What Has Happened to Ukraine

Inertial Scenario for Ukraine's National and Political Identity

Alexei V. Popov

Abstract

This article is a study of the evolution of the Ukrainian national and political identity in the context of the most important aspects of its formation, singled out by the author. The author's methods are based on the principle of historicism. He analyzes the formation and development of political practices and the political regime in Ukraine in the 20th-21st centuries, and compares peculiarities of the ethnic, cultural and political development of Ukraine with that of Russia and other countries in Eastern Europe. Prospects for the development of the political situation in Ukraine are discussed through the prism of the geopolitical paradigm. The author points out that during the Soviet period there were factors that worked for the separation of Ukrainians from Russians and those that worked against it. In the post-Soviet period, under the influence of growing ethnic and civic nationalism, globalism and some peculiarities of Ukrainian political culture separatist tendencies prevailed. The current conflict in Donbass has entered into a smoldering phase, which is most advantageous to the Ukrainian authorities. He describes as unlikely the possibility of major changes in the Ukrainian regime. The more probable scenario, in his opinion, is inertial.

Key words: National identity, ethnic and civic nationalism, Ukrainian political culture, Russophobia, Euromaidan, political conformism, military actions in Donbass, de-russification, limited political competition

Alexei V. Popov is an expert with the Kiev Center of Political Studies and Conflictology (http://www.analitik.org.ua/).
kcpik@kcpik.org.ua

The question "What has happened to Ukraine?" has been asked in Russia for almost three decades, but especially in the last four years. This question is based on the impressions of Russians who visited Ukraine in Soviet times and in the early years of its independence—the absence of marked differences between Russians and Ukrainians in everyday life was too evident. After the events of recent years, it seems that these observers failed to see something very important behind this seeming closeness. But does this mean that we should accept the pet idea of Ukrainian nationalists that there has always been an abyss between the two peoples?

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EMPIRE

Differences between Russians and Ukrainians, for example in folk culture, are obvious. But the question is, how great the role of these differences is in specific circumstances, and how they changed with time. One proof of these differences is the estrangement, observed by many researchers, between Ukrainian and Russian villages in areas populated by the two ethnic groups, the rarity of mixed marriages and the negative attitude towards them. There is a similar problem in Kazakhstan among people belonging to different *zhuz* (tribal divisions), but it is considered a consequence of purely intertribal differences within one people.

On the other hand, in the Russian Empire, too, the problem of mixed marriages was limited to villages. There were no Russian or Ukrainian districts in cities, and numerous Ukrainian students in Russian universities did not organize fraternities (unlike, for example, Poles or Georgians). The Ukrainian language, in its version that existed in Russia in the 19th-early 20th centuries, was understood by Russians, which was confirmed by performances of Ukrainian theatrical companies across the Russian Empire.

The scale of the differences that existed at that time was best described by Mikhail Dragomanov, a prominent figure in the Ukrainian movement: "Even if this may make me a 'cursed Mazepa' for a certain type of Ukrainian nationalists, I still should say that

equating the Russification of Poland, for example, to that of Ukraine is unconvincing and awkward. Even if Ukrainian scientists recognized that the Ukrainian nationality is also separate from the Muscovite one, not only like the Polish nationality but even like the German or Finnish one, this would not mean that the 'Russification' of Ukraine is the same as the 'Russification' of Poland. In Poland, national separation and the right to autonomy is embraced not only by academicians but also by the man-in-the-street and is proclaimed in every way by Polish peasants, landlords and writers alike. In Ukraine, things are different." (Dragomanov, 1991).

It was the closeness of Russians and Ukrainians that helped the latter assimilate in the Russian Federation. According to the 1897 census, the Ukrainian language was native to 22 percent of people in the Kursk province, 36 percent in the Voronezh province, 37 percent in the Stavropol province, 28 percent in the Province of the Don Cossack Host, and 47 percent in the Kuban region. In 12 counties of these territories, Ukrainian-speaking people constituted an absolute majority. Many Ukrainians lived in Siberia and, especially, in the Russian Far East, where they also usually settled in compact groups. For example, according to the 1926 census in the Soviet Union, almost a third of the population of the Vladivostok district of the Far Eastern Territory did not just speak Ukrainian but identified themselves as Ukrainians. I am ready to admit that their assimilation created problems at the personal level, but if these problems had been significant, they would undoubtedly have manifested themselves at the political level and would still be noticeable. However, Russia has no problems with the autochthonous Ukrainian population.

However, we cannot say that the closeness of Russians and Ukrainians was a one-sided game and led to the transformation of Ukrainians into Russians. For example, during the Time of Troubles in the early 17th century, Poland captured part of the present Chernigov and Sumy regions. Were people who lived in those territories Russians or Ukrainians at the time? In any case, the multi-volume history of Ukraine by Mikhail Grushevsky contains no hint that the Ukrainian people reunited within the framework of the Polish-Lith-

uanian Commonwealth during that war. Less than three decades later, Russia recaptured those territories, but administratively they were now united into the Chernigov Regiment and were an organic part of the autonomous Cossack Hetmanate. The region was the birthplace of many Ukrainian figures, among them Hetman Demyan Mnogogreshny.

During the same war of 1654-1667, Russia also recaptured Smolensk, whose heroic defense in the Time of Troubles is still remembered. Nevertheless, within several decades there formed a new identity in the Smolensk region, which was not Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian or Russian. From the middle of the 18th century, members of the Smolensk nobility avoided marrying Russians. In 1764, Empress Catherine the Great, in a letter to Prosecutor General Alexander Vyazemsky, described Smolensk, as well as Little Russia, Livonia, and Finland as provinces that "must be Russified in the easiest possible way, so that they stop being like wolves hankering for the woods" (Solovyov, 1990). But now the Russianness of Smolensk is unquestionable, and its attainment did not require measures comparable to the conquest of the Caucasus or even the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich, which happened not because of Russian-Ukrainian antagonisms but because of the authorities' desire to ensure a quiet life for Polish landowners, whose lands became part of Russia as a result of the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as Zaporozhians formed the basis of haidamak groups.

Here is one more example: in the middle of the 17th century, many Ukrainians, mainly those from right-bank Ukraine who fled constant war, settled in Russia's Wild Fields and formed Sloboda Ukraine (Slobozhanshchyna). Yet, while remaining ethnic Ukrainians, local residents did not seek to become Ukrainians in the administrative sense, that is, by joining the Hetmanate, and did not participate in turbulent political processes that took place there until the beginning of the 18th century. In fact, until Catherine's administrative reforms, there were two autonomous Ukraines that peacefully coexisted within the Russian Empire—the Hetmanate and Slobozhanshchyna.

Alexei V. Popov

UKRAINIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC AS FORERUNNER OF INDEPENDENT UKRAINE

The above shows that the identity of both Russians and Ukrainians was largely shaped by which of the two states their territory belonged to and by the status of their territory.

Therefore, the creation of Ukrainian quasi-statehood in the form of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic played a key role in the separation of the two peoples. This turned Ukraine from an abstract concept into an officially designated territory with attributes of a state. Yes, there were the Ukrainian People's Republic and Pavel Skoropadsky's Ukrainian State in 1918-1919, which formally were independent states, but, unlike Soviet Ukraine, they existed for too short a time to leave an impact on society. In contrast, the decades of Soviet Ukraine's existence habituated its citizens, regardless of ethnicity, to the idea that they lived in Ukraine.

Probably, everything could have been different if the Soviet Union had been built as a federation of territories with due regard for ethnic peculiarities, that is, if there had been several federal subjects in place of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, where the status of the Ukrainian language would have been the same as its status in Soviet Ukraine. We cannot say that such a model would have destroyed the Ukrainian identity, but in that case it would have had to compete with regional identities, which the state structure would have sought to consolidate. In Spain, for example, there is the Catalan problem, but it concerns only Catalonia and does not concern the Balearic Islands where Catalan is one of the official languages.

However, the Soviet Union was formally built as an ethnic federation, and this model allowed combining local interests with national ones. The Ukrainian state structure (people's commissariats, etc.) served as the basis that united nationalists and non-nationalists. In other words, it gave birth to civic nationalism, which was broader than ethnic nationalism but included the latter.

Ethnic Ukrainians were in a minority in the first government of Soviet Ukraine, but this factor did not prevent many of them from upholding the idea of maximum independence for the Soviet republic. Where-

as in 1922 Dmitry Manuilsky, the son of a Volynian Orthodox priest and the first secretary of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine, advocated Stalin's autonomization plan, the head of the Council of People's Commissars of Ukraine, Christian Rakovsky, a Bulgarian and a former Romanian citizen who had never visited the Soviet Union or Ukraine before the Civil War, called for maximum independence for the republic, including in foreign policy and foreign trade. Mikhail Volobuyev, an ethnic Russian from Nikolayev, was the ideologist of Ukraine's economic independence, and another ethnic Russian, Nikolai Khvylevoy (his real surname was Fitilyov), the author of the slogan "Away from Moscow," advocated Ukraine's cultural separation from Russia.

In general, there were tendencies in Soviet Ukraine that worked for the separation of Ukrainians from Russians and those that worked against it.

For example, a Ukrainian state entity for the first time ever coexisted side by side with a Russian state entity—the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Although other countries and many people in the Soviet Union still called the latter Russia, officially the territory called Russia shrank to the size of the RSFSR.

The idea of pan-Russian identity based on the triune Russian nation was replaced with an idea of fraternal socialist nations united into the Soviet people. The pan-Soviet identity was propagated much more actively in Soviet times than the pan-Russian one. However, this identity worked only within the rigid frameworks of official ideology. In addition, the Soviet leadership actively cultivated the idea that Russians and Ukrainians were brotherly nations. However, this thesis presupposed a lesser degree of unity than that of the Soviet nation.

The very existence of Soviet Ukraine's statehood objectively made people without clear identity accept Ukrainian identity, while the Soviet practice of indicating nationality in passports made people think that nationality was a matter of blood, rather than self-identity. Objectively, it worked against Russian-culture people in Ukraine who considered themselves Russians.

Another factor that worked for the separation was Ukrainian-language education. Alexei Miller thinks that the absence of compulsory

secondary education in Russia was one of the main reasons why efforts to assimilate Ukrainians failed before the revolution (Miller, 2000). On the other hand, Harvard Professor Sergei Plokhy links the victory of Ukrainian identity over Russian identity in Galicia at the beginning of the 20th century to the introduction of secondary education in Ukrainian (Plokhy, 2015). In Soviet Ukraine, the main way to eradicate illiteracy in the 1920s was through the teaching of the Ukrainian language. The number of students at Ukrainian-language secondary schools exceeded the number of students who studied in Russian. It was only in the 1980s that the trend reversed a little. Also, the republican and local press used mainly the Ukrainian language.

At the same time, the role of Ukrainian-language education in Soviet Ukraine was largely offset by the spread of the Russian language, especially in cities, and the feeling that Russian culture was also native to Ukraine. And this factor worked for rapprochement.

The renunciation of Ukrainization in the 1930s in practice meant only the removal of administrative barriers to the Russian language in Ukraine and its compulsory study at school. The Ukrainian language gave way to Russian as an urban language, which broadened people's life prospects, and the balance between Ukrainian- and Russian-language schools changed primarily as a result of urbanization.

This process took place at the grassroots level, rather than under administrative pressure. This is evidenced by the opposition of such classics of Soviet Ukrainian literature as Pavel Tychina, Nikolai Bazhan, and Maxim Rylsky to the educational reform of 1958, which provided one of the few rights of choice that existed in the Soviet Union—the right of parents to choose the language of instruction for their children (the writers argued that ethnic Ukrainians must attend Ukrainian-language schools).

An outstanding figure of the Ukrainian national movement, Ivan Dzyuba, recognized the natural character of Ukraine's Russification through urbanization: "I studied Russian philology at the Stalino Pedagogical Institute (now Donetsk State University). We all spoke in Russian, although we had no disdain for the Ukrainian language and knew it well. Later, I came to understand that a whole nation, with its

culture and language, was disappearing; and if each of us did not feel concern about this, then we would vanish one by one and there would remain no one who would live for Ukraine" (Dzyuba, 2006).

In other words, the Ukrainian language was not despised in the Soviet Union but was valued as a language of rich folklore, and by many as a language of information (there was a shortage of good literature in the country, and works by many foreign authors were easier to find in Ukrainian). At the same time, everyday communication in Russian was psychologically natural. This meant that for many Ukrainians switching to Russian was organic. However, the organic nature of this mass Russification caused a reaction from an active minority of the intelligentsia, above all artists, who accused Russia and Russians of all real and imaginary sins in the hope that growing intolerance might prevent a further spread of the Russian language. Russophobia is more widespread among Ukrainian high culture artists (this phenomenon emerged even before the 1990s) than among their Polish or Baltic colleagues. But whereas Russophobia in these countries exists among both the elites and the general public, in Ukraine, at least beyond Galicia, there were no anti-Russian sentiments among the masses until 2014.

The intolerance of the Ukrainian-speaking intellectual elite is largely directed not so much against ethnic Russians from Russia as against their Russian-speaking compatriots from the East, who are considered mankurts and janissaries. Ukrainian writer Oles Gonchar in his diaries repeatedly admired achievements of Russian culture but, at the same time, he wrote in June 1990: "It is necessary that thousands and thousands of missionaries move from the West to the East (...) to give millions of people who were duped in the era of totalitarianism a lesson of national dignity (...) so that they see the light and become humans" (Gonchar, 2005). These words are even more radical than the division of Ukrainians into first- and second-rate people from an anti-commercial video about Victor Yushchenko during the 2004 presidential election campaign, which was believed to be a provocation by Kremlin political consultants.

For members of the Ukrainian national movement, the urban population of South-East Ukraine was assimilated. But the original

meaning of the word "assimilation" is "likening." Therefore, it would be absolutely legitimate to speak of the assimilation of Ukrainians in Russia, both autochthonous and those who came from Ukraine, at least with respect to people who began to consider themselves Russians and who were almost always viewed by the local Russian population as Russians (unlike, for example, Russian-culture Jews, Armenians and members of many other ethnic groups, who thought of themselves as Russians). Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine, on the one hand, were viewed by the overwhelming majority of their Ukrainian-speaking compatriots as belonging to their ilk. On the other hand, although they felt no antagonism towards ethnic Russians in Russia (this antagonism was not seen among Ukrainian-speaking people, either, except Galicia), they did not identify themselves as Russians. For them, the notion 'Ukraine' was associated primarily not with the Ukrainian language but with other things, such as the football club Dynamo Kiev which was much more popular in the South-East than Moscow clubs, or with better-supplied shops compared with shops in Russia (except Moscow). And the destruction of Soviet identity did not turn them into Russians.

Russian-speaking activists of the Ukrainian dissident movement usually did not question the republic's right to independence within the borders of Soviet Ukraine. Some of them were ready to accept not only this kind of independence but also the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism. For example, Pyotr Grigorenko ended up as a Ukrainian nationalist and even attended and spoke at a congress of the SS Galicia Division (Hryhorenko, 1992), and Victor Nekrasov, the author of "Front-Line Stalingrad," called himself an OUN member of Russian origin" (Skuratovskiĭ, 2010).

INDEPENDENT UKRAINE: THE CULTURE OF POLITICAL COMPROMISE AND THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

The sovereignization of Ukraine and the proclamation of its independence in 1991 did not entail serious internal conflicts, which was due to an organic consolidation of nationalists and non-nationalists on the basis of state structure, which was discussed above. Similar consolidation took place in the Baltic states and Georgia as well, but the share of

these elements in Ukraine was different. Here nationalists, for all their activism and prominence, played second fiddle to the *nomenklatura*, and perhaps it was due to this that there were no politically influential inter-fronts and separatist movements in Ukraine. On the contrary, Ukraine was the only Soviet republic to create an autonomous entity in its territory, Crimea, during the *perestroika* years. The hypothesis that Ukraine's independence was an accidental phenomenon arising from the ruling *nomenklatura's* fear of Boris Yeltsin is unfounded. On the contrary, even before that, the same *nomenklatura* unanimously opposed the Novo-Ogaryovo draft of a New Union Treaty, and it was the understanding that Ukraine would not sign this treaty that was one of the reasons for the August 1991 coup.

It is well known that Ukraine gained independence without having traditions of statehood and political culture. The practice of Soviet Ukraine (with the exception of the last few years of *perestroika*) was the practice of much greater ideological restraints, compared with other republics in the Soviet Union's European part (for example, many plays that were allowed in the RSFSR were banned from being performed in Ukraine even by guest theater companies). Also, it was the practice of mimicry by part of the elite (primarily the literary intelligentsia), who had the same nationalist views as dissidents but who opted to make a career within the system.

This background did not seem favorable for building a new state. However, Ukraine of the early 1990s—a country of "red directors," collective farm chairmen and other Soviet *nomenklatura*—had an advantage over Russia as a country that peacefully resolved its conflicts. When Russia saw a bloody confrontation between the president and parliament, the Verkhovna Rada and President Leonid Kravchuk, in response to miners' strikes and general discontent of the population, agreed to hold early elections in early 1994, which led to a democratic change of power. All subsequent internal conflicts were settled peacefully (conflicts between the president and parliament in 1995 and 1996 over the powers of the two branches of government, the tape-recording scandal of 2000-2001, the first Maidan of 2004, and conflicts over the dissolution of the Verkhovna Rada by the

president in 2007 and 2008). In many cases, it was a bad peace but an undoubted peace.

There was the impression that Ukrainian political culture was being formed as a culture of compromise, which was reflected in the country's constitutional order. For all the disputes relating to the basic law, the issue of making Ukraine a purely presidential or purely parliamentary republic was never seriously discussed. Discussions mainly focused on broadening the powers of the president or the Verkhovna Rada within the framework of a hybrid model.

But there was less compromise in humanitarian policy. Being a bilingual state de facto, Ukraine remained a monolingual state de jure. The declarative mention of the Russian language in the Constitution did not give it any guarantees. This made the Ukrainian fundamental law essentially different from the constitutions of a majority of Eastern European countries which, although more monolingual than Ukraine, provide guarantees for non-state languages in their basic laws.

In the political discourse of the early 1990s the prevailing view was that state bilingualism in the current situation would consolidate the domination of the Russian language, and that preferences should be introduced for the Ukrainian language—an analogue of affirmative action for African Americans in the United States—to rectify the situation that had developed during the years of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. People holding this view argued that Ukrainians were a nation colonized and enslaved by Russians, although an absolute majority of Ukrainians did not feel enslaved and did not feel a barrier between themselves and Russians, like that between white and black Americans. The language problem could have been effectively solved if Ukraine had adopted the Canadian model of bilingualism which requires a broad range of officials to speak two languages, thus guaranteeing that social services are provided to citizens in the language of their choice. Even a less radical bilingual model would have increased the spread of the Ukrainian language, because the very status of Ukraine as an independent state would have made this language prestigious. This is illustrated, for example, by the experience of reviving the Basque language in the Basque Country, although its

position at the time when the Basque Autonomous Community was established in Spain was worse than that of the Ukrainian language in Soviet Ukraine.

However, such a compromise was unacceptable to the nationalist part of the Ukrainian elite, since its goal was to recode Ukrainian society and establish the domination of the Ukrainian language in public life. There emerged a paradoxical situation. For many years, public opinion polls showed that the total percentage of supporters of a nationwide official status for the Russian language and supporters of an official status for it in Russian-speaking regions exceeded 70 percent. However, this solid arithmetic majority never turned into a political majority. The Kolesnichenko-Kivalov law, adopted during the presidency of Victor Yanukovich, objectively reflected views of the majority of society, but was unequivocally opposed by all opposition factions in the Verkhovna Rada. This was a manifestation—at a new level and under new conditions—of a phenomenon known from Soviet times: support for compromise was stronger among ordinary people than among the elites.

Many reasons explain the passivity of the Russian-speaking part of society. For example, the closeness of the two languages alleviated the problem. Therefore, many Russians organically became Ukrainians within the framework of the Ukrainian state, just as Ukrainians became Russians in the RSFSR and the Russian Federation. In addition, people in South-East Ukraine were more inclined not to protest but rely on the state and adapt to it. Besides, there was no need for adults to adapt, as they were not obliged to attend Ukrainian-language courses, as was the case in the 1920s-early 1930s. Getting one's child enrolled in a Ukrainian-language school did not seem to be a problem because of the closeness of the languages, while administrative actions of the authorities were taken gradually and were neutralized by other factors. For example, the Ukrainization of electronic media under Kuchma coincided with the introduction of cable television which offered Russian-language channels; and print media and book publishing ceased to be an object of state regulation, which led to an even greater spread of the Russian language in these spheres than had been the case

in Soviet Ukraine. The import of books from Russia and performances of Russian entertainers were not limited by the state, and the development of the Internet created many additional opportunities for consuming Russian culture. However, we cannot equate this kind of consumption with Russian identity.

THE FACTOR OF GLOBALISM

The Russian-speaking intelligentsia and the emerging Russian-speaking "creative class" had not dreamt for years of an independent state and the recognition of the absolute inherent value of this state. They viewed independence only as the most practical way to put an end to the Iron Curtain and enter the "civilized world" and the "world community." This group of society was convinced that the world order that had emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union was reasonable and useful.

"There has emerged the only pole in the world—the U.S. (…) I pin my hopes only on a unipolar world—it is easier to make decisions when there is an authoritative arbiter. Plus there is the Security Council (and NATO), which have a "big stick" and can stop military conflicts" (Amosov, 2003).

This was an excerpt from "My Worldview," written in 1999 by Nikolai Amosov, an outstanding surgeon and ethnic Russian from Kiev.

He embraced the ideology of globalism not because of grants but because of the hegemony of Western civilization in the world. I mean hegemony as understood by Antonio Gramsci—not just a superiority in economic development, which allows countries belonging to this civilization to advance their interests, but, first of all, additional power arising due to the fact that the interests of these countries are viewed as universal and embodying the idea of "progress."

The hegemony of the West developed over centuries, but in the era of globalism it became stronger. For example, Westernism is well known as an ideological trend in Russia. But the war with Turkey in 1877-1878 created a public consensus—the idea of liberating Slavic peoples looked unequivocally progressive for revolutionary and Ukrainian nationalist Dragomanov, who only added that one should

fight not only "external Turks" but also "internal" ones. No one thought of taking the side of the Ottoman Empire as a progressive country which, unlike Russia, had a constitution and parliamentary elections. And today a large part of the Russian intelligentsia supports Ukraine's actions in Donbass, not to mention the Russian-speaking intelligentsia of Ukraine. I think the acceptance of globalism has endowed some citizens with additional self-identity—not only as members of their ethnic group or state, but also as members of the civilized world.

The acceptance of globalism meant that any integration with Russia was an obstacle to integration into this world. The attitude of this part of the intellectual class towards Russia worsened as the "civilized world" increasingly criticized Moscow for its independent policy. This factor makes one think that an active use by Russia of its soft power, like the American-style distribution of grants, would have hardly reversed the situation.

The consequences of the adoption of globalism were not limited to the rejection of the Russian vector by Russian-culture Ukrainians. Another side of this phenomenon was the acceptance by many Russian- and Ukrainian-culture people of the idea of external governance of Ukraine, something inconceivable to traditional nationalists of the first half of the 20th century. Simon Petlyura, Stepan Bandera and their associates often agreed to disadvantageous compromises with external players, but these steps resulted from their objective political weakness. Yet, they did not doubt that with the creation of a Ukrainian state, internal problems would be solved by themselves, as the power would belong to Ukrainians. The Euromaidan was a consequence of the belief among part of society that it was only European control over the Ukrainian authorities that would make them work in the interests of the people, plus the appointment of foreigners to government posts, as was the case with the first government of Arseny Yatsenyuk, and the invitation of a Georgian team led by Mikhail Saakashvili. Thus, the Euromaidan objectively was not only a rejection of the Russian vector and a concrete specific political regime embodied by Yanukovich, but also a disillusionment with the possibility of building a democracy in Ukraine. The belief in the need for external control for the state's

development means a lack of faith in internal democratic mechanisms through which society could control the state from within.

Of course, the political influence of the intellectual class was much less than that of oligarchs and big business in general. But this business had practical motives to support European integration: on the one hand, it had already become the main beneficiary of the globalization process, and on the other hand, it viewed this integration as additional legitimation of its assets, including those kept abroad.

For many ordinary people, European integration was attractive regardless of their attitude towards Russia. Any integration project in the post-Soviet space, ideologized or not, did not seem like a guarantee of a miracle. But integration with the EU was viewed as such because, unlike the life of Russians, the life of Germans or the English seemed a miracle to Ukrainians.

WHY THE DIVISION HAS NOT TAKEN FINAL SHAPE

Nevertheless, the number of supporters of the Russian vector was still great, as evidenced by protests in South-Eastern regions after the Euromaidan. But there are several reasons why these protests largely failed.

A large part of Ukrainian society and the elite gravitate towards conformism and are willing to take the side of the winners or, at least, trust them. Public opinion polls showed that, although political preferences of citizens were divided almost equally at the 2004 and 2010 elections and during the Euromaidan, immediately after the elections the winners and their political forces enjoyed much greater sympathy of society than it could have been expected considering the voting results. In October 2004, Victor Yushchenko received 39.9 percent of the vote in the first round, but in March 2005, according to a poll conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 49.2 percent of people who definitely planned to go to the polling stations said they would vote for his bloc at parliamentary elections. In all, about 55 percent of people supported Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko, while the percentage of voters who supported their opponents was almost four times smaller. Even in the east of Ukraine less than a third of citizens had an unfavorable opinion of the then president, and half were

neutral about him (Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2005). In January 2010, Victor Yanukovich received 35.3 percent of votes in the first round. However, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the same institute in March of the same year, 46.3 percent of respondents were ready to vote for the Party of Regions (Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2010). In November 2013, shortly before the protests began, 53.5 percent of people supported political forces that later became pro-Euromaidan parties, while 40 percent supported anti-Maidan parties (Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2013). A poll conducted one to two weeks before the victory of the Euromaidan showed that only 40 percent of those polled sympathized with the protesters (Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2014a). But in March 2014, the pro-Euromaidan parties were supported by 74.4 percent of people, with only 20.5 percent of people supporting anti-Maidan forces (Kiev International Institute of sociology, 2014b).

The phenomenon when part of supporters of the previous regime take the side of the new authorities is not purely Ukrainian. The French political system has been based on this phenomenon since 2002, as parliamentary elections are held immediately after presidential elections, which invariably guarantees the presidential party a solid majority in the National Assembly, even if this is a recently formed pro-presidential party, as was the case with Emmanuel Macron.

In Ukraine, however, the switching of sides takes place on a larger scale. For example, President Kuchma and Prime Minister Yanukovich had a majority in the Verkhovna Rada elected in 2002, which decreased somewhat in the last few months before the 2004 elections. Yet, newly elected President Yushchenko did not have any problems with the same parliament. The Ukrainian parliament elected in 2007 supported Prime Minister Timoshenko, but after Yanukovich won a presidential election in February 2010 he had a solid majority in it until the next election. Yanukovich also had a majority in parliament elected in 2012 until the last days of the Euromaidan. However, after the victory of the Euromaidan, a coalition was formed in parliament that supported the new authorities. It united factions and groups of 235 deputies in the 450-seat parliament, of whom 69 did not belong to pro-Euromaidan

parties. Also, 371 deputies, including almost all deputies from the Party of Regions, voted to appoint Yatsenyuk as prime minister.

Can these figures serve as grounds to classify the Euromaidan as a coup d'état and accuse the new regime of failing to build a government of national accord, provided for by the agreement between Yanukovich and the opposition? A coup d'état presupposes suspending and resetting the functioning of government institutions, whereas this agreement did not specify what a national accord government should look like. On the other hand, the essence of such governments is to unite people of different political views, rather than make their members and supporters give up their former beliefs.

Yet, at least half of the population of all eight administrative regions of mainland South-East Ukraine viewed the Euromaidan as a coup, because, according to a survey conducted in early April 2014 by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, only a third of respondents in these regions (the survey was not conducted in Crimea and Sevastopol) considered Yatsenyuk and Turchinov legitimate heads of government and state, while half of respondents considered them illegitimate (Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2014c). However, the elite of the South-East did not question the legitimacy of the new government. The most it was ready to do was consider this government undesirable and due to be replaced at the next election.

The conformism of the South-East elite, which only recently was at the head of the anti-Maidan movement, surpassed the conformism of society many times over, because this elite had much to lose. But in this situation, the masses of protesters who considered the Euromaidan a coup found themselves without their usual leaders. New leaders emerged spontaneously from among protesters and were not viewed as authoritative by those who did not take part in the protests. The depth of the gap between the masses and the elites can be seen from the following fact: There is the émigré Ukraine Salvation Committee in Moscow, headed by former Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov, which positions itself as almost a government in exile. The Committee considers the hostilities in Donbass a civil war and, therefore, does not view the self-proclaimed Donetsk and

Lugansk People's Republics as occupation administrations. Yet, it has no contact with the leaders of these republics, which also consider themselves an alternative Ukraine.

Although there was less conformism among the masses than among the elites, it still made the protests in the South-East less widespread than they might have been if there had been a sign of dual power, for example, if Yanukovich and the part of the elite, including parliament deputies, who did not recognize the new regime had tried to create alternative government institutions. This conformism made many people accept on faith the assurances of the new government about broad decentralization, including the humanitarian sphere.

The situation with Crimea was another factor that objectively strengthened Kiev's position in the South-East. Beginning in March, Crimea and Sevastopol, which could have been at the vanguard of protests for reformatting Ukraine, withdrew from the political field of the country by joining Russia. This predictably could not increase pro-Russian sentiments in the rest of Ukraine. Formerly, public opinion polls had invariably showed a good attitude of the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians towards Russia. However, during the conflicts over Tuzla in 2003 and the gas dispute of 2009 their attitude deteriorated significantly. Now it happened again, only this time the conflict was much more serious. Attempts by the state which annexed part of Ukrainian territory to act as an arbiter and, at the same time, pressure Kiev to reformat Ukraine into a federation, in which the voice of the South-East should be heard, were predictably doomed to failure. Even potential supporters of Russia doubted the impartiality of such arbitration, and anti-Russian forces took an increasingly tough position, describing all talk of federalization as separatism.

True, Ukrainians who were firmly pro-Russian did not become more hostile to Russia because of Crimea, while for the winners of the Euromaidan Crimea was not a reason but a pretext for starting a policy of de-Russification. However, these events influenced the political swamp, that is, citizens without a clear position, and strengthened the base of the current regime, as evidenced by the results of public opinion polls and elections.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION VS COMPROMISE

On the other hand, it would be legitimate to ask whether the victory of the Euromaidan necessarily had to lead to a war, and whether a compromise could have been reached with the masses of the discontented in the South-East at an early stage. My answer is "no."

The short history of independent Ukraine developed, on the one hand, as a history of steady integration into European and world (but Western-controlled) organizations, and on the other hand, as a history of crises which became increasingly explosive and which ended in increasingly imperfect compromises. For some time, the relationship between these processes could be easily overlooked, but now it is much more difficult not to notice it. The February 2014 agreement on the settlement of the crisis, for the first time achieved with the participation of European guarantors, was also the first world agreement in the history of Ukraine that was not fulfilled. It was after the signing of the economic part of the Association Agreement that an anti-terrorist operation began in the East, and immediately after the political part of this agreement was signed (June 27, 2014), this operation entered into its largest-scale and bloodiest phase.

Of course, the West needed to put an end to Kiev's multi-vector policy and achieve unambiguous certainty for it. Hence its position on the language issue and the territorial structure of the country, which was most vividly realized in the April 2014 PACE resolution, which spoke of the inadmissibility of any mention of Ukraine's federalization (Parliamentary Assembly, 2014).

Obviously, the real problem was not in the word but in an optimal distribution of powers (for example, Spanish autonomous communities have more powers than Austrian federal lands), but the Europeans played up to Kiev in criminalizing the notion 'federation,' because for the West the Ukrainian problem is part of the Russian problem. Its attitude to the protests in the South-East and then the war in Donbass differed fundamentally from its attitude to an overwhelming majority of internal conflicts around the globe.

In the cases of Cyprus, Nagorno-Karabakh, ethnic Serbs in Croatia and Kosovo, Aceh in Indonesia, FARC in Colombia, etc., the West

considered the leaders of separatists or insurgents legitimate representatives of certain ethnic or social groups who had taken over powers not provided for by the laws of their country. Their right to be a party to negotiations was not questioned. But the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics are in no way seen as self-proclaimed republics that reflect the views of their populations, even though illegitimately from the point of view of Ukrainian legislation. The West views them as paramilitary organizations which established power in those regions with external help and imposed themselves on the population.

This position of the West strengthened the attitude of the pro-Western liberal public in Ukraine towards people in the South-East as *sovok* (homo Sovieticus) and *vatnik* (bigots), whose opinion could be ignored. A recent study (Baysha, 2017) convincingly shows how the "discursive violence of the Ukrainian media" in late February-early April 2014 paved the way for the "brutality of the antiterrorist operation" by creating a negative image of people of the South-East. Importantly, these were not state-run, oligarchic or party nationalist media, although they did the same. These were popular websites, which are thought to be mouthpieces for liberal civil society (*Ukrayinska Pravda, Livyi Bereg,* and *Gordon*).

In other words, the conflict was a logical consequence of Westernization, rather than the rise of nationalism. Welcoming the successes of the Ukrainian army in July 2014, the European Parliament thus made it clear that this Westernization on the civilizational borders of Europe may not resemble the practices of major European countries. At the same time, Ukrainian radical nationalism objectively was an instrument which Ukrainian liberals used to achieve victory. True, it is not willing to play this role and wants to be something more than just an instrument. But behind the talk of the Banderization of Ukraine is a confusion of the notions of customer and contractor.

WAR IN AN ACCEPTABLE FORMAT
Of course, many of those who took part in the Euromaidan did not fight there for renaming Vatutin Avenue in Kiev as Shukhevich Avenue, or for banning the import of Russian books, including memoirs of

Princess Yekaterina Dashkova, or for banning songs by Russian singers Vladimir Vysotsky and Victor Tsoi described as "tentacles of the Russian World" which leeched onto Ukrainians (definition by Vladimir Vyatrovich, the head of the Institute of National Memory, the most Euro-integrated organization of the Ukrainian government, which consistently advocates the idea of a nationalist "recoding" of Ukrainians). The voices of people who do not agree with this (for example, the poet and culturologist Evgenia Bilchenko) are sometimes heard in the media space, but the problem is whether these voices, together with the voices of those who were against the Euromaidan from the very beginning, can become a political factor.

I think this is almost ruled out under the most likely, inertial, scenario which provides for the development of tendencies that emerged after the victory of the Euromaidan and the preservation by Russia and the West of their behavioral models which have developed over recent years.

When assessing this scenario, one should bear in mind that the armed conflict in Donbass has over the last three years entered into a format that is the most advantageous (of all really possible ones) for Ukraine—a low-intensity smoldering conflict.

This situation objectively predisposes one to see dynamics, positive for Kiev, in the conflict that began in 2014. At first, Ukraine surrendered Crimea to Russia and pro-Russian forces without a fight. At the next stage, however, it localized the offensive of the Russian World to Donbass, although it failed to take full control over the region. The result of this phase of the fight can be regarded as a draw, or Ukraine's defeat on points. But Crimea was lost through a knockout. After that, a defeat on points is still a better outcome.

The next, longest phase of the conflict has been going on without changes on the frontline. However, positive dynamics for either party to the conflict is not only measured by territories they seize—it is seen in the fact that actions, formerly deemed impossible, turn out to be possible and not having obvious negative consequences. For example, the implementation of the political part of the Minsk Agreement (which both Kiev and the West consider imposed on Ukraine from the outside) now seems to be a much more illusory goal than it seemed

in 2014-2015. In particular, Kiev has rescinded a bill on constitutional amendments regarding decentralization; an economic blockade of Donbass has been introduced; and several laws have been passed and measures taken to combat the Russian World, both inside and outside the country. The latter include the termination of air service, a ban on remittances, restrictions on the import of Russian books, a ban on performances by some Russian entertainers, the actual abolition of the law "On the Basic Principles of the Language Policy," restrictions on the use of the Russian language on the Ukrainian radio and television and its abolition in education (with the exception of primary school), de-Russification of geographical names, and the removal of monuments.

Kiev views all these measures as non-military blows to the enemy, and the scale of such actions increases with every year.

The law on the reintegration of Donbass, passed by the Verkhovna Rada this January, was a logical development and a new stage of this policy. Its purpose is not so much to recognize the territories beyond Kiev's control as occupied by Russia. What is more important is that the law recognizes this state de facto without a formal recognition of the war with Russia de jure.

This positive dynamics creates a situation where a critical mass of society thinks that at least Ukraine will not find itself in the same difficult situation as in the spring of 2014 and that, at best, it will restore full control over Donbass on its terms: Russia will not withstand the sanctions and will stop supporting the uncontrolled territories. The policy of the West does not contradict these expectations: the sanctions continue, there is almost no public criticism of Kiev's actions in Donbass at the state level, except for minor issues, and the U.S. has decided to supply Javelin antitank missiles to Ukraine, which is largely a symbolic gesture fitting perfectly into the aforementioned pattern of positive dynamics.

For the reasons mentioned above, the West does not advocate a direct dialogue between Kiev and Donetsk/Lugansk, but considers the existing level of conflict with more and more victims an obviously lesser evil than a possible strengthening of the self-proclaimed republics. This clearly follows from the statement of German Foreign

Minister Sigmar Gabriel about the inadmissibility of Russia's proposal on a UN peacekeeping mission, which provides for the separation of the warring parties by peacekeepers, to be deployed along the frontline, and the protection of the OSCE mission, because that would only mean freezing the conflict. (A meeting between Vladislav Surkov and Kurt Volker, which took place in Dubai during the writing of this article, showed that the Americans are nevertheless ready to accept the Russian format as the first phase of a peacekeeping mission; yet its practical implementation is still far off.)

Of course, very many of the above-mentioned elements of the positive (for Kiev) dynamics also have a great negative effect. For example, the existing format of the conflict in Donbass involves great military expenditures and leads to reduced ties with Russia, which is a significant burden for the Ukrainian economy. However, it is important to understand a balance between positive and negative aspects from Kiev's point of view.

Of course, the mobilization was a straining factor for society, because it could affect almost every family. But since the end of 2016, when all people mobilized a year before returned home, only contract soldiers and professional officers have taken part in the conflict from the Ukrainian side—that is, only those who have made this choice voluntarily or who have chosen military service as their lifetime career. This is the main reason why the format of hostilities can be considered acceptable or, at least, not too burdensome for Ukrainian society.

The present scale of losses of the Ukrainian army is not a factor that may spark a mass antiwar movement in the country, similar to the antiwar movement in the United States in the late 1960s, because the ratio of casualties to population in Ukraine is much smaller than that in the U.S. during the Vietnam War.

Naturally, the economic situation in Ukraine is much less stable than that of the U.S. during the Vietnam War. However, in the public consciousness, the war is only one factor behind the economic problems (along with corruption, incompetence of the authorities, etc.).

The unpopularity of the idea of peace at any cost not only shows the specific character of the Ukrainian regime but, above all, it shows

that society does not view the crisis as a catastrophe, which means that the conflict has acquired a format convenient for Kiev.

This format means, in particular, that, to paraphrase Trotsky, Ukraine is in a state of both peace and war with Russia, taking advantage of each of these states. For example, over the first 11 months of 2017, Ukrainian exports to Russia grew by 12 percent and brought Ukraine U.S. $360 million more than a year before. Two-thirds of Ukrainian coal imports come from Russia, including 80 percent of anthracite, which has become scarce due to the blockade of Donbass.

The war has advantages, too. Of course, they would have disappeared in the event of a full-scale conflict, but Kiev is confident that this will never happen. In a situation like this, it finds it simpler to mobilize society, convince it to put up with difficulties and, most importantly, format the political and information space in an advantageous way. Beneficiaries of this reformatting include not only the government but also a wide range of parties and politicians who supported the Euromaidan. For example, there is a segment among supporters of the Batkivshchina Party, led by Yulia Timoshenko, and the Radical Party, led by Oleg Lyashko, who, judging by public opinion polls, do not support either a confrontation with Russia or the current policy of historical memory. Obviously, these are former supporters of the Party of Regions and communists, who have realized that the successors to these parties will not be allowed to win anyway and that power can be contested only by pro-Euromaidan parties. Therefore, they side with forces that are close to their own ideological position, guided by their social slogans and disregarding their greater geopolitical and humanitarian radicalism in comparison with the current authorities. But such a choice can be made only if one is confident that this radicalism will not lead to a great war and catastrophe.

So, the current format of the conflict strengthens the political regime in Ukraine, which is actually the closest to regimes of limited political competition, such as those that existed in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the interwar period in the 20th century, or some Latin American countries (Brazil and Guatemala) after the Second World War. There is formal pluralism and a real possibility of succes-

sion of power there, yet real power can be contested only by forces from one political spectrum, whereas forces that are beyond this spectrum are restrained and can only aspire to seats in parliament.

History shows that such regimes can exist for a very long time, especially with external support, which Kiev certainly has, if we mean support for its geopolitical policy, rather than concrete persons in power. It is another thing that such support is limited—the West will not fight for Ukraine and will not provide aid on a scale comparable to the Marshall Plan.

The Georgian scenario for changing this regime is theoretically possible but unlikely, because several factors prevent the success of a would-be Ukrainian Ivanishvili. The conflict in Ukraine is felt more sharply because in 2014 it lost territories that it had controlled all the years of independence, while Georgia lost control over Abkhazia in 1993 and over South Ossetia even earlier. The August 2008 war only showed the impossibility of regaining these territories. But the most important thing is that, whereas Georgia was an obvious loser in that war, Ukraine has some positive dynamics, which was discussed above. In addition, differences between Georgians and Russians have always been obvious, whereas for Kiev the current conflict is a way to recode a large part of the population and form the nation on the basis of the thesis that "Ukraine is different from Russia." Finally, the evolution of Georgia should not be exaggerated. Diplomatic relations between Tbilisi and Moscow have not been restored, while relations between Kiev and Moscow have never been broken off. Although Georgia has toned down its anti-Russian rhetoric, it keeps moving towards the Euro-Atlantic structures.

Ukraine is moving in the same direction. Its problems will obviously grow in the near future. Already now, due to migration, the population of the territory now controlled by Kiev is less than 30 million people (judging by bread consumption statistics). This means it has decreased by more than 40 percent since 1991. In addition, the largest, postwar, generation is now entering the mortality age, while the generation of newborns is the smallest over the years of independence. Yet, the territory of the country has retained its geopolitical value and,

regardless of whether Ukraine is granted formal NATO membership or not, American troops can be permanently deployed in its territory during the current Cold War—or, more precisely, their presence can be broadened, because several thousand NATO troops, half of them Americans, have been involved in military exercises permanently held at the Yavorovo test range since the spring of 2015.

As regards Ukraine's admission to NATO, many Western European countries oppose this option. On the other hand, they have not proposed any detailed plan for Ukraine's non-aligned status. Objectively, such status would be best guaranteed by the specifics of the state's internal structure, when accession to a military alliance would require a consensus of the regions. In an interview with the *Atlantic* magazine in November 2016, Henry Kissinger echoed this idea: "I favor an independent Ukraine that is militarily non-aligned. If you remove the two Donbass regions from eastern Ukraine, you guarantee that Ukraine is permanently hostile to Russia, since it becomes dominated by its Western part, which only joined Russia in the 1940s. The solution, then, is to find a way to give these units a degree of autonomy that gives them a voice in military entanglements, but otherwise keeps them under the governance of Ukraine." (Goldberg, 2016)

But since this voice remains solitary, the negative attitude of Western European countries to Ukraine's accession to NATO is only a short-term tactical choice which may change later.

It is also unlikely that the implementation of the Minsk Agreement will help create the model described by Kissinger, because a "voice in military entanglements" is a trait of a confederation. Meanwhile, the status of individual Donbass regions, as defined by the above agreement, is far even from that provided for in a federation. Rather, it is similar to the limited autonomy of ethnic Serbs in Croatia, which they received under the Erdut agreement.

Therefore, even if the Minsk Agreement is implemented, which is unlikely, the existing political regime in Ukraine will hardly change.

As regards Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians, in a situation where they cannot change this regime through elections, they will try to adapt to the existing reality, at least outwardly.

The described inertial scenario is basic and most probable. However, it is not the only possible one due to the weakness of the Ukrainian state (in particular, due to the growing influence of right-wing radicals who may obtain parallel power), the unstable situation in the world, and the unpredictability of Russia's policy in the long term, as Moscow may decide that Kiev has crossed certain red lines established by it. If this state collapses due to external factors, the identity of a large part of its present population may change very quickly, as evidenced by the experience of the 17th century and recent decades.

References

Amosov, N., 2003. *Moyo mirovozzrenie.* Moscow-Donetsk: AST-Stalker.

Baysha O., 2017. In the name of national security: articulating ethno-political struggles as terrorism. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses,* 12(4), July 2017, pp.332–348.

Dragomanov, M., 1991. *Vybrane.* Kyiv: Lybid.

Dziuba I., 2006. *Ianukovych daleko ne durnyĭ.* [online] Available at: <https://www.ostro.org/general/society/articles/904/> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Goldberg, J., 2016. *World Chaos and World Order: Conversations with Henry Kissinger.* [online] Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/11/kissinger-order-and-chaos/506876/> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Honchar, O., 2005. *Shchodennyky: Tom 3 1984–1995.* Kyiv: Veselka

Hryhorenko, P. 1992. Dopovid' na 6-mu delegats'komu z'ïzdi 1-oï ukraïns'koï dyviziï UNA v Toronto. *Literaturna Ukraïna,* 1992, 28 travnya, pp.7–8.

Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2005. *Dumky i pohliady naselennia Ukraïny-berezen'2005 r.* [online] <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=469&page=63> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2010. *Reĭtyngy politychnych partiï Ukraïny: berezen' 2010.* [online] <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=275&page=46> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2013. *Elektoral'ni namiry vybotsiv*

Ukraïny shchodo vyboriv do Verkhovnoï Rady. [online] <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=208&page=30> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2014a. [February]. *Stavlennia v Ukraïni ta Rosiï do aktsiï protestu v Ukraïni.* [online] <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=231&page=28> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2014b [March]. *Elektoral'ni oriientaciï ukraïntsiv, berezen' 2014.* [online] http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=269&page=27 [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Kiev International Institute of Sociology, 2014c [April] *Dumky ta pohliady zhyteliv pivdenno skhidnykh oblasteĭ Ukraïny: kviten' 2014* [online] <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=302&page=29> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Miller, A., 2000. *"Ukrainskiĭ vopros" v politike vlasteĭ i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX veka).* Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteĭia

Parliamentary Assembly, 2016. *Recent developments in Ukraine: threats to the functioning of democratic institutions Resolution 1988 (2014).* [online] Available at: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=20873&lang=en> [Accessed 5 April 2018].

Plokhy, S., 2015. *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine.* New York: Basic Books.

Skuratovskiĭ, V., 2010. *Kievskaia literaturnaia sreda 60-kh – 70-kh godov XX veka.* [online] Available at: < http://polit.ru/article/2010/05/21/kiev/> [Accessed 5 April 2018]

Solovyov, S., 1990. *Istoriya Rossii s drevneĭshikh vremen. Tom 26.* Moscow: Mysl.