive – especially when they concern military equipment purchasing. The Army modernization, apart from the sudden strengthening of the Polish eastern border, did not escape the notice of the public; thus, people reacted to the ‘media buzz’ instinctively – they were afraid to be faced with the threat of conflict. Media discourse on the state of the Polish Army was strengthened with the experts’ and politicians’ opinions, plenty of which were on Internet portals and TV programs in 2014. Although many times the opinions were presented by doubtful or self-appointed so-called experts, they strongly influenced public opinion and increased the level of fear, mostly due to the way such opinions were presented, copied and circulated.

Fear was also evoked by the opinions presented by the people connected to the Army. In one of the statements, included in the report entitled “The state of national military defense strength”, former General Staff Officer, general Leon Komornicki, said: “We need to prepare for the worst scenario, meaning facing the opponent’s aggression. Poland is not able to defend its territory in case of potential conflict” (Dragański 2015).

General Komornicki believes that: “(...) currently, the Polish Armed Forces consist mostly of operational army, not adapted to defend the borders, due to, among others, improper equipment and allocation. (...) In his opinion, the issue of educating the citizens and their involvement in the country’s defense also needs to be improved” (Dragański 2015). Further in his report, the author focuses on the so-called national defense forces, which should complement the Polish defense system (Dragański 2015).

What do citizens feel when they hear such dramatic opinions concerning the army? A citizen who has been convinced for many years that NATO is the peace guarantee for Poland, and that they may feel safe in their own country? Many Polish people feel cheated, as the faith, shaped by politicians and the media, claiming that the Washington Treaty is strong and thus has been providing a safety belt, turned out to be worth the same as the treaties signed before World War II. Such dramatic assessment of the Polish Army may well evoke fear and moral panic among the Poles. However, let us perceive the issue of national safety through the perspective of geopolitics and treaty guarantees. Consider selected parts of the interview with the Chief of National Security Bureau, general Stanisław Koziej, who seems quite optimistic, pushing away the threat of the armed conflict with Russia. He claims as follows: “(...) Attacking Poland means attacking NATO – proclaiming war against the whole organization, to which the greatest world power (the USA) and European countries belong. It would be then a big-scale war. Today, however, there seems nobody who would consciously decide on a military conflict”. Further, the general points out the caution Vladimir Putin shows when creating foreign policy:

“(...) Putin is rational enough to be aware that starting war with NATO would mean, if not the end of Russia, then taking this country back in civil development many decades. He is obviously balancing on the verge of the risk of war with the West. However, even he would not be able to accept the existence risk, meaning the one connected with “to be or not to be” of Russia. Deliberate - let me highlight that word – starting the war is not to be expected. Nonetheless, it does not mean there does exist no possibility for the world conflict to start even if those in power lack the will to start it” (Koziej 2015).

When we confront those two opinions, we can see certain dualism, as on the one hand, there are the neglects in the Polish Army and uncritical faith in the power of NATO, and on the other – logical facts concerning the situation in Russia. When comparing military resources of the countries in rational way, one cannot but point to the advantages of one and the problems of the other. Reasoned analysis concerns the advantages and the problems that both participants of the conflict face.

How then to assess the realism of threats and how to justify the fear and moral panic among Polish people? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look through the theoretic approaches that describe those issue. The thesis the authors of this paper would like to verify is that the Russian invasion of Ukraine created the notions in Poland that have the features of moral panic. Such notion is

of highly negative influence on the country defensiveness. The authors claim that it interferes with the routine of the pro-defensive activities, introducing false information to the communication circuit and thus increasing the level of society fears.

In the field of moral panic the analysis of Poles, especially of its etiology and effects, there is an extremely complex field of research which is a *sine qua non* of understanding the essence of fear of the Poles about the threat of extending Russian expansion not only to the western regions of Ukraine, but also of real aggression aimed at the annexation of parts of Polish territory.

Therefore, taking into account the effectiveness of Russia's policy towards Ukraine and the passivity of the international community in the face of events in Crimea and Donbass, the question arises whether the Poles have reasonable fears of a regional conflict threatening the internal security of the state? There is another question related to the previous, related to resolving the dilemma existing between realism and the misperception of threats coming from Russia. This dilemma has prompted the authors to analyze the reports of research conducted on representative samples of Polish respondents, as well as the analysis of the media debate about the war in Ukraine, in order to answer the question included in the main research problem formulated as follows: How Russia's policy towards Ukraine affects the sense of security in Polish society?

It turns out that even the most thorough analysis of secondary data does not allow us to draw objective conclusions justifying the negative attitudes of the Polish society towards Russia's policy. The etiology of panic has a deeper context, and its sources remain in the relationship not only with manipulation of information by politicians and the media, but in the mentality of Poles rooted in their minds because of the history that has created in most cases prejudice and stereotypes of Russians in the Poles' perception.

Referring to the posed question, it seems reasonable to assume that the panic of Poles towards Russia's policy has a deeper than a political or media context. It results from the retrospection – the history of mutual relations and the memory of the wrongdoings to the Polish people throughout history. The analysis of the current situation in Russia's relations with Ukraine urges to reflect on the legitimacy of fear and moral panic of the Poles. Should they really be afraid of aggression of Russia? Is the historical memory only a 'great fuel for fire' in Polish minds produced by politicians using the strongest weapons – the media? While these questions will certainly never be answered in a precise way, it is worthwhile to take research challenges in this area, for example, to obtain results that demonstrate the permanence of stereotypes and prejudices born for centuries and stimulated 'to life' by the influence of new and surprising circumstances. Theoretical assumptions in the introduction give the attitudes to the purpose of this article. It is the identification of real and subjective factors of the Poles' moral panic in the face of the threat of reviving imperialist tendencies in Russia's foreign policy.

2. Moral panic – interpretation frames of the issue

One of the issues from the range of social fears is moral panic, originally considered within the context of subcultures (Cohen 1972:9). Currently, it seems to appear wherever there is any activity that evokes some uncertainty or fear. Polish authors, P. Sztompka and M. Bogunia-Borowska claim that moral panic is present in the situation when: “States, events, people or groups of people start to be described as threats to the social values and interests, whose character is the object of creation to the media, preachers and politicians” (Sztompka, Bogunia-Borowska 2008:922).

Then there is the marking of groups of people or events, strengthened by the mass media. Stanley Cohen claims we deal with moral panic when the event, person or group of people become unjustifiably described – especially by the media – as the threat to the contemporary social values (Cohen 1972:9). Yvonne Jewkes enumerates five defining features of moral panic, which are as follows:

- moral panic occurs when the media turn a reasonably ordinary event into extraordinary,
- the media in particular set in motion a deviance amplification spiral, through which the subjects of the panic are viewed as a source of moral decline and social disintegration,
- moral panic clarifies the moral boundaries of the society in which they occur,
- moral panic occurs during periods of rapid social change and anxiety,
- young people are the usual target of moral panic, their behavior is regarded as a barometer to test the health or sickness of the society (Jewkes 2004: 67).

Stanley Cohen explains the role of the media in this notion in greater detail. According to him: “The media – in a sense – can create social problems, they can present them dramatically and overwhelmingly, and most important, they can do it suddenly. The media can very quickly and effectively fan public indignation and engineer what one might call a moral panic about a certain type of deviancy” (Cohen 1972:17). At the same time, media are one of many actors participating in the process of creating the discussed issue. Cohen identifies four sets of agents crucial to the development of a moral panic: the mass media, moral entrepreneurs, the control culture and the public (Cohen 1972:17). In other words:

“When the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is out of all proportion to the actual threat offered. When ‘experts’ in the form of police chiefs, the judiciary politicians and editors perceive the threat in all but identical terms and appear to talk ‘with one voice’ of rates, diagnoses, prognoses and solutions when the media representations universally stress sudden and dramatic increases (in numbers involved or events) and novelty above and beyond that which a sober, realistic appraisal could sustain, then we believe it is appropriate to speak of the beginnings of a moral panic” (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Roberts 2013:16).

Very often, the power centers (including symbolic power centers) create moral panic as far as following moral norms and values is concerned. E. Goode and N. Ben Yehuda claim that: Focusing on fictitious problems distracts from real problems. If, for example, fictitious threats are followed by the means to deal with them, the fiction starts its own life. It becomes dangerous when it generates repressive activities (Soin 2011:147–163). In the opinion of Piotr Sztompka, the issue of moral panic as mass reaction to shocking social deviations is the example of such version of sociology implying the values through the facts, in which sociological description and the diagnosis mobilized emotions and moral actions that strengthen the values (Sztompka 2007:247–261). Therefore, moral panic may be evoked by politicians in order to ensure the support of local community as its protectors, sometimes in order to distract its focus from their own deeds. The media support the panic in order to ensure the profits and/or politicians' goodwill. Another important aspect is its harmfulness when bad law is created due to it. Through exaggerated descriptions of the situation, the media directly influence the government and the opposition to imply speedy and reckless reaction.

Lofland describes criteria which he argues can be used to measure the 'variable' of 'joy' within social crowds: 1. Arousal or the 'amount of overt ... activity combined with display of emotion socially defined as joyous'; 2. Proportion of 'members displaying various levels of these acts; 3. Social definition 'of the nature, meaning and import of the arousal' – how significant it is seen to be; 4. Institutionalization 'in the sense of being pre-designed, planned, and regular in its occurrence'; 5. Duration 'of a single occasion of arousal and (whether this is) linked in a rapid series of occasions of arousal' (Lofland 1982:355–358).

Izabela Sakson-Szafrńska describes the stages of the described phenomenon based on the Goode and Ben Yehuda indicators:

- Stage one of moral panic – an event occurs that is defined as a threat to social values and interests;
- Stage two – the spiral of reinforcement: media recognition and social mobilization;
- Stage three – the creation of picture of concern and interest;
- Stage four – the phase of social/institutional control: the reaction of the authorities, individuals or opinion-forming groups;
- Stage five – moral panic affects social changes (Sakson-Szafrńska 2014, 150–161).

All these often take place in troubled times, Bauman's 'liquid modernity'. As Tammy L. Anderson writes, moral panic is a crucial element in the fabric of social change (Anderson 2014:369).

The definitions of moral panic are described by some of the authors as imprecise, which may be found within the scope of other notions:

While moral panics as a response have an original cause for concern and are thus to be distinguished from forms of mass hysteria or delusion, they [...] diverge from other forms of public reaction to a perceived moral or social malaise, such as the formation of social movements in relation to ecological risk, gender discrimina-

tion or poverty, in that they are based on an exaggerated threat; exaggerated either because the actions that trigger moral panic are represented inaccurately or because the threat itself is portrayed as more serious than it is comparison to other problems (Sandvoss 2006:401).

It is also criticized for the issues of episodic, temporal character: “The concept of moral panic seemed less relevant because it appeared to focus on episodic and discrete events giving too much attention to symptoms rather than focusing directly on political, economic developments and their relationship to ideological trends” (Thompson 1998:140).

One ought to point out here that the mentioned episodic character results in permanent changes of the law preceded by temporal changes of the basics.

To sum up, the issue of moral panic is the developed model of irrational behavior of the society and of its elites. It is used wherever the fear-evoking events change the way elites work due to the pressure media and public opinion on them. For example, such traumatic event may be the threat to the national safety – both real – even if exaggerated – and imaginary one.

Armed conflicts are the kind of events in the society lives which, sort of naturally, evoke extreme emotions. Moreover, the condition of the country being (or not) prepared for the war is the starting point for moral assessment government is the subject of. When the country is over-prepared for the armed conflict, it results in the accusations of neglecting the spheres of social life other than internal safety. On the other hand, inaccurate preparation for the armed conflict may result even in the accusations of high treason. Moral panic takes place when both types of accusations are unsubstantiated. The threat of the armed conflict makes the appearance of moral panic more probable. The conflict in the neighboring country is a strong rationale for the described issue to appear.

3. Moral panic and the armed conflict in Ukraine – the case study of Polish public opinion

Ukraine is one of the biggest neighbors of Poland, connected to Poland with many ties. Ukraine is a part of former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, connected to Poland with personal union. Such cities as Lutsk or Lvov, which form an important part of Polish national heritage are situated in Ukraine. What is more, in fact Ukraine separates Poland from Russia (de jure Poland borders Russia in Kaliningrad Oblast). Therefore, contradictory to Russian interventions in Georgia or Armenia, the actions in Ukraine are defined as close or direct threat to Polish national being, which in itself may be perceived as exaggeration.

Poland, as a country of liberal democracy is quite naturally governed under the influence of public opinion, and the government acting under such pressure works slower, whereas action pragmatics is interfered by social fears, or moral commotion.

When analyzing the signs of moral panic in Poland, the authors will use the typology of Erich Goode and Nachman Ben Yehuda. Moral panic is not the issue

which occurs fully in the way it was designed or planned. This notion is relatively seldom described in the context of armed forces, although Hays writes about it in *Mass Deception: Moral Panic as the US War on Iraq Theater* (Heather, Hayes 2012:467–470). That is why it seems prudent to try to analyze this notion from such perspective, as a solution to try to justify the range of potential reactions one may face when such issue is brought to life.

4. The armed conflict in Ukraine in the perception of Polish people – when anxiety is evoked

The analysis of the sources of moral panic among Polish people in the face of the situation in Ukraine points to the historical circumstances and mutual, Polish-Russian relations. Not without a reason, the fear and Russophobia among the Polish are the result of the historic issues and it should not be a surprise that the Poles are afraid of the Russians, or that they seem to treat them with the approach they do not show towards any other nation.

Contemporary Russian stereotypes concerning the Polish are also connected with history and they also play an important role in creating mutual relations. The Polish fear of Russians is visible even abroad. The special international European edition of German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* ran an article confirming the historical context of fear and of moral panic among the Polish. The author of the article, Adam Leszczyński, says:

“The Polish are afraid of Russia and the Ukrainian crisis only increased this fear. “(...) Polish fear of Russia has historical background. There always existed the belief that Russia, without densely populated, rich Ukraine would not be able to pose a threat to Poland. But if Ukraine is controlled by Russia, it will be the turn of Poland next. As the author of the article claims, Polish media cite the polls in Germany with incredulity, which say that almost half of the Germans are ready to accept the conquering of Crimea by the Russians” (Matzke 2015).

Such information clearly evokes anxiety among the Polish and focus on their attention on prewar cooperation between Germany and the Soviet Union. The memory of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, i.e. the pact sanctioning the destruction of Poland (Moorhouse 2015:409–423) is still vivid in Poland and the current cooperation of its signatories – observed.

The analysis of the scale of moral panic among the Polish leads us to the results of the research concerning the perception of the Ukrainian conflict. In one of the studies, conducted in November and December 2012, ordered by the Centre for Polish–Russian Dialogue and Understanding, on a random sample of 1036 adult Poles, and repeated in November and December 2014 on a random sample of 1000 Poles, the analysis of Polish-Russian relation was made (Polska – Rosja Diagnoza Społeczna 2015:4). Although the results of the study made at the end of 2012 showed the picture of ‘little stabilization’ in Polish-Russian relations, the research made in December 2014 brought completely different results. They may be

described as a profound setback which may be related to the events in Ukraine. In 2014 there appeared to be explicit, mutual dislike between the Poles and the Russians, and among the Polish there appeared some security concerns because of the Russians (Polska – Rosja Diagnoza Społeczna 2015:5).

Another study, conducted on a sample of 1021 adults by the Adrian Institute and ordered by Tajniki Polityki (The Secrets of Politics) portal, analyzed by Norbert Maliszewski, showed in a more vivid way the results of the actions performed by the politicians and the media in the face of the Ukrainian conflict. The results of the study show clearly that almost every second person questioned is afraid of violent Russian reaction and of following sanctions imposed on Poland (Skalski 2015). Despite that, it is evident that there is a clear tendency to support the engagement of Poland in the process of stabilizing Ukraine, the activity supported by as many as 30% of the questioned.

What is more, the studies conducted from 6th to 12th March, 2014 by CBOS on a sample of 1098 adult citizens of Poland show fear of the results of the armed conflict in Ukraine. 53% claimed that the Ukrainian crisis is connected with the threat to the safety of Poland, 39% believed the opposite. 73% of people thought president Putin aims to rebuild the empire from the times of the Soviet Union (Sondaż: Polacy winią Rosję za konflikt na Ukrainie, Polacy o sytuacji na Ukrainie w czasie krymskiego kryzysu 2014). It is important to notice that 72% of the Polish believe the Ukrainian conflict to be a threat to Poland, 66% claim the conflict also poses danger to the security in Europe and 52% that the expansive Russian policy is capable of threatening global security.

That is only a part of the social opinion in Poland concerning the conflict in Ukraine, and the wider range of the problems describing moral panic among the Polish may be found on social websites and forums. Such form of discussion has competitive advantage over more traditional polls, as it shows more real, and very often – the emotional opinions of the users.

However, its negative effects should not be forgotten. One of them is such strong fear that it makes the Polish consider leaving the country. In street polls and interviews opinions confirming such drive appear. Quoting the opinion of a doctor treating fears and phobias: “(...) as a rule, the young are of great mobility. They know languages. They feel they will succeed. They eliminate their fear by planning to leave, it helps them.” He admits: “(...) I feel it too. More and more often, I start to be concerned what will happen next. For the elders the thought of leaving home is as terrible as the one about staying if something is going to happen. They are worried about the sources of income needed if they leave. Who will pay the pensions?” (Wasilewska 2015).

4.1. How does science assess such reactions?

According to Anna Bersz, a psychotherapist of Polskie Towarzystwo Psychologiczne (Polish Psychology Association), “fear of war is the social fear” and theoretically, it should first concern people who personally saw foreign troops

marching through Poland. Despite that, age does not seem to be of any importance. “The old know what they are afraid of, for the young fear of war concerns more basic anxiety, fear of death”. According to psychologist Barbara Stawarz, fear of war is one of the so-called social phobias. However, a phobia is irrational, so what many Polish feel cannot be called a phobia. This is real fear, built on the possibility of updated, almost online watching, of the war fought just beyond our border (Wasilewska 2015).

Moral panic among the Polish is confirmed by the results of numerous polls, the conclusions of which are that their reactions may be often irrational, and this ought to be reflected on. In extreme cases young people express phobia, fear and plan leaving the country, whereas the older ones behave like their parents during World War II. There are some examples below:

Citizen of Poznań, 62: The war is about to begin, I am sure of that. That is why I am very afraid of that and I think Polish people should prepare for it. I'm afraid the beginning of war would mean the increase of the prices. I wonder if we should start preparing food reserves. Somebody ought to tell us (Polacy boją się, że wojna Rosji z Ukrainą dotrze do Polski 2015).

Citizen of Toruń, 61: It frightens me to see what is happening beyond our eastern border and I am afraid this threat will concern Poland as well. I am afraid of the war. I was born after the war and I remember how great the poverty was. How many people died because of it. In the village where I was born, there was no family that did not lose anybody (Polacy boją się, że wojna Rosji z Ukrainą dotrze do Polski 2015).

In 2014 the group III World War Preparations was created on Facebook. As the moderators write: “Our group mostly serves to prepare for the potential armed conflict in Poland. Therefore we ask the group members to help us create the sets of advice for Polish people concerning following extreme versions of the development of the situation” (www.facebook.com/groups/1451360175093616/ 05. 03. 2014). The group consists of 200 participants (Wasilewska 2014, 34). It may be optimistic to say this is not many. The concern is not only the result of the situation on the Ukraine. Years of real socialism system in Poland brought the feeling of uncertainty for the future for many Polish people. Such situation encourages not only social fears, but also enmity towards others, as well as ethnocentrism.

TV stations are also the ones responsible for creating the feeling of uncertainty. Take Russian military maneuvers and testing of new submarines within the area of Lithuania for example. Lithuanian Prime Minister, Algirdas Butkevicius told the media that the information concerning the maneuvers is classified, and the boss of the Lithuanian border guards, general Renatas Pozela said that his unit had not registered such activities. Polish expert on military issues, Reserve Commander Artur Bilski said: “(...) We are unable to counter [such actions] because we do not have the ships to fight them – that is why the cooperation within NATO is so important” (Wiadomosci TVP 08 April 2016).

To clear the situation on the Polish side, the members of Polish lower house of Parliament have been working on the anti-terrorist bill that would order and define

the area of activities for each of the agencies. Political party PIS argues that the acts are modern and needed, whereas the opposition is against such bill, claiming it will limit citizens' rights (Wiadomosci TVP 19 May 2016).

Even respected commentators seem to allow themselves to be carried away by the ambiance. Well-known historian Antoni Dudek warns against the next partitioning of Poland (Dudek 2014).

Evoking fear is considered an advantage for the potential aggressor. Jacek Przybylski writes that Russia threatens with the Third World War: Our Arabic and American partners have to well consider if they want a full-scale war (Przybylski 2016:22–28). Vladislav Gulewicz presents similar opinion:

It all settles into logical picture. In case of the aggression on the West, the first country to face the hit from Russia would be Poland, that is why the Polish people have something to be afraid of. However, it is Poland itself that has chosen such fate, depriving itself from the status of being neutral, the one it had after the Warsaw Pact collapsed (Gulewicz 2016).

5. The enmity of the Poles towards Russians

The enmity of the Poles towards Russians has been a certain natural background in international relations for centuries, which in itself seems nothing extraordinary, taking into consideration the dark periods of the common history. Such enmity is one of the sources of the stereotypes we may come across today. CBOS polls show clearly that both nations do not like each other, especially recently, when the situation in Ukraine has become more and more unclear and ambiguous. Polish people, faced with their fear of seeing their recent history repeat itself, show their enmity to the Russians, and the Russians answer with the same type of reactions. In the opinions of the Polish, Russia is considered a 'bear' – big, slow, stupid, but dangerous, and Russians – vicious, fraudulent liars with negative approach to the Polish. Also, the Poles have negative image in the eyes of Russians. From the perspective of the interviews with the citizens of Moscow, Yekaterinburg and Wsiewołożys, Poland is associated with a cactus which shows its thorns unnecessarily; as a vindictive and snarky scorpion; a too ambitious dog, barking left and right; a cat that likes stroking and an artful and sneaky fox. Russians were also referring to the Polish as cunning when they compared them to a field bindweed that clings to the stronger plants and profits from them, as for example from the European Union (Staszewski 2015).

On the other hand, Polish-Russian relations are not based on the so-called negative cooperation only. Already during the Ukrainian conflict the Polish government issued the medals for creating a positive image of Poland in Russia. The medal was given, among others, to the granddaughter of one of the most famous Russian and Polish military man, marshal Konstantyn Rokossowski (Polskie ordery dla przyjaciół Moskali 31 July 2014). What is more, Russia is also one of the few

countries where the Polish popular culture products, such as TV series, have been very successful (*Polskie seriale podbijają świat – zapowiada TVP 28 March 2006*).

Looking from such perspective, it seems the Polish people show the greatest animosity towards Vladimir Putin for his politics and hypocrisy. In other words, the negative image of Russia in Poland is connected with the authoritarian character of Russian governing. It seems to be because of Vladimir Putin that the number of Russophobes in Poland has increased from 56% in 1993 to 86% in 2014. It is doubtless that the reason for such rapid increase of animosity towards the Russians is the change of the policy during Putin's first presidency, during the time he was a Prime Minister, and currently. Especially Putin's second presidency brought about massive increase of enmity towards Russians, as it revealed the face of Russia governed by the 'new tsar'. The annexation of Crimea and the 'strange' war in Ukraine evoked fears of Polish people to such a degree that the media, especially Internet, were in raptures. Old prejudices were reborn and Putin became the object of mockery, blame and aggression.

What are the sources of such great enmity towards the Russians? Historical experiences seem to be the source of the reaction to Russian aggression in Ukraine. It is worth remembering what past relations of the two nations with the Russians often cheating the Polish help to understand the fear of the Poles.

Russians are aware of the Polish animosity. Vladislav Gulewicz says: "NATO summit in Warsaw is the part of this chain. Its result is obvious – Warsaw will still be going towards the escalation of tensions near its borders and Polish elites, subjective to Washington, will feed anti-Russian, Russophobic hysteria, presenting the war. And again, as it happened before, it will end laughably" (Gulewicz 2016).

Concluding the issue of Polish animosity towards Russia, the situation of Poland is worth assessing. Poland has been cheated and badly experienced by Russia for many centuries. It would allow to help to understand the fears of the Poles.

6. Consensus

The enmity evokes not only the will to participate actively in the conflict in Ukraine. Many times it makes the Polish feel humble and quiet, because in the face of Russian military power and historical experiences, the Polish prefer not to wake up the 'Russian lion'. CBOS polls have shown that Poland should not stay passive when facing the armed conflict in Ukraine, especially it ought to help within the frames of international cooperation. Among the poll participants, as many as 8% expressed the opinion that Poland should support the newly created Ukrainian government in some special way. Every fifth Pole (21%) is for Poland maintaining its impartiality (*Polska – Rosja Diagnoza Społeczna 2015:5–6*). The highest support among the poll participants received the answer concerning diplomatic activities aiming at pressing Russia to stop the escalation of violence (78%). Over two thirds (70%) claim the international community should back the newly created Ukrainian government financially. Somewhat less often, the participants voted for implementing economic sanctions towards Russia. However,

such activities still have the support of the majority of the Polish people (60%). Two fifths (40%) claim that in the current situation the new Ukrainian government ought to receive military help. Nevertheless, the more popular opinion is that Poland should not offer military help. Only every seventh Pole (13%) claim that the international community should allow to separate Crimea from Ukraine. Two thirds (65%) of the Polish are against such action.

Supporting diplomatic actions and the sanctions towards Russia rises with the educational background of the participants, and the agreement for financial help does not correlate with it. The support for military help is decreasing with the age of the poll participants, and to a smaller degree – with the education background. The youngest participants (75%), students (76%) and the inhabitants of the greatest cities (73%) present the strongest objection towards the issue of separating Crimea from Ukraine. Every twelfth participant (8%) believes that the international community should initiate other activities, but the vast majority cannot determine what forms of help should be applied (17% says ‘it’s difficult to say’, and 20% was very general about it). The participants believing in the need of extra activities mostly point to the need of financial help addressed to society, not to the Ukrainian government (12%), and diplomatic activities, highlighting the need for such discussions and understanding each other (11%). Some pointed to the need for prevention of separating Crimea from Ukraine (5%), supported forceful actions (5%), advised to stay impartial (4%), suggested the division of Crimea (3%), advocated the need to supervise and acknowledge the referendum in Crimea (3%), implied the separation of Russia (3%) or suggested the offer of advice and professional help to the new Ukrainian government (2%) (*Polska – Rosja Diagnoza Społeczna 2015:6*). The consensus towards Russian actions is strengthened with the awareness of NATO effectiveness. The Russians also seem to notice that: “Being targeted is surely not pleasant. However, Warsaw agrees to that mostly because it depends on the presence of the USA and international NATO forces. Minister Waszczykowski during the previous meeting of NATO foreign affairs ministers in Brussels highlighted that it was decided to strengthen the east flank with physical presence of the allied forces. In other words, he suggested Poland is strongly protected” (Połunin 2016).

Vladisvav Gulewicz also seems to perceive this issue in a similar manner:

“However, just two weeks before the visit of Putin in Greece, on 16th May, Waszczykowski, when talking about the NATO summit which was to take place in Warsaw, informed the public that the presence of the USA armed forces and of the international NATO forces in Poland is the answer to ‘very aggressive behaviour and the threat from Russian authorities.’” (Gulewicz 18 May 2016).

Such protection allows to show political animosity openly. In other words, there seems to be total agreement for showing disapproval towards Russian actions in Ukraine. Such behavior is not changed either by the memory of Ukrainian crimes on Polish people or ethnically Russian character of Crimea. Such ‘monolithic’ agreement tends to be easily changed into exaggeration.

7. Disproportionality

Politics and media are the ‘inseparable twins’ when it comes to creating fear among the citizens, strengthening the awareness of the threats they have not known or the ones which even do not exist. Both spheres have their goals in that. Politicians build their electorate by showing the mistakes of their predecessors, the media support potential winners in political battle in order to gain their help in the future. In case of the conflict in Ukraine, politics and the media stood together, criticizing the dysfunctions of the national defense system, showing the citizens more or less pointless solutions in raising their feeling of security.

This article has already mentioned the idea of general Komornicki, concerning the national defense forces, kind of supplementary forces towards military operations, much like the American National Guard. This idea seems good under the condition that such forces would work as some kind of mass mobilization, formations of people who were not prepared to fight. One ought to remember that creating such force is a costly and long-term process, especially when we take into consideration the low capital outlay in case of defense systems in Poland.

The first question to be asked concerns human resources capable of realizing defense actions in Poland. Disproportionality in perceiving the threat is very visible when comparing some of the press titles. *Wprost* from 14th September, 2014 describes how the Polish prepare to run away to Germany. Potential refugees are quoted “when it starts the Germans will close the borders” (Wasilewska 37/2014:33). It is worth noting that nothing whatsoever suggests an imminent start of the conflict nor the German decision not to accept Polish refugees.

What is more, *Wprost* in December 2014 presented the opinions concerning the start of the Third World War. However, it highlights that “the West will not die for Ukraine, and Poland is currently safe. But for Russia Baltic countries are next in line” (Lewicki 12/2014:95). It is worth pointing out that such type of publications are not supplemented with any type of critical commentary. The threat is described, but not the means to fight it.

There are many ideas on this matter, the most spectacular of which seems to be the vision of Paweł Kukiz – former Presidential candidate. In the newspaper *Do Rzeczy*, he claimed: “the country should start to support shooting organizations, as I do not believe in the protection from the side of NATO (Kukiz 2015)”. Quoting Latin saying *si vis pacem para bellum*, which literally means: if you want peace, prepare for war, he claimed: “I do not believe a miracle suddenly happens and until the end of the world there will be no armed conflict in our region” (Kukiz 2015). According to him, one form of reaction is the threat from the East and the weakness of the army; that is why in his opinion 116 thousand hunters should be engaged to create the Polish defense system: there are 116 thousand hunters in Poland! At least half of them use their weapons well, know the forests, know how to move in the field, are able to sneak up on an animal and that means also they can sneak up on an enemy (Kukiz 2015).

The statement that hunters ought to be engaged in defending the country is worth commenting on. Kukiz does not seem to believe in the strength of the Polish Armed Forces. He overestimates the worth of so called ‘levee en masse’ – voluntary troops with limited military training (the ability of shooting does not make a soldier). Such is the type of reaction to the essence of common panic evoked by celebrities (Paweł Kukiz, before the career of a politician was a musician – the founder and the frontman of popular in Poland group called Piersi)¹.

If a public person, who gained over 20 per cent of support among the Polish in residential election presents such theories, what reaction may be expected from his electorate? Uncritical faith of the voters in the election promises allows to formulate the hypothesis that the same people will believe that engaging hunters in national defense system makes sense. They will not even consider the option that the current war does not mean the activities of accidental people with a rifle. The idea of Kukiz and people like him concerning war would steer society into the dangerous state of moral panic, which in an uncoordinated, chaotic and improvised way forces ill-considered actions. There is also one more important element of moral panic, that is the power of extrapolation and of copying: it means copying more or less absurd ideas created by incompetent people.

Fakt newspaper, in the article from 5th March, 2015, writes that “the fallout shelters are only in Podkarpacie” (Kowalczyk 5 March 2015:8). The article is accompanied by the picture of a demolished room signed “we found only one fallout shelter in Warsaw – in the cellar of the house in Wola. It is not suited for use” (Kowalczyk 5 March 2015:8).

The fears of the readers are strengthened by the series of articles about the faults of Polish armor. The magazine *Polityka* says that newly gained tanks Leopard are not the symbol of modernity of the Polish Army, but of being behind the times. *Polityka* points to the fact that in other armies the focus is on drones (Ćwieluch 28 May 2014:48).

Similarly, in *Fakt* Łukasz Maziewski in the article from 30th April 2016 writes: “Our tanks too weak for Russians”: he quotes the words of German journalists that such machines do not have the ammunition good enough to manage thick cover of the modern Russian tanks T-90 Vladimir, as well as with older machines, T-80. *Gazeta Polska* from 15th October 2014 writes about “Paper Polish Armed Forces”. The plans concerning the evacuation of the government are also included (*W razie wojny ... Rząd ucieka* 13/15). In fact, preparing such plans is the normal duty of the organs responsible for the safety of the authorities, but in the face of potential armed conflict it sounds apocalyptic.

Such type of publication increases the fear leading to moral panic. It is worth deciding if the fallout shelters are really needed to defend the capital in given situation or if it is not a ‘rhetoric attack’ of the paper. There is also no information concerning the faults of the equipment the opponent uses, which is in fact similar to the one used by Poland.

¹ The play of words: *piersi* can be translated both as number one or as breasts.

To sum up these words one may take into consideration the Report on defenselessness, written by Juliusz Ćwieluch. He writes that Antoni Macierewicz was not telling the truth when saying that in autumn the Polish Army was not ready to prepare the defense and it has not changed. Nothing changed (Ćwieluch 28 May 2016:49).

Sometimes, however, there are ideas, although not proportional in perceiving the threat, may make sense. For example, such were the exercises 200 people took part in 2014 in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. The aim of the activities was to improve partisan war with Russian soldiers. The idea and its realization was so interesting that it gained the support and the patronage of the National Security Bureau. As Tomasz Badowski, the CEO of Research Institute of International Relation claims, when commenting on the activities in TOK FM: "(...) in case of hybrid war, which we deal with in eastern Ukraine, such type of organizations have a big role to play. They could confront the soldiers (Polacy ćwiczą wojnę partyzancką 2015).

The problem is the ethnic structure of Donbas, which is not what one may find in Poland, in other words, hybrid aggression against Poland would have to be performed with methods and techniques different than over there. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that there is social energy directed towards defending the homeland. That may help cease the feeling of panic.

The range of such type of activities is emphasized by the fact that for the first time they were observed by the representatives of the General Command of Forces Components and by the deputy Minister of Defense (Polacy ćwiczą wojnę partyzancką, 2015).

Also, professor Romuald Szeremietiew, former Deputy Minister of Defense, when in discussion with Jakub Szczepański claims, with little money one may create the defense system able to protect the country (Gdyby doszło do konfliktu z Rosją, to byłoby cienko 2015). From the interview with the former Minister of Defense one may conclude that the defense system of Poland should be supplemented with the formation created on the example of the Home Army, ready to run asymmetric actions. He argues the necessity of using 20 times bigger forces to fight partisans, where in case of the conventional army there are 3 times bigger forces needed. In the second part of the interview he claims that:

"(...) making territorial defense forces is cheap. Such army does not need heavy equipment and expensive, complicated weapons. Partisan war needs light, small-arms weapons, explosive materials, anti-tank grenade launchers etc. one may also use cyberspace. Hackers may make big mess in managing and leading systems of the opponent. Such irregular activities need to be worked on. I think it could be one of the ways to scare the enemy away" (Gdyby doszło do konfliktu z Rosją, to byłoby cienko 2015).

As stated above, the features of moral panic are mixed with taking logical and needed, defensive actions. The problem, and at the same time, the symptoms of the moral panic are the actions and overreaction that always seem to be merged, connected with undertaking activities suddenly and with no strategic thinking,

even though they ought to be regular and routine. All this appears to create the climate of exaggeration – disproportionality.

Nonetheless, moral panic is a negative issue with an adverse impact on managing the country. Disproportionality in the era of limited resources means deficiencies in the long term, thus disarming, or undermining the possibility to create appropriate defense reaction.

8. Conclusion

The issue of moral panic has negative, far-reaching implications for public management and for national safety. How strongly it can affect national safety may be seen in the fact that the flagship scientific work for this notion, written by Stanley Cohen, is in fact devoted to the relations between moral panic and national security. The effects of the moral panic are as follows:

1. Wrong allocation of the resources – the means and the forces are devoted to solving the problems which do not require full engagement.
2. It increases the feeling of fear in the society, thus either increasing aggression or on the contrary, passiveness, as a result.
3. It leads to law deterioration – implementing regulations ad hoc, which are not in line with other parts of the legal system.
4. It forces hasty actions, which in normal conditions would be performed better, with more precision and more cheaply.

Therefore, moral panic is the desired phenomenon, but from the perspective of the enemy.

As Paweł Purski from Eastbook.eu claims: (...) in Crimea they know perfectly well what statistic the Pole is afraid of. Their specialists take care of feeding the proper topics for the discussions conducted at a Sunday table. The goal of such spin is to create the impression that Russia is a no-nonsense country and it is better to compromise in case of the Donbas conflict (Purski 2015).

One of the desired issues is cumulating fear of using nuclear weapons. Psychosis of this threat exploded on 4th September because of *Foreign Policy*, which published an article concerning the possibility of Putin using nuclear weapons against Poland, with the hit planned on Warsaw. As a result, the text, copied in Polish social media sites, created extraordinary reactions.

Fears, threats and overreaction are what ‘Ivan’ feeds on, although ‘he’ denies it. Vladislav Gulewicz says:

“This is not us feeding aggressive, war feelings. This is not Russia which provokes war, which history has proved many times during decades. However, this is Russia which always finishes the wars started by the West, saving Europe from one aggressor or another” (Gulewicz 18 May 2016).

On the other hand, arming seems needed, as there are other threats than ‘Ivan’.

The current deputy head of Pentagon, Robert Work explained that “as long as Iran will be working on ballistic missiles, the USA together with their partners will

work on NATO and all their allies defenses against this threat” (Połunin 31 May 2016).

Such approach seems important also because of the conditions of Polish Army. As Andrzej Sikorski says:

“We have continuous problems with training, especially for headquarters, military staff and reserves. That is why there is nobody to train, as many officers have not completed higher military education, but only yearly courses and know little about military affairs. Besides, the Army for many years has been practicing the scenario of the intervention in some distant country, forgetting that defending the homeland is the most important matter. It is said we have finished with interventions so far, but before we are trained in defense, we may die in battle. That may contribute to the rule that a soldier will not tell lies to the Ministry of Defense, but will not tell everything” (Sikorski 39/14).

The officers of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) point to the state of the military equipment, and to its age. NIK also highlights insufficient number of reserves (Liźniewicz 08 August 2014).

However, taking into account the potential threat of Russia, one needs to remember that this is Poland’s everlasting enemy and friend at the same time, who should not be afraid of or panicked about. ‘Ivan’ has his own problems which will not be solved over the next decade. ‘Ivan’ is also the potential victim of the moral panic, although one ought to admit that the Russian media, partly controlled by the government, are not such a great trigger of moral panic as it may happen in case of democratic states and as has happened in Poland.

Moral panic affects Poland and Russia also in the context of modern demographic changes (Gaweda 26–28 October 2016, Life and Death in Russia conference).

To sum up, moral panic is the issue whose range also seems to concern the notion of national security. Unfortunately, it seems surprising, as it is rarely considered from this perspective, especially with regard to the conflict in Ukraine and the reaction of the public opinion to it. Nonetheless, the damage moral panic creates would considerably weaken the quality of managing the country and its defense system. That is why it seems prudent not to forget this highly efficient tool of creating disruption among the citizens. Highly efficient, obviously, from the perspective of a potential aggressor, or simply enemy, interested in creating as chaotic ambience as possible, thus enabling themselves to reach their goals more easily, whichever they might be or whatever they might concern. Moral panic would make it more difficult to restore peace and calm among neighboring nations, even if other factors responsible for preserving the state and condition without the aggressive actions between the nations would be met. Moral panic would add to prolonging the time needed for stabilizing the situation and might ruin any actions focused on fulfilling real needs and answering real problems of everyday life the neighbors are doomed to lead, even if only partly.

One may only hope to make one of the steps needed to clear the battlefield and to understand intended or accidental actions of manipulation better, especially if

understanding how moral panic works may help to avoid reacting in a way that would in fact destabilize the situation even more.

The Ukrainian conflict continues and still takes its toll. The progress of the rebels working in fact with the Russian Army may be giving rise to heightened moral activity leading directly to moral panic. How intense it is will not only depend on the real or imaginary importance of the occurrence, but also on the existence of other reasons for heightened moral activity, e.g. the mass arrival of refugees.

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