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HISTORICAL AND CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL POSITIONING OF UKRAINE: IS IT CENTRAL OR EASTERN EUROPE?

ABSTRACT The academic paper is focused on developing historical and current geopolitical positioning of Ukraine in Europe. The scholars have attempted to solve the problem of affiliation of Ukraine to a specific sub-region of Europe – Central and/or Eastern. It has been reasoned and argued that on the map of the European sub-regions, Ukraine occupies an extremely specific and mixed position, as its affiliation to any certain sub-region has always been historically and geopolitically determined, however it largely correlates with some attributes inherent both to Central and Eastern Europe. In conclusion it has been specified that Ukraine, being a boundary country, is characterized by a paradoxical geopolitical position and inconstant nature of its geopolitical projection within the frames of the sub-regions in Central and Eastern Europe.

Key words: Ukraine, Europe, sub-region, geopolitical positioning, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Central-Eastern Europe.

There are no doubts that due to its physical geographical position Ukraine is located in Europe, since by some accounts the geographical centre of Europe is in fact found in this country.¹ However, the historical, political and geopolitical identification of any country, in particular Ukraine, is predetermined not only by its geographical positioning on the map of the continent or the world, but also by historical-political and mental positioning of its population and delineation of those socio-political and socio-economic processes which take place in it. At the same time, for both researchers and average citizens the problem of affiliation of Ukraine to a specific sub-region of Europe, whether Central, Eastern or Central-Eastern, is still unsolved. Thus, the analysis of the available research results is aimed at defining and resolving this issue.

It should be mentioned that in modern historiography there is no complex solution to the above-mentioned problem, as the majority of scholars (outside the context of Ukraine) appeal to make a distinction between the notions “Central”, “Eastern” and “Central-Eastern” Europe. This can be found in the works by N. Aleksiun and D. Beauvois², S. Berglund, J. Ekman, F. Aarebrot³, M. Foucher⁴, S. Hlinkina⁵, Ye. Kish⁶, J. Kłoczowski⁷, I. Kostiuszko⁸, Ya. Krzhen⁹, M. Kundera¹⁰, T. Masaryk¹¹,

¹ О. Ткаченко, “Україна на ментальній мапі Центрально-Східної Європи: пошуки ідентичності”, *Вісник Львівського університету. Серія: журналістика*, vol. 35 (2011).

² Н. Алексюн, Д. Бовуа, *История Центрально-Восточной Европы*, Евразия 2009.; D. Beauvois, *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, J. Kłoczowski (ed.), transl. by J. Kłoczowski, U. Paprocka, Lublin 2000.

³ S. Berglund, J. Ekman, F. Aarebrot, *The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*, Cheltenham–Northampton 2004.

⁴ М. Фуше, *Европейская республика. Исторические и географические контуры*, Международные отношения 1999.

⁵ С. Глинкина, “Центрально-Восточная Европа на пути в Евросоюз”, *Новая и новейшая история*, vol. 3 (2007).

⁶ Є. Кіш, “Центральна Європа: теоретико-методологічні засади концепту”, *Науковий вісник Ужгородського університету*, vol. 28 (2012).

⁷ J. Kłoczowski, “Actualité des grandes traditions de la cohabitation et du dialogue des cultures en Europe du Centre-Est”, in J. Kłoczowski, F. Bédarida (eds.), *L'héritage historique de la Res Publica de Plusieurs Nations*, Lublin 2004.

⁸ И. Костюшко, *Восточная Европа после “Версаля”*, Москва 2007.

⁹ Я. Кржен, “Центральная Европа в европейском историко-географическом контексте”, *Неприкосновенный запас*, vol. 6, no. 56 (2007).

¹⁰ М. Кундера, “Трагедія Центральної Європи”, *Ї: Незалежний культурологічний часопис*, vol. 6 (1995).

¹¹ T. Masaryk, *Nova Evropa. Stanovisko slovanske*, Praha 1920.

N. Mezhevich¹², A. Miller¹³, V. Noskov¹⁴, M. Simon¹⁵, M. Waldenberg¹⁶, L. Wolff¹⁷ and others.

The point is that the countries which, according to various researchers, constitute Central, Eastern or Central-Eastern Europe, throughout the 20th and in the early 21st century (and often even earlier) experienced significant changes in political, socio-economic, cultural and religious spheres of life. Chief among these are: The First and Second World Wars, the formation and collapse of the USSR, permanent transformation of the political and socio-economic construction, integration or disintegration, as well as processes of democratisation and autocratisation. Due to them, the significance and self-sustainability of various countries, including Ukraine, may widen and deepen or, on the contrary, decrease. But the case of historical and geopolitical positioning of Ukraine from this perspective and its affiliation to the sub-region of Central, Central-Eastern or Eastern Europe is rather specific. Especially due to the fact that the background of systematic socio-political and socio-economic characteristics of Ukraine earlier belonged or even still belong to the group of transitional practices. These practices essentially require drawing conclusions, which may explain the parameters and the essence of the very sub-regions. Moreover, it can be clearly seen in the context of the fact that subdivision of Europe into different sub-regions is rather nominal and factor-determined. This means that affiliation of Ukraine to certain geopolitical sub-regions of Europe is largely determined by the geopolitical borders of Europe, in particular the eastern ones.¹⁸ Geopolitically it is nothing but Russia or Russia and its “European satellites.”

On the one hand, Ukraine, or at least its western part (if not the whole Right Bank (Pravoberezhzhia) of the Dnipro River), is historically and in particular mentally and politically associated with the sub-region of Central-Europe. That is mainly pointed out by P. Magocsi, who states that this part of Ukraine historically belonged to Central Europe (in particular the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland,

¹² Н. Межевич, “Восточная Европа. К столетнему юбилею политического проекта”, *Балтийский регион*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2016); Н. Межевич, “Идентичность и граница: некоторые теоретические вопросы и практики в восточной части Балтийского моря”, *Балтийский регион*, vol. 3 (2014).

¹³ А. Миллер, “Тема Центральной Европы: история, современные дискурсы и место в них России”, *Новое литературное обозрение*, vol. 6, no. 52 (2001).

¹⁴ В. Носков, “Изобретая Центрально-Восточную Европу. К выходу в свет коллективного труда польских и французских историков «История Центрально-Восточной Европы»”, *Диалог со временем*, vol. 32 (2010).

¹⁵ М. Симон, “Интеграционные процессы в странах Вышеградской группы: роль концепции Центральной Европы”, *Мировая экономика и международные отношения*, vol. 7 (2014).

¹⁶ М. Waldenberg, *Narody zależne i mniejszości narodowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, Warszawa 2000.

¹⁷ Л. Вульф, *Изобретая Восточную Европу: Карта цивилизации в сознании эпохи Просвещения*, Новое литературное обозрение 2003.

¹⁸ Я. Кржен, “Центральная Европа в европейском...”; М. Рябчук, “За огорожено Меттернихового саду”, *Ї: Незалежний культурологічний часопис*, vol. 13 (1998).

the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Monarchy).¹⁹ In the very least it was so due to political, geographical, legal, geopolitical, cultural and religious factors. It became especially notable on the eve of the First World War in 1915, when F. Naumann, hoping for the victory of “The Triple Alliance” (consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy), justified the necessity to elaborate the construct of this sub-region as an economic, customs and military union on the territory of “extended” Germany and Austria-Hungary together with Polish, Ukrainian, Baltic and other territories.²⁰ However, evaluating the alignment of forces, the researcher stated that acquiring sovereignty, for example, by the Ukrainians depended on whether Russia and Germany were likely to cooperate – for independent existence Ukraine was too weak.²¹ From this perspective, Ukraine or at least its western territory became part of Central Europe.

In different variations, the idea of integrating Ukraine into Central Europe was supported by other scholars of that time, in particular M. Weber. On the one hand, in practice it manifested itself in the fact that in the context of international relations in the first quarter of the 20th century (more specifically, in 1917–1919), Ukrainians tried to affirm their sovereignty in various ways (i.e. as part of different projects), by manifesting their unwillingness to be considered part of Eastern Europe (in particular Russia), but on the contrary wished to be seen as Central Europe.²² However, on the other hand, such a conceptualisation of Central Europe during the interwar period did not result in any geopolitical significance or actualisation either in general or with respect to Ukraine, especially taking into account the analysis of the international position of “small” and “big” countries in Europe concerning regularisation of the sub-region.²³ In the same way the initiative of the first head of the Second Polish Republic (the Commonwealth of Poland) J. Pilsudski concerning the creation of “Intermarium”, a confederation of the states between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas, namely Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and Finland became extremely noticeable within the geopolitical realities, when the greater part of modern Ukraine was governed by the USSR. Besides, a decline in popularity of the Central Europe concept took place during the Cold War period and the opposition of the Western and “Soviet”, or Eastern, blocs. However, the indicated scientific position was altered by H. Ash, who stated that even throughout the Cold War the concept of Central Europe included the lands of the former Habsburg Monarchy, in particular the territory of modern Western Ukraine. The scholar’s idea was simple and focused on the reflections over

¹⁹ P. Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of Central Europe: Revised and Expanded Edition*, Seattle 2002.

²⁰ Є. Кіш, “Центральна Європа...”.

²¹ Ю. Каганов, “Центрально-Східна Європа як історичний регіон: зміст та еволюція концепції”, *Наукові праці історичного факультету Запорізького державного університету*, vol. 19 (2005).

²² Л. Шаншиєва, “Немецкие историки о концепции Центральной Европы”, *Политическая наука*, vol. 4 (2001), p. 162.

²³ Є. Кіш, „Центральна Європа...”.

a specific legal consciousness, and the cultural and religious atmosphere of the sub-region,²⁴ especially Halychyna, Bukovyna and Zakarpattia, and their (within the frames of the so-called “Austrian myth”²⁵) strong preference for the west of Europe, in particular as opposed to the self-absorbed, closed Orthodox and Islamic societies in the east of Europe (including the eastern part of Ukraine or its territories on the Left Bank of the Dnipro River).

On the other hand, Ukraine or at least its central and predominantly left part (mainly the Left Bank (Livoberezhzhia) of the Dnipro River) is politically or geopolitically associated with the sub-region of Eastern Europe. In contrast to the sub-region of Central Europe and therefore Western Ukraine or the Right Bank of the Dnipro River, the historical and geopolitical essence of the Eastern Europe construct was initially predetermined by a significant influence of historical eastern civilisations – from the Byzantium to the Mongolian hegemony in Kievan Rus’ and the Ottoman hegemony in the Balkans.²⁶ That is why in Eastern Europe (especially in Russia, as well as in Ukraine) a quite important political role has traditionally been played by despotism and autocracy. Besides, Eastern Ukraine as part of Eastern Europe (in contrast to Western Ukraine, which belongs to Central Europe) is not historically characterized by civil society and it has developed in an unnatural way, i.e. not from the bottom up, but from the top down. This is a result of the fact that Ukraine as part of Eastern Europe is historically marked by continuous experience of the institution of serfdom and absence of self-government of towns.²⁷ The feature outlined above is presupposed by the fact that in the lands of Eastern Europe contractual principles and legal codification have not been traditionally approved, and instead the mechanisms of legal and social dependence on the state were predominant and common. This logic is supported by the fact that Ukraine, as part of Eastern Europe, is first of all positioned as a cultural, cultural-economic or religious unity which is historically characterized by elements of Byzantine, Orthodox and, a bit less significantly, Ottoman influence. Thus, it successfully corresponds with chronologically different attempts to define Eastern Europe, in the majority of which there is an individual and special place for Ukraine.²⁸ What is more, some researchers refer the latter to the sub-region not only as a historical part of the Russian Empire or the USSR, but as a historical part of Austria-Hungary or Poland, by which they essentially contradict the notion of the construct of Central Europe. This construct was specified in the idea of Polish eastern policy by J. Giedroyc and J. Mieroszewski, which treated relations between Poland with histori-

²⁴ Ю. Каганов, *Центрально-Східна Європа...*

²⁵ О. Каченко, “Україна на ментальній мапі Центрально-Східної Європи...”; І. Андрущенко, “На периферії вселюдськості”, *Критика*, vol. 10, no. 36 (2000), pp. 17-20.; В. Руднев, *Словарь культуры XX века*, at <<http://lib.ru/CULTURE/RUDNEW/slowar.txt>>, 19 November 2018; Ю. Андрухович, “Час і місце, або Моя остання територія”, *Дезорієнтація на місцевості* 1999, at <<https://www.ukrlib.com.ua/books/printit.php?tid=14243>>, 19 November 2018.

²⁶ Я. Кржен, “Центральная Европа в европейском...”.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Л. Вульф, *Изобретая Восточную Европу...*, p. 253.

cal Ukraine, on the one hand, and other countries of the sub-region, on the other, as a sublimation of relations with Russia or the USSR.

As a result it was argued that Eastern Europe (predominantly Russia) and its states, including Ukraine, were directly opposed to the rest of Europe in terms of historical and mental spheres, and based on this opposition, Europeans formed their identity.²⁹ Such a peculiar construction revealed itself during the Cold War period, when Ukraine, being a part of the USSR, automatically became the representative of the Eastern, or Soviet, bloc (the region of “real socialism”, the “world socialist system”, the “socialist commonwealth”) or Eastern Europe.³⁰ Thus, countries were synthesized in this sub-region by means of the state regime, called socialist, as opposed to the western social structure.³¹ But while such synthesis and systematisation of countries in the sub-region was “formational”, it was certainly not cultural or religious.³² Thus the problem of affiliation of Ukraine, or at least of its eastern part, or the territories on the Left Bank of the Dnipro River, remained, even after the collapse of the USSR. For instance, it can be noticed in the ideas and positions of S. Berglund, J. Ekman and F. Aarebrot,³³ who considered Ukraine to be part of Eastern Europe, first of all because of the political/geopolitical and socio-economic attributes of its (and other countries’) development in the course of and after the Cold War. A similar conclusion can be reached on the basis of documents produced by the UN Statistics Division, the “Multilingual thesaurus of the European Union”³⁴ and the “CIA World Factbook”³⁵, which since the early 90s of the 20th century unambiguously treated Ukraine as part of the sub-region of Eastern Europe, explaining it by the historical scope of Soviet influence over Ukraine and the so-called Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, quite appropriate is M. Drake’s³⁶ conclusion, according to which, current definitions of Eastern Europe are not extremely precise, general and reliable. This, therefore, supports the position whereby Ukraine, not fully, but only partially fits the concept of Eastern Europe.

In general, it allows us argue that Ukraine occupies a specific and mixed location on the map of the sub-regions of Europe. This means that positioning Ukraine within a certain sub-region of Europe has always been historically and politically dependent, although it correlates to a great extent with some attributes inherent both in Central and Eastern Europe. First of all, some parts/regions of Ukraine naturally, historically, mentally and geopolitically belong or once belonged to Central Europe (as a result of

²⁹ Л. Шаншиева, “Немецкие историки о концепции Центральной Европы”, р. 161.

³⁰ Ю. Гладкий, А. Чистобаев, *Регионоведение*, Москва 2003, р. 180.

³¹ Ю. Каганов, “Центрально-Східна Європа як історичний регіон...”.

³² П. Вандич, *Ціна свободи: Історія Центрально-Східної Європи від Середньовіччя до сьогодні*, Київ 2004, р. 16.

³³ S. Berglund, J. Ekman, F. Aarebrot, *The Handbook of Political...*, s. 2.

³⁴ *Multilingual Thesaurus of the European Union*, at <<http://eurovoc.europa.eu/>>, 19 June 2019.

³⁵ *CIA – The World Factbook*, at <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>>, 19 November 2018.

³⁶ M. A. Drake, *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, New York–Basel 2005.

historical affiliation to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland, Austria-Hungary etc.), while others belonged to Eastern Europe (as a result of historical affiliation to Russia and the USSR).³⁷ Secondly, individual parts of Ukraine (as well as other countries from this geographical area) historically wished or still wish to “leave” the sub-region of Eastern Europe in favour of Central Europe, while others wanted or want to do quite the contrary.³⁸ It became especially notable on the eve, during and after the collapse of the USSR and the socialist system in 1986-1991, when Ukraine formally gained independence, but was also visible after the “revolution” and military campaigns in Ukraine during 2004-2005 and 2013-2018 (still ongoing at the time of analysis).

However, even despite this, the territory of modern Ukraine, as it has already been mentioned, has its significant peculiarities when it comes to historical experience, but they do not always correlate with historical affiliation to different empires. We suppose that Ukraine should not be divided into two parts vertically along the Dnipro River, but rather by a horizontal demarcation line. In particular, the starting point or a symbolic cornerstone of such a line is the second part of the 18th century. In 1764, for the first time the term “Novorosiiska guberniya” (the New Russia province) was used, referring to the south Ukrainian lands, which were taken by the Russian Empire from the Viysko Zaporizhske (Zaporizhia Army), the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire in the Northern Black Sea Region. By all means, it is rather difficult to conduct a precise comparison of the territorial characteristics of the voivodships (provinces) in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that belonged to both nations³⁹ and indicated modern regions. Among the territories which were incorporated into the Russian Empire as a result of the wars with the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire, the following regions of Ukraine may be listed: Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kirovohrad, Luhansk, Odessa, Kherson, The Autonomous Republic of the Crimea, and the city of Sevastopol (see Table 1).

Some questions arise as to the Kharkiv and Kirovohrad regions. The territory of the modern Kharkiv region has been inhabited since the mid-17th century. Correspondingly, its development was similar to the subsequent process of settling new territories of eastern and southern Ukraine. That is why we prefer to study it along with other new regions of Ukraine. The territory of the modern Kirovohrad region, on the other hand, was divided. Its northern districts had been inhabited for a long time, its southern regions were settled predominantly by people from Ukrainian territories, after the disbanding of the Viysko Zaporizke (Zaporizhia Army). Therefore, taking into account the fact that the region is mainly inhabited by a rural population who identify themselves as Ukrainians and traditionally use the Ukrainian language we consider it the

³⁷ Ю. Каганов, “Центрально-Східна Європа як історичний регіон...”

³⁸ Л. Вульф, *Изобретая Восточную Европу...*, pp. 49-50.; Дж. Лукач, *Конец двадцатого века и конец эпохи модерна*, Наука 2003, pp. 122, 134.

³⁹ After signing the Union of Lublin in 1569, which established the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the state was divided into voivodships (provinces), some of which were located within the borders of modern Ukraine: Belz, Bratslav, Volhynia, Kyiv and Ruthenian. In 1635 Chernihiv voivodship was formed.

“historical” regions of Ukraine. Thus, we can form two groups of regions of Ukraine on the basis of the historical factors pertaining to their formation and development (see Table 1). The first group consists of territories, which at some stages of their development belonged to the Kievan Rus’, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In contrast, as part of the second group we consider territories which were established by the Russian Empire. Consequently, they were settled as a result of migration from various parts of the Empire and beyond its borders, and fell under significant influence of Russia, and their historical experience is predominantly reduced to various political and social processes inherent in this empire/country. Therefore, we identify them as the “new” regions of Ukraine (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Population size of Ukraine within the frames of its division into “historical” and “new” regions (as of January 1, 2018)

№	“Historical” regions	Population size	№	“New” regions	Population size
1	Vinnytsia	1 575 808	1	The ARC	N.A.
2	Volyn	1 038 457	2	Dnipropetrovsk	3 231 140
3	Zhytomyr	1 231 239	3	Donetsk	4 200 461
4	Zakarpattia	1 258 155	4	Zaporizhzhia	1 739 500
5	Ivano-Frankivsk	1 377 496	5	Luhansk	2 167 802
6	Kyiv	1 754 284	6	Mykolaiv	1 141 324
7	Kirovohrad	956 250	7	Odesa	2 383 075
8	Lviv	2 529 608	8	Kharkiv	2 694 007
9	Poltava	1 413 829	9	Kherson	1 046 981
10	Rivne	1 160 647	10	Sevastopol city	N.A.
11	Sumy	1 094 284			
12	Ternopil	1 052 312			
13	Khmelnyskyi	1 274 409			
14	Cherkasy	1 220 363			
15	Chernivtsi	906 701			
16	Chernihiv	1 020 078			
17	City of Kyiv	2 934 522			
Total		23 798 442	Total		18 604 290

Source: *Current population size in Ukraine as of January 1, 2018*, at <http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/publnasel_u.htm>, 19 November 2018.

Table 2. National composition of population in the “historical” and “new” regions of Ukraine, according to the census of 2001 (in percent)

“Historical” regions, %			“New” regions, %		
National groups	Ukrainians	Russians	National groups	Ukrainians	Russians
Vynnytsia	94,9	3,8	The ARC	N.A.	N.A.
Volyn	96,9	2,4	Dnipropetrovsk	79,3	17,6
Zhytomyr	90,3	5,0	Donetsk	56,9	38,2
Zakarpattia	80,5	2,5	Zaporizhzhia	70,8	24,7
Ivano-Frankivsk	97,5	1,8	Luhansk	58,0	39,0
Kyiv	92,5	6,0	Mykolaiv	81,9	14,1
Kirovohrad	90,1	7,5	Odessa	62,8	20,7
Lviv	94,8	3,6	Kharkiv	70,7	25,6
Poltava	91,4	7,2	Kherson	82,0	14,1
Rivne	95,9	2,6	City of Sevastopol	N.A.	N.A.
Sumy	88,8	9,4			
Ternopil	97,8	1,2			
Khmelnyskyi	93,9	3,6			
Cherkasy	93,1	5,4			
Chernivtsi	75,0	4,1			
Chernihiv	93,5	5,0			
City of Kyiv	82,2	13,1			
Average	91,12	4,95	Average	70,30	24,25

Source: *Population of Ukraine according to the place of birth and citizenship, as reported by the 2001 All-Ukrainian census*, at <<http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/publications/>>, 15 November 2018.

As we see from Tables 1 and 2, when the Russian Federation annexed the Crimea together with the City of Sevastopol, the proportion between the “historical” regions of Ukraine and “new” regions of Ukraine as to the population size is 55% to 45%. Here, one must take into account the fact that since 2014 there have been hostilities in the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, in deed and not in name, and large parts of the regions are occupied. Consequently, the aforementioned number of inhabitants of these regions requires correction. However, since the verified data concerning the population flow is not available, especially when talking about the occupied territories, we retain to the official data, both concerning the population size, and the national composition of the population of the “historical” and “new” regions of Ukraine (as of 2001 and 2017).

Additionally, we determined that the absolute majority of national population consists of Ukrainians in both groups of regions of Ukraine. At the same time, in the group of “new” regions, the number of representatives of ethnic Russians has dramatically increased. Practice shows that affiliation to an ethnic group is an important factor per se, but it requires additional analytical parameters. We assume that the language spoken by inhabitants of different regions of Ukraine may be used as an index of their ethnic identity.

Table 3. The working language of inhabitants of the “historical” and “new” regions of Ukraine (in percent) (as of 2017)

“Historical” regions, %			“New” regions, %		
Language	Ukrainian	Russian	Language	Ukrainian	Russian
Vinnitsia	92,4	7,6	The ARC	N.A.	N.A.
Volyn	99,3	0,7	Dnipropetrovsk	26,2	73,8
Zhytomyr	90,2	9,8	Donetsk	2,9	97,1
Zakarpatia	99,4	0,6	Zaporizhzhia	22,9	77,1
Ivano-Frankivsk	99,8	0,2	Luhansk	5,4	94,6
Kyiv	91,0	9,0	Mykolaiv	21,8	78,2
Kirovohrad	67,6	32,4	Odesa	8,6	91,4
Lviv	98,0	2,0	Kharkiv	6,5	93,5
Poltava	96,3	3,7	Kherson	21,0	79,0
Rivne	99,2	0,8	Sevastopol city	N.A.	N.A.
Sumy	73,3	26,7			
Ternopil	99,7	0,3			
Khmelnyskyi	93,5	6,5			
Cherkasy	86,4	13,6			
Chernivtsi	74,1	25,9			
Chernihiv	25,9	74,1			
Kyiv city	33,8	66,2			
Average	83,52	16,48	Average	14,41	85,59

Source: К. Бердинских, И. Верстюк, “Слово о мове”, *Новое время*, vol. 37 (2018), pp. 26-27. The authors applied summarized data from four surveys, held by Kyiv International Institute for Sociology in 2017.

As evident from Table 3, the language factor introduces significant corrections to the ethnic outline of the population in Ukraine. In the group of “historical” regions the ethnic and linguistic affiliation are largely identical. However, there are exceptions like the City of Kyiv and the Chernihiv region, where in contrast to the declared Ukrainian

identity, the leading language is Russian. On the other hand, in the group of “new” regions of Ukraine the abovementioned characteristics are inversely proportional. There are a range of factors which have contributed to such a situation, but we consider it a fact which may have various political consequences. The clearest manifestation of these may be observed in the results of presidential elections in Ukraine. Comparison of the results of several presidential elections not only allow us to obtain the general picture, but also to see its dynamics. We took the first voting results of the 2004 presidential elections, which, by the majority of experts, were evaluated as rather fair and genuine, and thus let us see real regional political preferences. During the first round V. Yushchenko received 39.9% of votes, while V. Yanukovych – 39.3% of votes. We believe that the crucial factor here was an extremely evident opposition between the South and East, on the one hand, and the West and North, on the other (see Table 4).

Table 4. The results of the first round of the 2004 presidential elections in “historical” and “new” regions of Ukraine (in percent)

“Historical” regions, %			“New” regions, %		
Candidate	Yushchenko	Yanukovych	Candidate	Yushchenko	Yanukovych
Vynnytsia	59,7	16,0	The ARC	12,8	69,2
Volyn	77,2	10,5	Dnipropetrovsk	18,7	49,7
Zhytomyr	43,5	29,3	Donetsk	2,9	86,7
Zakarpattia	46,6	37,8	Zaporizhzhia	16,6	55,7
Ivano-Frankivsk	89,0	4,5	Luhansk	4,5	80,0
Kyiv	59,7	16,7	Mykolaiv	17,9	54,0
Kirovohrad	39,0	30,8	Odesa	17,3	53,4
Lviv	87,3	5,8	Kharkiv	15,4	57,4
Poltava	43,6	26,0	Kherson	32,1	37,4
Rivne	69,3	16,1	Sevastopol city	6,0	73,5
Sumy	52,7	25,7			
Ternopil	87,5	5,5			
Khmelnyskyi	57,9	21,1			
Cherkasy	57,7	17,9			
Chernivtsi	66,6	17,9			
Chernihiv	43,4	24,5			
City of Kyiv	62,4	14,6			
Average	61,36	18,86	Average	14,42	61,70

Source: *The 2004 Presidential elections*, at <<http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2004/wp0011>>, 15 November 2018.

The results of the 2004 presidential elections given in Table 4, allow us to observe extreme polarization among the inhabitants of the “historical” and “new” regions of Ukraine. These results, together with programmatic positioning of some political parties, give us a possibility to speak of a certain socio-political division in Ukraine, which has its roots in ethnic and linguistic identity, as well as foreign political/geopolitical orientations. The significance of this division can be seen in the results of the 2006 parliamentary elections and the 2007 pre-term parliamentary elections. During the 2010 presidential elections, in contrast to the previous presidential campaigns, there were no individual regional leaders-symbols. Consequently, with the aim of analysing the position of the two regions we decided to combine the results of several independent candidates. In the case of the nominally “eastern” representatives, we summed up the results of the following candidates, V. Yanukovych and S. Tihipko, whereas while speaking about the nominally “west” or former orange camp representatives we added up the results obtained by Yu. Tymoshenko, V. Yushchenko and A. Yatseniuk. In Table 5 we specify the overall results.

Table 5. The results of the first round of the 2004 presidential elections in “historical” and “new” regions of Ukraine (in percent)

“Historical” regions, %			“New” regions, %		
Orientation	“West”	“East”	Orientation	“West”	“East”
Vinnnytsia	57,3	26,2	The ARC	15,9	62,1
Volyn	63,7	19,8	Dnipropetrovsk	22,5	64,2
Zhytomyr	43,8	37,8	Donetsk	7,8	83,2
Zakarpattia	42,3	39,7	Zaporizhzhia	18,9	68,5
Ivano-Frankivsk	77,9	9,5	Luhansk	9,6	80,6
Kyiv	54,1	30,9	Mykolaiv	20,7	64,7
Kirovohrad	42,0	41,2	Odesa	15,7	72,2
Lviv	76,5	10,6	Kharkiv	18,1	69,0
Poltava	44,2	37,6	Kherson	27,1	55,9
Rivne	58,2	23,2	Sevastopol city	9,2	71,2
Sumy	48,2	33,2			
Ternopil	72,0	14,6			
Khmelnyskyi	54,9	28,4			
Cherkasy	51,6	30,3			
Chernivtsi	59,5	28,0			
Chernihiv	50,3	32,9			
Kyiv city	48,2	34,9			
Average	55,57	28,16	Average	16,55	69,16

Source: *The 2010 Presidential elections*, at <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/vp_2010/>, 15 November 2018.

We are perfectly aware that the figures in Table 5, on the one hand, are predictable, as they incorporate the outcomes of several candidates. We also have to take into account that when it comes to the “orange” camp, which was in power at that time, the voters evaluated the actual achievements and unrealized promises. At the same time, the results were an expression of latent opposition, a revenge for the 2004 presidential elections. That is why the figures given in Table 5 testify to the current relevance and significance of the already mentioned demarcation line in the socio-political format. We should also bear in mind the fact that during the election campaigns, politicians presented different and competitive programmes as regards the development of Ukraine. None of the candidates put the issue of abolishing or restricting the country’s independence on the agenda.

Consequently, the events of the “Revolution of Dignity”, the subsequent annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation and encouragement and support provided by the latter to separatist movements brought a profound qualitative change to the people’s position in all regions of Ukraine. Despite active fostering/promoting of the formation of the “people’s republics” in all “new” regions on the part of Russia, relative success was only achieved in the part of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. At the same time, in view of the aggression and threat posed by the Russian Federation patriotism integrated people in all regions of Ukraine. Following the results of the survey conducted by the Sociological group “Rating” in August 2018, 82% of Ukrainian people consider themselves patriots (the same figures were registered in 2017), while 13% did not and 5% could not give an answer. While there were 57% of those who identified themselves as the Ukrainian citizens in 2010, in 2018 their number was 66%.⁴⁰ Therefore, an absolute majority of the population of modern Ukraine, notwithstanding the existing socio-political division, identify themselves as Ukrainian within the borders of independent Ukraine.

Thus, while considering geopolitical positioning of Ukraine we must take into consideration the opinions of its citizens. In fact, throughout the period of its independence Ukraine has repeatedly changed its geopolitical orientation: ranging from the European Union or the Customs Union to Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and so on. The European vector was quite strong during the “Orange Revolution” in 2004, and especially during the “Revolution of Dignity” in 2013-2014. In practice it was President V. Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the European Union Association Agreement that provoked the protests of Ukrainian students in November-December 2013, which led to a massive social opposition to the authority represented by V. Yanukovich and his team. Supporting European vector during the “Revolution of Dignity”, which was also named “Euro-revolution/Euromaidan”, required not only activity, but also self-sacrifice. In the course of the protests, more than a hundred people were killed, even more were wounded. It may be the only example in contemporary

⁴⁰ *Dynamics of patriotic feelings of Ukrainians: August 2018*, at <http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/dinamika_patrioticheskikh_nastroeniy_ukraincev_avgust_2018.html>, 15 November 2018.

history, when for the right to join Europe and become a part of it, so many people sacrificed their lives.

Table 6. Which international union should Ukraine join: polling (in percent)

Date	EU	Customs Union	Other	Don't know
September 2012	32,0	42,0	6,0	20,0
September 2013	42,0	37,0	5,0	17,0
September 2014	59,0	17,0	9,0	15,0
September 2015	57,0	17,0	12,0	14,0
September 2016	51,0	19,0	14,0	17,0
September 2017	52,0	14,0	9,0	24,0
September 2018	52,0	18,0	15,0	14,0

Source: *Dynamics of socio-political views in Ukraine*, at <<http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/0063e745819871f4c681514866a6c0cf.html>>, 18 November 2018.

It can be observed in Table 6, and it has also been mentioned above, that the Ukrainian people show a kind of volatility when dealing with such a question. The support for joining the EU reached its peak in September 2014, when the annexation of the Crimea took place and the war in the Donbass was in its active phase. Such a reaction of people is understandable and predictable, given the significant shock caused by Russia's moves. The current situation appears to be more stable and deliberate and it represents the actual preferences of the majority of the population. What is quite interesting in this context is the regional distribution of the geopolitical orientations of Ukrainian citizens (see Table 7).

Table 7. Which international union should Ukraine join: polling, regional perspective (in percent)

Region	EU	Customs Union	Other	Don't know
West	80,0	2,0	7,0	11,0
Centre	54,0	10,0	18,0	18,0
South	35,0	27,0	20,0	18,0
East	26,0	30,0	25,0	19,0
Average	48,7	17,2	17,5	16,5

Source: *Dynamics of socio-political views in Ukraine*, at <<http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/0063e745819871f4c681514866a6c0cf.html>>, 19 November 2018.

From Table 7 it is clear that in the three macro-regions of Ukraine, orientation towards the EU is predominant and overwhelming, and it is only in the Eastern macro-region that it is outranked by the desire to join the Customs Union. An additional significant factor, from our perspective, is that according to the results of the survey,

orientation towards the EU is inversely proportional to the age of the respondents. Thus, in the age group of 18-35-year-olds this position is supported by 63% of respondents, compared to 53% in the group of 35-50-year-olds. This means that Ukraine's course towards the EU finds constant support among the majority of population in Ukraine and this support is likely to increase in future.

Therefore, contrary to the widely-held opinion in scholarly literature that the division between the pro-West and pro-East Ukraine runs along the Dnipro River, the real demarcation is between the "historical" regions, on the one hand, which belonged in succession to Kievan Rus', the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Austria-Hungary, and the "new" regions, on the other, which were settled after the victory of the Russian Empire over the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire in the second part of the 18th century and the annexation of the territories from the Viysko Zaporizske (Zaporizhia Army), the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the differences peculiar to these two macro-regions of Ukraine developed into a socio-political division. It became particularly evident during the 2004 presidential elections and the following parliamentary and presidential campaigns. However, the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation and its support for separatist movements, which led to the war in the Donbas, contributed to the integration of the Ukrainian nation and to the development of the pro-European course.

In conclusion, all of the above means that Ukraine, being a borderland, is characterized by a paradoxical geopolitical position and variability of its geopolitical projection, within the limits of the sub-regions, both in Central and Eastern Europe. Located between the territories subject to the processes of European and Eurasian integration,⁴¹ Ukraine is, on the one hand, largely an Eastern European country, but on the other hand, especially after 2004 and chiefly since 2014 it has been leaning towards Central Europe. This latter tendency has been observed by N. Aleksiu and D. Beauvois and other scholars⁴² who consider Ukraine to be part of so-called "Central-Eastern Europe". But this applies only to a part of the Ukrainian territory, in view of the country's historically changeable borders. The other part of Ukraine can be considered as belonging to Eastern Europe.⁴³ The inclusion of only a part of the Ukrainian territory in Central-Eastern Europe is a part of both the Central Europe concept and Eastern Europe concept.⁴⁴ According to I. Piliaev's point of view, the above-mentioned remark means that in the context of Ukraine, the conception of Central-Eastern Europe must be interpreted as a macro-sub-regional extrapolation (projection) of the ambiguous

⁴¹ І. Піляєв, "Концепція регіону Центрально-Східної Європи: актуальний погляд", *Актуальні проблеми міжнародних відносин*, vol. 116, no. 1 (2013).

⁴² Н. Алексю, Д. Бовуа, *История Центрально-Восточной Европы*, Евразия 2009.; D. Beauvois, *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej...*

⁴³ В. Носков, "Изобретая Центрально-Восточную Европу..."; Ф. Болкестайн, "Соединенные Штаты Европы – это иллюзия", *Известия* 28 августа 2004.

⁴⁴ А. Миллер, "Тема Центральной Европы...", p. 76.

civilisational and cultural identity of Ukraine.⁴⁵ Therefore, on the one hand, the spaces of “Central-Eastern Europe” and “Central and Eastern Europe” are identified, but on the other hand, they are semantically differentiated. As Central-Eastern Europe is not just a mechanical unification of the centre and east of Europe, but a multidimensional projection, which in essence is an extrapolation of the ambiguous civilisational, cultural and geopolitical identity of Ukraine. Moreover, scholars state that Central-Eastern Europe is a region which embodies and represents Ukrainian history, a projection of all predominant intentions of Ukrainian political elites and a kind of macro-model of Ukraine itself.⁴⁶

This is supplemented by the fact that Russia, especially in the context of the current events in Ukraine, is mainly interpreted as an indispensable attribute of mythologized and demonic meaning – as something “alien” from the East, something that is not inherent to the Ukrainian context, but wants to assimilate its reality.⁴⁷ Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn which takes into account the fact that after the collapse of the USSR (i.e. from the 1990s onwards), the notion of Eastern Europe, at least in the diplomatic sphere, primarily denoted Russia and in addition those countries which were under its influence.⁴⁸ The purpose of this was to sharply delimit Central Europe, separating it from the “motherland” of “real socialism”.⁴⁹ Therefore, the pace at which Ukraine is moving away from Russian influence is one of the signs which assert its status as a country of Central-Eastern Europe. Theoretically, this testifies the accuracy of the theory of clash of civilisations proposed by S. P. Huntington, and in practice it is clearly seen when one takes into account the events of the “Orange Revolution”, the “Revolution of Dignity” and the context of the current ambitions of Ukraine regarding its accession to the EU. In conclusion, this means that Ukraine, being a country of both Central Europe and Eastern Europe, must be defined as part of “Central-Eastern” or “Eastern-Central Europe”, at least with claims for further extension of this sub-region, as it is striving harder and harder to join European and Transatlantic structures. At the same time, current inclusion of Ukraine into the sub-region of Central/Central-Eastern Europe is largely partial, artificial, and is an intellectual construct, chiefly used by scholars, as well as political scientists and ideologists,⁵⁰ especially in the context of the variability of the historical and geopolitical choice of Ukraine.

⁴⁵ І. Піляєв, “Концепція регіону Центрально-Східної Європи...”.

⁴⁶ Ю. Каганов, “Центрально-Східна Європа як історичний регіон...”; І. Піляєв, “Концепція регіону Центрально-Східної Європи...”.

⁴⁷ О. Ткаченко, “Україна на ментальній мапі Центрально-Східної Європи...”; О. Бетлій, “Перевиначення Східної Європи”, *Критика*, vol. 7-8 (2007).; О. Гриценко, “Світ, Європа і ми”, *І. Незалежний культурологічний часопис*, vol. 13 (1998).

⁴⁸ М. Тодорова, “Воображая Балканы”, *Политическая наука*, vol. 4 (2001), p. 182.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁵⁰ Л. Зашкільняк, *Історія Центрально-Східної Європи*, Львів 2001, p. 7.

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