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Identities between trauma and nostalgia: dynamics and changes among populations in Donetsk region

Abstract

This study is an attempt to capture the dynamics of identity change in the area directly touched by military conflict after the beginning of Russian-Ukrainian war. In more general context, the aim of this paper is to examine how traumatic and nostalgic memory function in political imaginary and how these phenomena affect identity issues in Donetsk region after the 2014.

The current Russian-Ukrainian conflict can be analyzed as a result of unfinished disintegration of the Soviet Union. At the same time, one of the most visible consequences of these tragic events in Ukraine is a dramatic change of Ukrainian national identity. But it is enormous simplification to explain the rise of pro-Russian movements in the south and east of Ukraine by the rapid shift in collective identity of the local population (Zhurzhenko 2014). Rather, it shifted and formed in response to dramatic political events, while different political actors used it for their purpose.

People's identities and attitudes towards the identity issues, language and political preferences have changed in the course of the conflict and as a direct result of it. Following constructivist's approach, I consider identities not as fixed and objective, but blurred, situational, multi-layered etc. Can we explain turbulent events in Ukraine based on the regional model of division with references to linguistic and ethnic split? I suppose it is a big simplification that can lead to misunderstanding, because the main dividing lines in Ukrainian society are not based solely on regional differences, but also upon generational, social, and value differences.

Keywords: Ukraine, identity, Donbass, nation-building, Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The objectives of paper

This study seeks to analyse conflicting processes of identity re-definition in Donetsk oblast after the 'Euromaidan Revolution' and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. My main task is to analyses recent changes in two main dimensions of national identity, specifically its projection regarding other identities people have and the meaning people attach to their perceived belonging to the Ukrainian nation. It is measured in relation not only to territorially attached identities (both subnational and supranational) but also includes people attitudes to social and political issues defined by political views, languages, age and media usage.

How different is perception of population of the two parts of the Donbas – the part controlled by Ukraine and by the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR/LNR). How experience to live under different authority but also different media coverage is reflected in the local population's identities and attitudes?

The paper is drawn on the basis of results of surveys conducted by leading Ukrainian research institutions Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Sociological Group «Rating». The analysis of public opinion among of populations in Donetsk region was based on the surveys conducted by Donbas Think Tank[1] in 2016 and 2017, and different surveys conducted by Democratic Initiatives Foundation and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS). On the next step the research will be supplemented by qualitative study based on the semi-structured interviews in the Donetsk region. The next step of this study (still in the progress) will be analysis how Ukrainian and Russian strategic narratives influence discourses on national identity, including vision of the self and the world together with interpretations of historic legacies reflects in the perception of Donbas population.

Of course, analyzing sociological data we should keep in mind that answers present a simplified reality, which does not take into account all possible variations and ambivalences of how people perceive and describing themselves in terms of nationality, identity or even language use.

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[1] The surveys were conducted for Donbas Think Tank by the Ukrainian office of the international research agency IFAK Institute from May 30 to June 13 2016 and December 10 to December 26, 2017 by using the method of face-to-face interview. The sample of respondents on the uncontrolled territory of the Donetsk region was 605 in 2016 (600 respondents in 2017) and 805 respondents on the controlled territory in 2016 (705 in 2017). The sampling error on the uncontrolled territory was near 4% and 3,5% on the controlled territory.

Theoretical background

The issue of identity is one of the most divisive elements in post-Soviet Russian and Ukrainian societies, and is a perpetual source of conflict that influences relations and foreign policy. The current Russian-Ukrainian conflict can be analysed as a result of the unfinished disintegration of the Soviet Union (Polegkyi 2016). At the same time, one of the most visible consequences of events in Ukraine is a dramatic change in Ukrainian national identity (Kulyk 2016). This topic attracts substantial attention among scholars (Arel 2018; Giuliano 2018; Onuch, Hale & Sasse 2018; Pop-Eleches&Graeme 2018; Sasse&Lackner 2018; Sereda 2016; Kulyk 2016, 2018) – and many others.

It is a common view that national identity is a sense of belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group. But what are the factors underlying such a sense of belonging? If it is slightly easier to describe the limit of ethnicity in a homogeneous society with clear ethnic and linguistic boundaries, it is very difficult to draw such a border in the case of mixed families, bilingual users of Russian and Ukrainian language. It becomes an even more complex problem in the case of civic identity, where such identity is built mainly on the basis of political choice and is determined by different value sets, worldview, and political stance – which is precisely what we can observe in Ukraine after the 'Euromaidan Revolution' and during the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war.

Indeed, Ukrainian society is deeply divided in relation to many issues, with differences rooted in history, language, mentality, and aspirations for the future. But the main questions are: what is the main basis for this division?

I`m absolutely agrees with Riabchuk (2015: 138) that the main dividing line is not between Russians and Ukrainians, or Russophones and Ukrainophones, but this line is ideological – "between two different types of Ukrainian identity: non/anti-Soviet and post/neo-Soviet, 'European' and 'EastSlavonic'. All other factors, such as ethnicity, language, region, income, education, or age, correlate to a different degree with the main one."

Some scholars and politicians have tried to explain dramatic events in Ukraine as an internal conflict, even describing it as 'civic war' based on serious differences between eastern and western parts of the country and contradictive identities therein. But it is an enormous

oversimplification to explain the rise of pro-Russian movements in the south and east of Ukraine as due to a rapid shift in collective identity of the local population. Rather, as Tatiana Zhurzhenko (2014:250) claims, "national identities in the Ukrainian-Russian borderlands have shifted and crystallized in response to dramatic political events, while internal as well as external political actors have made use of conflicting memories and antagonistic historical symbols".

The process of self-definition that leads to the sense of affiliation with a certain group and society is in many ways the key to national identity. But self-definition always includes the distinction of the image of 'self' and 'others'. In this respect we can keep in mind Benedict Anderson`s (1983) claim that a nation is an imagined community. He argued that identities are constructed though imagining, which enables individuals to see themselves as part of an invisible cultural whole. Imagining becomes a necessary precondition for obtaining national membership; he stressed the importance of myth, belief, and self-image in the formation of group identity. Nations are imagined through language, which is why the language issue is so important in the Ukrainian case. Anderson also stressed the power of symbols – they create a strong sense of unity within a given community. Having discussed the importance of symbols, we should also mention the role of the past and the historical narratives of a given ethnic group. But nations are always imagined through the concrete social and cultural practices of their given societies.

Identities are always in the process of modification, adaptation and construction, especially during the time of social and political changes. Rather than seeing national and cultural identities in Ukraine as fixed and objective, I will follow a constructivist approach in defining them as collective representations of political, social, and cultural boundaries, and thus not simply characteristics of the self, but also aspects of the societal practices of domination and resistance. One of the most important considerations concerns the fact that identity may be seen in terms of multiplicity, so we should speak of not 'one' static identity, but rather 'identities' which can combine and interrelate. Sometimes these identities overlap without any essential conflict, in other cases, they struggle with one another. We can also distinguish *cultural, ethnic* and *national* identities.

Border identities are often defined as 'situational ethnicities,' argues Kuzio (1998:12), and a particular period of time may determine which of a person's collective identities or multiple loyalties are promoted. "'Situational ethnicity' implies that identities are not fixed, but

blurred, possibly in a state of flux, dependent upon prevailing economic and geopolitical circumstances". It means that individuals can commute between dominant identities, depending on the situation, especially in border regions and during periods of significant transformation (Kuzio, 1998, p. 148).

In short, identity is socially constructed at several levels via relationships to dominant ideologies, widespread social practices, and underlying power structures all drawn together as discourse. As outlined De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg (2006:14): "Both social and discourse practices frame, and in many ways define, the way individuals and groups present themselves to others, negotiate roles, and conceptualize themselves."

Identity is not something that we 'have', but something that emerges through interactional practices – including ways of using language – in contexts. "Since identity is continuously and constantly produced and reproduced, sketched and designed, and often co-constructed by 'self' and 'other,' we should strive to demonstrate how identities are (re)produced through language (and other media) and how they come into existence through social interaction" (De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006:22). Identity conflicts depend upon particular issues for their substance, while issue conflicts such as language, relation to the past etc., depend on the identity discourse for their meaning.

The past and the struggle for historical narratives

The interpretation of the Ukrainian relationship with the past, Russia, post-colonial experience, and the Soviet legacy remains crucial to the nation-building process in Ukraine. The legacies of stateless existence and the large-scale linguistic and cultural "Russification" and "Sovietization" have strongly influenced post-Soviet Ukrainian nation-building. Highly urbanized and 'Russified' eastern and partly southern Ukraine had strong cultural and economic links with Russia. Many in Russia still deny the existence of Ukrainians as a separate nation. Widespread narratives state that Ukraine never existed as a state, the Ukrainian language is a kind of 'joke' dialect of Russian, Ukrainians are a 'non-historical nation,' and it was 'invented' in the beginning of XX-th century by the Habsburg Empire to destroy the Russian Empire.

Serhii Plokhy (2008:288) supposes that Ukraine was a borderland over the course of its history, not only of different state formations, but even of different civilizational and cultural

zones. "Centuries of borderland existence contributed to the fuzziness and fragmentation of Ukrainian identity. Borders were created and policed to divide people, but the borderlands served as contact zones where economic transactions (legal and illegal) took place, loyalties were traded and identities negotiated".

Independence provided ground for the development of the Ukrainian language and culture, but did not eliminate the supremacy of the Russian language, media, and culture in many spheres even after the Euromaidan revolution. As Riabchuk (2012:23) wrote, "it did not liberate it from the inertial power of the imperial discourse and did not annihilate its ability of self-preservation and self-recreation with the help of neo-colonist practices and institutions." In fact, he continued, "we are dealing with deep social deformations caused by long-term colonial domination".

For many Ukrainians, especially the older generations, the Soviet past today exists as a nostalgic, romanticized version. Many people, particularly in regions such as the Donbas, link their worsening economic situation to the collapse of the former USSR. Nostalgic memories oversimplify a past that stands in opposition to a confusing or uncertain present. So, until now for many in Ukraine the Soviet mythology still plays a decisive role in the perception of state, past, and socio-political situation and determines their behaviour. If we also consider the significant presence of Russian media in Ukraine (especially in the east and south) - which are constantly reproducing a romantic vision of Soviet times and translate contemporary Russian mythology – it can help explain the Soviet and Russian sentiment among the population in Ukraine.

According to a study conducted by the Sociological Group "Rating" (2015b) in October 2015, 31% of respondents still regret the collapse of the Soviet Union, while more than half (56%) do not, and 14% are undecided. The number of Ukrainians who regret the collapse of the USSR during last year's visibly reduced: in 2010 the figure was 46%, in 2013 - 41%, in 2014 - 33%, and in 2015 only 31%. Almost half of the residents of the South (49%), 39% in the East, and 25% in the Centre regret the collapse of the USSR. The older the respondents are, and the lower the level of education and income, the more they feel sorry for the USSR. There are also ethnic differences – the number of respondents who feel sorry for the Soviet Union among Russians is two times higher than among ethnic Ukrainians according to "Rating" (2015b).

Language issue

The language issue was a hot topic during all the years of Ukrainian independence and is closely linked with construction of national identity. The importance of the language issue in Ukraine is still defined by the historical legacy of suppressed Ukrainian position under imperial rule (both Tsarists and Soviet). Durable 'Russification' of Ukrainian society during Soviet times created situations wherein Ukrainian language was marginalized, and was in fact in a subordinate position even after 1991.

Division of society is often drawn along linguistic lines, but in Ukraine language doesn't indicate ethnicity or even national self-definition directly. Many people speak both Russian and Ukrainian, or mixtures of the two – 'surzhyk'. Politicians played the 'language card' for political goals numerous times, emphasising regional confrontation and the status of the Russian language. As Tatiana Zhurzhenko (2002:13) argues, "it is not language differences that create tensions and conflicts, but rather various political forces articulate these differences and formulate the positions of the language groups. As a consequence, this creates additional tensions in society and provokes a discourse of hostility and exclusion. Similarly, Volodymyr Kulyk (2016:593) argues that disagreement on the content of national identity "had much to do with political elites' effort to mobilise the respective constituencies for the defence of their alleged interests".

While language practices have not changed much even since Euromaidan revolution (Kulyk 2018), the symbolical position of Ukrainian language and status of the Russian language became a hot topic for the public discussions.

Now the majority of the Ukrainian population does not consider that the Russian language should be recognized as the second official language of Ukraine. Supporters of this idea have decreased from 27% in 2013, to 19% in 2015, according to Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS 2015b). Even in the eastern and southern regions only half of the population suppose that the Russian language should recognize as the second official language among those who would vote in a hypothetical referendum concerning the status of Russian language. The rest of the population within these regions (46%) considers that the Russian language should be recognized as the second official language only in those areas where the majority.

In 2018, according to the Sociological Group «Rating» (2018), 63% believe that Ukrainian language should be the only state language. 17% stand for granting Russian language with the state status, 15% support granting it with the official status in certain regions. The highest level of support for the idea of granting Russian with any status was recorded in Zaporizhia, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, and Odesa oblasts. In Donetsk oblast, 37% - of respondents were for granting of Russian language with the state status, another 30% - support granting it with the official status in certain regions. 31% believe that the Ukrainian language should be the only state language.

According to Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2017), most people in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts use Russian as a language of everyday communications, but third of population uses both: Russian and Ukrainian.

What language do you speak mostly in your everyday communication?

	Luhansk oblast	*Donetsk oblast*
Russian	46,9	61,9
Ukrainian	19,3	3,0
Both Russian and Ukrainian	33,9	34,5
Another language	0,0	0,6

Source: Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2017)

There are of course groups of people of Russian origin, and Russian speakers, who perceive the country as divided by regional differences and believe that Ukrainian nationalists are the ones who are increasing tension in the country. At the same time, according to the survey carried out in March 2014 in all regions of Ukraine (including Crimea and Donbas) conducted by the International Republican Institute (2014), only 12% of the population (Definitely yes - 5%, Rather yes – 7%), answered yes to the question "Do you feel that Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine are under pressure or threat because of their language?"

In September, 2015, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2015a) conducted an all-Ukrainian poll (survey was conducted in all regions of Ukraine except of Crimea) about discrimination in Ukraine. About half of the population thought that there is no discrimination in Ukraine. Depending on the kind of discrimination, 23-32% of the population thought that there is almost no discrimination. 5-10% - felt that discrimination slightly appears. Less than 9% of the population experienced discrimination in the past year. This survey is interesting because in both the Luhansk and Donetsk regions the survey was conducted in territories that are and are not controlled by Ukraine. That is why it showed differences in Donbas compared to the other parts of Ukraine or similar studies before the war. In this case, the large role of national or language discrimination as represented by Russian media was not recorded. The kinds of discrimination that have significant differences are discrimination by region of origin (13% - this percentage is three times bigger there than in other regions of Ukraine - 4%), discrimination by language (10% - this percentage is two times bigger there than in other regions - 5%), and discrimination by nationality (9%; this percentage is almost two times bigger there than in other regions - 5%).

Identity and patriotism in the light of public opinion

One of the main elements indicating national self-identification is loyalty towards the Ukrainian state. If a referendum for the independence of Ukraine was held in August 2016, 64% (or 87% among respondents who would vote) of Ukrainians would vote in favour of the act of independence, which is close to the figure during the referendum held in 1991 (89%) according to Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS 2016). At the same time, these results were considerably higher than those of public opinion polls held in 2006 and 2011 (in 2006, 70% were in favour of independence and 30% were against, while in 2011 this figure was 67% and 33%, respectively). The greatest changes between 2016 and 2011 were in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine. In 2016 in the southern regions, 78.5% of the people would have voted for independence (in 2011 only 47%), while 21.5% would have voted against (53% in 2011). In the eastern regions, 71.5% (49% in 2011) would have voted in favour of independence, while 28.5% (49% in 2011) would have voted against.

Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS 2018) asks the respondents in May 2018[2] how they would vote if a referendum on the proclamation of Ukraine's independence. According to the results of this poll, if the referendum on Ukraine's independence had been held in May 2018, 66% of the population of Ukraine would have voted for the independence (or 84% among respondents who would vote)**,** 12% - would have voted against, and 21% - would not have voted or would not have participated in the referendum.

The dynamics of readiness of the population to vote for the act of independence of Ukraine: May 2016-May 2018
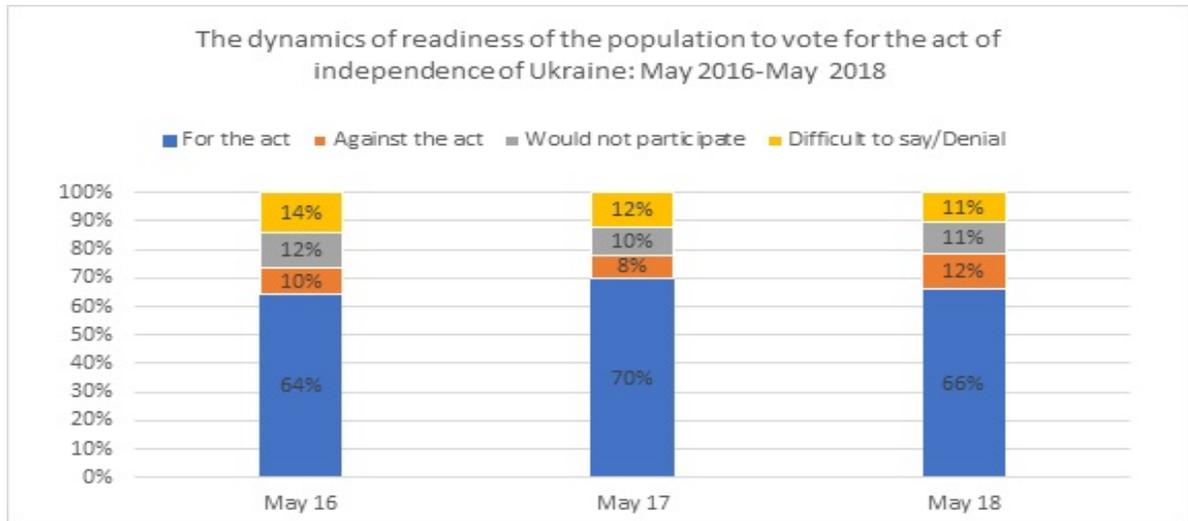
Source: *Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS 2018)*

In 2018, support for Ukraine's independence has slightly decreased (from 70% to 66% or from 90% to 84% of votes "for") and returned to the level registered in 2016.

At the same time the majority of citizens still do not consider Ukraine to be a truly independent state (KIIS 2016). In 2016 only 38% of citizens were firmly convinced of the true independence of Ukraine, while 49% of citizens had the opposite opinion. Since 2001 when this question was first raised, only in 2005 did the majority of citizens consider Ukraine to be truly independent (49% versus 37%).

In 2014, the absolute majority of respondents (64%) answered the question "Who am I?" with the response that they were a citizen of Ukraine. 30% described themselves as citizens of their region, city, or village; 21% statedethnicity; 17% perceived themselves simply "a human;" 8% consider themselves Europeans and the same amount would say their family role.

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[2] Residents of Ukraine without the temporarily occupied territories (the AR of Crimea, parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts)

4% of those surveyed described themselves as Soviet people, and the same number stated they were a citizen of the world. 3% of the respondents stated their profession or religious identification (KIIS 2016).

According to the survey "Portraits of the Regions" conducted by the Sociological Group «Rating» (2018), the majority of the respondents feel proud for being Ukrainian citizens (69%). Along with that, they are even more proud to be residents of their region (74%) and their city / village (78%). At the same time, about one-third of the polled in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Poltava, Zaporizhia, and Odesa oblasts are not proud to be Ukrainians. In 2018, as compared to the whole research period, the lowest number of those who identify themselves as residents of their region, city, or village has been noted (19%), as well as the number of those who simply mention their nationality (13%). At the same time, as compared to the 2014 poll, there has been a significant increase in the number of those who would choose the alternative "just a person" (up to 29%, 24% in 2012, and 26% in 2010). 10% of the respondents named their family role as an identifier, 9% consider themselves "a citizen of the world". 6% of the polled characterize themselves as "Soviet person" and "Europeans". Also, 5% while answering to the question "Who am I?" mentioned their religious convictions, 3% - their profession and occupation.

According to results of the previous survey conducted by the "Rating" (2014) in July, 2014, 86% of respondents considered themselves as patriots of Ukraine (50% distinctively identify themselves as patriots, another 36% say yes rather than no). Only 6% of those surveyed didn't consider themselves patriots; 8% were undecided. Comparatively, in 2010 the amount of people who considered themselves as patriots rose from 76% to 86% (in 2013 before 'Euromaidan revolution' this figure was 81%).

Public opinion in the Donetsk oblast

According to the surveys in 2016 and 2017 conducted by the Donbas Think Tank (2016, 2018), we have some data from both sides of Donetsk oblast: under control of Ukraine and occupied territory. On the territory of the Donetsk region under Ukrainian control - 42% identify themselves first and foremost as citizens of Ukraine in 2017 (in 2016 it was - 32%). In a total, 45% of respondents prefer territorial identity in 2017 (a resident of Donbass - 21% and Donetsk region - 11%), as well as local: a resident of a city or village - 13%. Compared with the data for

2016, the level of regional identities was higher - 61%. So, regional identity declined from 61% to 45%.

In the hierarchy of identities the prevailing identity among the residents of both parts of the Donetsk region is territorial: 45% in 2017 (61% in 2016) on the controlled and 72% (60% in 2016) on the uncontrolled territory. Territorial identity consists of the regional (belonging to Donbas or the Donetsk region) and local (belonging to the place or area of residence) identities.

The level of territorial identity on the occupied territories has slightly increased to 72% in 2017 (60% in 2016). In particular, 37% consider it first of all the inhabitants of Donbass, 22% - residents of Donetsk region, 13% - residents of my town/village. On the occupied territory of Donetsk oblast, the level of identity of the "DNR citizen" has slightly diminished - 13% in 2017 (in 2016 it was 18%).

Territory of Donetsk oblast under Ukrainian control
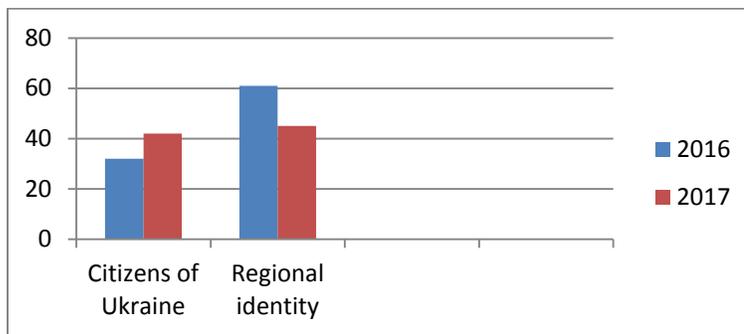
Occupied territory of Donetsk oblast
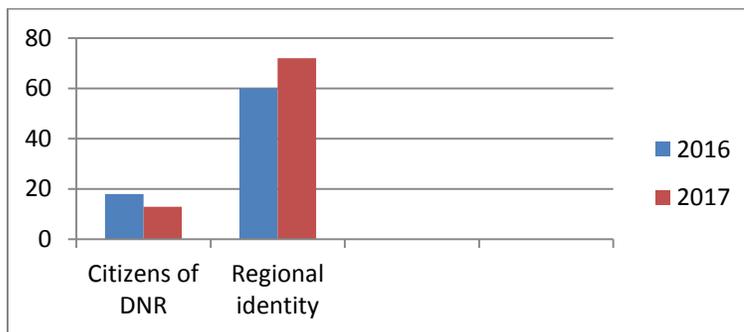
Source: Donbas Think Tank (2018)

The residents of the territories controlled by Ukraine consider themselves more different from residents of Russia, but rather similar to residents of other regions of Ukraine (34% in 2017 and 35% in 2016), but for residents on occupied territories people from the rest of Ukraine less close to them than the residents of Russia (41% in 2017 and 42% in 2016).

In terms of values and way of thinking, I personally differ significantly...?				
	Territories controlled by Ukraine		Territories uncontrolled by Ukraine	
	2016 г. (n=805)	*2017 г. (n=705)*	*2016 г. (n=605)*	*2017 г. (n=600)*
...from residents of Russia, but rather similar to residents of other regions of Ukraine	35	34	9	7
...from residents of other regions of Ukraine, but rather similar to residents of Russia	20	17	42	41
...both from residents of other regions of Ukraine and residents of Russia	16	24	31	34
Difficult to answer	19	25	18	18

Source: Donbas Think Tank (2018)

At the same time, the narratives (widely used by the Kremlin) of Ukrainians and Russians as one people, shared by residents of both side, but the number is significantly higher on the occupied territories. This vision shared by half population on the controlled by Ukraine area and two third - on the occupied territories.

Please indicate how you agree or disagree with the following statements: Ukrainians and Russians are one people?				
	Territories controlled by Ukraine		Territories uncontrolled by Ukraine	
	2016 г. (n=805)	*2017 г. (n=705)*	*2016 г. (n=605)*	*2017 г. (n=600)*
Fully agree	28	24	21	25
Rather agree	26	25	30	50
Partly agree, partly not	21	31	23	20
Rather disagree	13	13	13	5
Completely disagree	8	5	9	0
Difficult to answer	4	2	4	0

Source: Donbas Think Tank (2018)

Relations of Donetsk population towards Russia and military conflict

According to the Sociological Group «Rating» (2018), in 2018 on the all Ukrainian level the majority of the polled (63%) believe that Russia is an aggressor country in relation to Ukraine, 24% share the opposite opinion, 13% have not decided yet. In Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, and Odessa regions, the number of those who do not consider Russia as an aggressor is higher than the number of those who share the opposite opinion.

Based on the data of Donbas Think Tank (2016) in 2017, 39% (45% in 2016) of respondents on the controlled territory of the Donetsk region assessed the situation in Ukraine as a political crisis, 55% (44% in 2016) of residents on the uncontrolled territory perceived the current situation as a civil war.

However, almost a third of respondents in both areas - 33% (same in 2016) on the controlled and 27% (30% in 2016) on the uncontrolled territory, define the current situation in Ukraine as a struggle of other states for the spheres of influence in Ukraine.

It should be noted that residents of both parts of the Donetsk region share the perception that the current situation in Ukraine is a struggle for influence between Ukrainian oligarchs (33% among the residents of uncontrolled territories and 29% on controlled territories).

There is a part of respondents on both territories who assess the current situation as a war against Russia. While on the controlled territory of the Donetsk region such respondents comprise 31% (24% in 2016), on the uncontrolled territory the number of such respondents is 8% (14% in 2016).

If you will describe in a few words the situation that is in the country, which of the following characteristics describe your perception of what is happening in Ukraine at the moment?				
	Territories controlled by Ukraine		Territories uncontrolled by Ukraine	
	2016 г. (n=805)	*2017 г. (n=705)*	*2016 г. (n=605)*	*2017 г. (n=600)*
Political crisis	**45**	**39**	**33**	**22**
The struggle of other states for the sphere of influence in the territory of Ukraine	**33**	**33**	**30**	**27**
Civil War	**31**	**22**	**44**	**55**

The struggle of the Ukrainian oligarchs for the sphere of influence	27	29	34	33
War with Russia	24	31	14	8
Another	0	1	0	0
Difficult to answer	10	5	3	4

Source: Donbas Think Tank (2018)

We have different perception of the possibilities for Donetsk region to becoming an independent state (in 2017): 12% - positive and 53% negative reaction on the territories controlled by Ukraine (rise from 33% in 2016) and 37% positive and 18% negative on the occupied territories. Similarly, possibilities for Donetsk region to become a part of Russia (in 2017): 6% - positive and 60% negative on the territories controlled by Ukraine and 37% positive and 18% negative on the occupied territories.

Indicate how this scenario is acceptable for you: Donetsk region is becoming an independent state?

	Territories controlled by Ukraine		Territories uncontrolled by Ukraine	
	2016 г. (n=805)	*2017 г. (n=705)*	*2016 г. (n=605)*	*2017 г. (n=600)*
Positive attitude	23	12	50	37
Neutral	28	20	27	29
Will react negatively	33	53	12	18
Difficult to answer	16	15	11	16

Indicate how this scenario is acceptable for you: Donetsk region is becoming a part of Russia?

	Territories controlled by Ukraine		Territories uncontrolled by Ukraine	
	2016 г. (n=805)	*2017 г. (n=705)*	*2016 г. (n=605)*	*2017 г. (n=600)*
Positive attitude	7	6	35	34
Neutral	23	18	33	37
Will react negatively	46	60	17	13
Difficult to answer	24	16	15	16

Source: Donbas Think Tank (2018)

We can compare evolution of vision of the situation by the population of Donbass if we`ll look on the survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS 2014) before military conflict in Donbass started. The survey "Opinions and views of the citizens of Southern and Eastern regions of Ukraine: April 2014" was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology during April 8-16, 2014. The results are representative for the population of each of 8 regions (oblasts) of the South and the East of Ukraine (Odesa, Mykolaiiv, Kherson, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Donetsk oblasts).

Do you support the idea, that your region should secede from Ukraine and join Russia?

	South-East as a whole	Donetsk region	Luhansk region
Certainly, yes, I do	7,1	11,9	13,2
Rather, yes	8,3	15,6	17,1
Difficult to say for sure, partly yes, partly no	12,5	17,3	12,4
Rather, no	16,0	17,3	20,6
Certainly, no, I don't	53,7	34,9	31,3
REFUSE TO ANSWER	2,4	3,0	5,5

Source: Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS 2014)

We can conclude that among the main positive changes in the controlled by Ukraine part of the Donetsk region should be noted increase in the level of national identification. As it was shown above, 42% consider themselves citizens of Ukraine (in 2016 only 32%). At the same time there is a decrease in the level of territorial identity from 61% in 2016 to 45% in 2017. On the occupied territories, the number of persons identifying themselves as a "DPR citizen" has also decreased (13% in 2017 and 18% in 2016). Instead, the level of territorial identity has increased, which in aggregate is equal to 72%.

At the same time, 41% of the interviewed residents of the occupied territories believe that they are more like Russians in terms of their own values and way of thinking. About a third of

them - 34% - said that they are not similar neither to the inhabitants of Russia, nor to residents of other regions of Ukraine. Instead, the position of proximity to the values of Ukrainians living in other regions of the country - 34% prevails in the controlled territories. However, almost every fourth feels its regional uniqueness and dissimilarity to the inhabitants of Russia and Ukraine.

The positive fact is that people in both the controlled and occupied part of Donetsk oblast consider that even under the conditions of an armed conflict the rest of the Ukrainian population has positive attitudes towards them. In the territories under control, in total 51% fully or partially agree with it. Another 28% partly agree and not with this statement. In the occupied part, in total, 46% agreed and 41% partially agree and disagree.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: despite of the conflict in the East, the majority of Ukrainians generally treat the residents of Donbass well?				
	Territories controlled by Ukraine		Territories uncontrolled by Ukraine	
	2016 г. (n=805)	*2017 г. (n=705)*	*2016 г. (n=605)*	*2017 г. (n=600)*
Fully agree	11	15	10	12
Rather agree	33	36	22	34
Partly agree, partly not	33	28	44	41
Rather disagree	13	10	13	8
Completely disagree	2	6	6	2
Difficult to answer	8	5	5	3

Source: Donbas Think Tank (2018)

The vision of Ukraine's future

Geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians changed over last years, especially influenced by the events of the Euromaidan and Russian aggressions. The idea of Europe plays an important role in Ukrainian political discourse and is crucial for definition of foreign policy preferences and construction of a Ukrainian national identity. The topic of European integration was a debated issue and reflects different visions of Ukrainians with respect to further development of the country. But support for European integration among Ukrainians was uncertain during last ten years. According to opinion poll surveys, only since 2011 has public support for European integration been prevailing over support for integration into the Eurasian Union. Public opinion

(Haran & Zolkina, 2017) in general largely reflects the instability in Ukraine-EU relations, as well as the inconsistent European integration policy of the Ukrainian government and the lack of a coherent policy from the side of the European Union. The growth of support for European integration radically increased in 2014 and 2015. As well, support of Ukrainians for membership in NATO increased in 2014 and became a growing trend over the following three years. But in 2016, we can observe some decline in the support of European integration.

According to Razumkov Center (Ukrainian Identity 2016:14), in 2015 half of respondents (51%) believe that priority for Ukraine is a relations with the EU. Relations with Russia should be priority for 11% of Ukrainians, with other countries (not indicated in the list) and other (except Russia) CIS countries - 6%, from the United States - 3%. In 2007, according to Razumkov Center, a relative majority (41%) of respondents considered priority relations with Russia, 31% - with the EU, 7% - with other CIS countries, 1% - relations with the United States. Relative majority of citizens - 41% (47% in December 2006) supposes that European integration cannot be unifying idea for Ukrainians. Believe in it - 34% (27% in December 2006), difficult to answer - 24% (27% in December 2006).

In 2018, according to the Sociological Group «Rating» (2018) 54% support Ukraine's integration to the European Union (25% do not support it). The pro-European vector also prevails among the various directions of foreign economic integration – 48%. Ukraine's equidistance from the Russian Federation and the West is supported by 30%; Ukraine's accession to the Customs Union is supported by only every tenth polled. The number of the pro-Western vector supporters is higher in the West, the lowest - in Odesa region and Donbas.

According to a survey conducted by Sociological group "Rating" (2015a) in June, 2015, wherein participants were asked about choosing the membership of Ukraine in only one international economic union, 51% of respondents considered that it should have been done with the European Union, 16% with the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, 14% for a different option, and 20% were undecided. Since September, 2014, the level of support for integration with the European Union decreased from 59 to 51%, while support for integration with the Customs Union was the same.

If the referendum about the entry of Ukraine into NATO was held in June, 2015, 40% of respondents would have voted for accession, 32% would have voted against, 11% would not

vote, and 17% were undecided. Since November, 2014, when the peak (51%) was recorded, a gradual decrease in support for Ukraine's accession to NATO has been recorded: from 46% in April, 2015, to 40% in June, 2015, while the number of opponents of Ukraine's accession to NATO increased from 25 to 32%.

According to Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2017)[3] 81% of residents Donbass have never visited the countries of the European Union. Those who at least once visited the EU, a bit more in the Donetsk oblast - 24% versus 15% - in Lugansk. At the same time, most residents of Donbass (59%) had to be in Russia. In Lugansk region a little more - 65,5%, while in Donetsk - 52%. Among those who visited Russia, the majority did so several times.

In Donetsk oblast, there are significantly more supporters of Ukraine's membership in NATO (30%) than in Lugansk (10%). At the same time, the majority of the residents of both oblasts prefer the non-aligned status of Ukraine (39% in the Luhansk region and 36% in Donetsk). Some part of the population continues to hope for a military alliance with Russia and other CIS countries as a security guarantee option - 17% in the Luhansk region and 16% in Donetsk.

In the Donetsk oblast, the opinions are differ on the territories controlled by Ukraine and uncontrolled. On the territories controlled by Ukraine majority would prefer that Ukraine will not to join any political and economic union, but on the uncontrolled territories – people would choose economic and political union with Russia.

If Ukraine should join one of the economic, political associations in the nearest future, what would you choose?				
	Territories controlled by Ukraine		Territories uncontrolled by Ukraine	
	2016 г. (n=805)	2017 г. (n=705)	2016 г. (n=605)	2017 г. (n=600)
I would like Ukraine not to join any political and economic union	38	37	30	23
European Union	23	24	9	6
Economic and political union with Russia	22	29	48	60
Difficult to answer	17	10	13	11

Source: Donbas Think Tank (2018)

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[3] Survey was conducted only on the territory controlled by Ukraine.

Conclusion

After 2014, there have been significant changes in various aspects of the identity of the citizens of Ukraine. If previous studies certify advantage of local identity over national now in most regions national identity prevail over local and regional. Regional political divergence, based in historical and cultural differences, can create fault lines within one state. But it should be noted here, that there was no strong controversy based on ethnic origins in Ukraine during the past 25 years. As well, Ukraine had no strong separatist movements during all its years of independence before Russian interference in 2014. Only in Crimea, which was the most ethnically Russian region and an important site of Russian strategic interest, was some degree of noticeable separatism present, especially in 1990s.

Donetsk and Luhansk are often labeled as a pro-Russian region. Analysis of a KIIS (2014) opinion poll shows that, on the one hand, population of Donbass in 2014 was divided on most separatist issues, with a minority backing separatist positions. On the other hand, population of this region has different vision of many issues (geopolitical orientation, language etc.) compare to other regions of Ukraine like western part of country, but not so different from southern part or central.

Abramov (2018) portrays the Donbass as an industrialized space of both collective amnesia and collective memory. The image of the Donbass as the center of the Soviet working class was actively constructed by Soviet cinematographers and literature. These led to the emergence and strengthening of a certain mythology of the Donbass which was used by Russian propaganda.

The Euromaidan protests and polarized reaction to them seemed to provoke polarization along different lines, but the regional was indeed one of the most visible. At the same time, as Giuliano (2018: 162) stressed that "ethnic boundaries do not enclose distinct sets of people who interpret events, material conditions, and interests in a common way. In other words, people who identify with a particular ethnic identity in Ukraine did not have common cognitive frameworks that directly determined political attitudes. Second, it suggests the absence of a bright line between ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians; people who identify with different ethnic identities did not have diametrically opposed worldviews."

As Szostek (2018) showed, the Ukrainian population is divided between Ukrainian and Russia strategic narratives (perpetuated through personal networks and various media), and the trust and interiorization of these narratives on the individual level is built based on personal experiences and attitudes. But this 'personal experiences' strongly depended on the process of socializations. Very often stereotypes are built even in childhood, through education, media that form dominated narrations of past, history, and what we can call wider worldview.

The role of media could be very important in this situation. Based on the study of perception of population under the control of Ukraine (where Ukrainian media present) and the occupied territories (where Ukrainian media absent) we can see how different narrations results in the polarizations of people`s relations towards many issues. This is not only case of Donetsk region. According to Detector Media (2015) study, the use of Ukrainian and Russian news sources is related to the level of support for a respective opinion about development in the country (also within a region, as well as a linguistic and ethnic group). That is true to all the issues: the Maidan, the war, situation in Ukraine — and is true both for the Ukrainian and for the Russian media. Dependence of convictions on the sources of information is especially remarkable in the east and in the south. Even in the west of the country, respondents who watch Russian news and read Russian internet media demonstrate a more moderate position than those who do not do it. In general, those who use Ukrainian information sources are more inclined to support the "patriotic" discourse". "However, a region of residence is the most influential factor that determines pro-Ukrainian or pro-Russian opinions, even when people with similar practices of media usage and with the same national self-identity are compared. For example, in the central part of the country Russian-speaking Ukrainians who learn news only from Ukrainian sources support pro-Ukrainian statement to a higher extent than those in the south" Detector Media (2015).

Although the political attitudes of the populations of different regions differ, there are also differences not only between East and West, but also between many other Ukrainian regions. It does not mean that the preferred language or ethnicity directly determines national identity or even geopolitical choices. For instance, as reported by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2011), young people of Donbas and Crimea, where a negative attitude towards EU membership has generally prevailed, did not differ from their peers in other regions of Ukraine. Within the age group 18-29, it was observed in this region that support of EU membership was

51% (average for the same age group in Ukraine was 58%), while the percentage of non-supporters was 22% (same as the whole Ukrainian sample).

The lines between different linguistic groups in Ukraine (Ukrainian-speakers, bilinguals, Russian speaking Ukrainians, Russian-speaking Russians) are extremely blurred and overlapping, but the way these categories are defined and politicized varies significantly from region to region (Kulyk 2017, 2018). It means, that even if people without doubts describe themselves as an 'Ukrainians', the meaning and the content of it – vary considerably.

Stating a 'Ukrainian' nationality does not necessarily mean that this person is loyal to the Ukrainian 'project' or we can say that the meaning of it – will be very different among different groups and often the regional differences can be visible. On the other hand, not all who defines themselves as a Russian in Ukraine or Russian-speaking Ukrainian shows solidarity with the Russian policy, considering their own identification as a citizen of the Ukrainian state to be more important (Mihaylov&Sala 2018: 83).

Despite some regional determinations of political behaviour the main dividing lines in Ukrainian society are based not so much on regional differences, but mainly on generational, social and - first of all - value differences. I could rather argue that, there are competitions between 'Soviet' mentality and values, which translate all typical Soviet, and nowadays Russian, narratives towards history, identity, foreign policy etc., and 'Ukrainian' with all its differences and contradictions. These two groups are using different discourses that we can label as 'post-colonial' and 'post-imperial.' Traditionally, 'pro-Ukrainian' was mainly associated with nationalistic discourse on Ukrainian identity. However, it would be a wrong idea to interpret such discourse only in a 'nationalistic' way, because very often it includes the 'European' components in the searching of Ukrainian identity and goes beyond ethnical limits. The inclusive model of nation-building can be the base for a building of a united Ukrainian political community bound by common values, despite differences of language, ethnicity, etc.

The challenge for post-Soviet Ukraine from the beginning was building of the inclusive model of national identity based not on ethnic but on civic ground (Motyl, 1993). But particularly it becomes problematic in the light of Russian-Ukrainian conflict since 2014. The exclusive variant, which is based on the linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions of the titular nation only, had and has negative potential impacts in Ukraine. In fact, the inclusive model has

prevailed during many years of independence in Ukraine. This may have occurred not because of ideological choices of the Ukrainian political elite, but rather because they were more interested in their own business interests then something else. Nationalist forces, and especially extreme nationalists, who claimed to work for an ethnically defined titular nation as a base for state-building were rather marginal in Ukrainian politics and could not have played a decisive role. The situation after the 'Euromaidan Revolution' and Russian aggressions became much more complicated. War and armed conflict have always played important roles in the re-definition of national identities because they required national unity and mobilization, but at the same time they provoke a deeper dividing line in society and focus upon an image of enemy and distinct 'other.' Consequently, the open Russian-Ukrainian struggle induced a rise of anti-Russian sentiment (mainly it was directed towards the Russian state and its proponents, not just ethnical 'Russians') and divided Ukrainian society on much stronger ground on the ideological base.

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