POLICY PAPER

THE IMPACT OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP ON THE CHANGING IDENTITY OF EASTERN EUROPE: CASE STUDIES OF MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

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Identity: basic characteristics

Identity is a debatable and vague concept that is quite difficult to define. In the term itself there is a paradox of its meaning: the Latin root *idem*, meaning "the same", implies both identity and difference, i.e. on the one hand identity is unique and serves as a means of establishing our difference from other people, but at the same time it involves connection and belonging to a wider social group or team.

The multiplicity of conceptualizations and definitions of identity raises problems with the methodological harmony, clarity and operability of the construct itself for research. Although these nuances do not preclude the use of the concept in a wide range of sciences, including psychology, sociology, philosophy, political science, and others, the debate over the relevance, practicality, and validity of the concept is ongoing. An appeal to identity often takes place in the political sphere, but its applied nature is an exaggeration rather than a factual reality. On the other hand, the immanent shortcomings of the concept create a favorable basis for the manipulation and speculation of issues of identity in the conduct of political activity.

The term "identity" was introduced by S. Freud in his work "Psychology of the masses and the analysis of the human "I", and in his interpretation it meant the self-identification of man with the authoritative personalities he imitates, consciously or subconsciously[1]. The concept was developed by other scientists, including J. Habermas, L. Krappman, J. Mead (socially determined identity "Me" and individual identity "I"). The problem of identity was also studied by E. Erickson, J. Marcia, A. Waterman, G. Tajfel, J. Turner (cognitive theory of social identity). E. Erickson is considered the founder of the theory of identity, and his main views on this issue are set out in the work "Childhood and Society". From his point of view, identity is formed in the process of socialization of the individual, i.e. identity is a socialized part of the "I". Despite the fact that E. Erickson did not provide a precise definition of identity, he emphasized the fundamental dynamism, fluidity of identity, and its ability to transform[2]. In this context, it is important to capture a fundamental aspect of this work, namely the social component of identity and the need to identify with a larger group, not only by gender, professional or social affiliation, but also nationality. Equally critical is the fluid and dynamic nature of identity, which encourages us to consider the prospects of both its objective transformation and purposeful activities aimed at forming and changing the basic components of identity by specific actors in both national and regional order.

A fundamentally significant characteristic of identity is its nature as a product of opposition. According to R. Martin, although identity presupposes both uniqueness and uniformity or similarity, it cannot be defined in isolation from other identities,

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[1] Freud, Sigmund (1921), Massenpsichologie und Ich (Analise, International Psychoanalytic Publishing House, Vienna, Austria.
[2] Jerikson, Je. (1996), Identichnost': just' i krizis [Identity: Youth and Crisis], Progress, Moskva, RF.

moreover, the only way to delineate identity is to present it in contrast to others. Thus, identity can exist only in terms of the dichotomy of "I-another"[3]. As J. Derrida said, "there is no culture or cultural identity that has no 'other' in relation to 'itself'."[4] This statement is true for the formation of most types of identities, including various forms of collective identification, such as national or regional. For example, Eastern Europe as a region during the Enlightenment played the role of "the significant Other" for Western Europe, as the antithesis of technological progress, economic development and high culture. For many Eastern European states, the role of the "Other" is played by Russia, given the complex historical outline of relations in the "metropolis-colony" mode and the fundamental contradictions of national projects.

Thus, it is impossible to give a specific definition of the concept of "identity", because there are different approaches to its interpretation. However, identity can be presented as a means of establishing one's own uniqueness and exclusivity through opposition to the "other", which is manifested in a number of special parameters that depend on the type of identity, and are long-lasting and permanent, although not immune to transformation. The lack of methodological coherence does not prevent the use of the concept of identity in the scientific and political spheres, but it also serves as a basis for the limited applied nature of the concept.

The main types of identity

The most important characteristics of identity, as W. Kimlytska[5] writes, are perspective, longevity and dynamism, which determine its multiple nature. Accordingly, identity is a multidimensional phenomenon: each person can identify oneself in the context of one's own family, gender, ethnic group, class, community, nation, state and civilization. As mentioned above, all these types of identities are constructed through the process of socialization, as the multicultural and multisocial nature of identities requires diversity of individuals, groups, social confrontations, deep interactions, a strong sense of identity and awareness of the fact that these identities can be transformed due to the current conjuncture. The process of socialization also leads to the creation of new identities. It should also be noted that different types of identities coexist in a harmonious mode, mostly without coming into conflict with each other. But there is a risk of a crisis of self-determination if two or more types of identity of the same level with contradictory or mutually exclusive features claim the same niche of identification.

There are at least three conceptually distinct types of identity: personal, social, and collective. Personal identity is based on the characteristics and meanings that the actor attributes to himself. Social identity is associated with the performance of certain roles in the social space. Although there is no fixed definition of collective identity, its

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[3] Martin, D. (1995). The choices of identity. Social Identities, 1(1),5–21.

[4] Derrida, J. (1992). An interview with Jacques Derrida: This strange institution called literature. In D. Attridge (Ed.), Acts of literature (pp. 33-75). London: Routledge.

[5] Kymlicka, W. (1995). Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

essence is a shared sense of "one-ness" or "we-ness" anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of "others". Collective identity can take various forms, including national identity, which will be discussed below. Since this work addresses the issue of collective forms of identity, in particular national and regional, in the future we will consider these forms from a theoretical point of view.

Thus, each person has several types of identity at the same time, among them the basic ones are personal, social and collective. Collective identity, in turn, can take various forms, including the national identity that underlies this work.

Formation and transformation of collective identity

Collective identity is constructed in a specific temporal and spatial context. This process takes place on the basis of objective and subjective elements. Objective elements include those that share all members of a community such as symbols, myths, language, religion, ethnicity, way of life, common history, values, traditions. Collective identity is formed by internalizing these components by members of a particular community, and the dominant nature of social identity is determined by emphasizing their priority. Subjective elements of collective identity include relative indicators of the scale of the process of internalization of objective factors of collective identity.

As for the transformation of collective identity, according to R. Martin, it is due to the fact that authenticity is not innate, but in fact constructed by social and historical frameworks, and that the historical aspect of identity involves not only the existence of different types of identity in the historical process, but also a change of any common identity in the context of the historical process[6]. The historical nature of identity emphasizes its variability and temporality, and the social system increases its longevity. In any historical period, one type of identity may prevail over another. As A. Eralp writes, "the criteria for the dominance of a certain type of identity are necessity, urgency, external threat and relative ability, as well as its internalization by a certain society."[7] For example, before the beginning of the late XVIII century for the majority of the population of Europe the main thing was religious affiliation as a form of identification, as well as a vertical type of identity, which involves connection with the immediate residence and self-awareness as a subject of a monarch. For the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, national identity remained key.

The above factors, which are objective in the formation of collective identity, including national, however, are not an exhaustive list to characterize the process of constructing identity. In this paper, **we consider identity as a result of**

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[6] Martin, D. (1995). The choices of identity. Social Identities, 1(1), 5–21.

[7] Eralp, A. 1997. "Soğuk Savaş'tan Günümüze Türkiye Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri." In Atila Eralp (ed.), Türkiye ve Avrupa: Batılılaşma Kalkınma Demokrasi, (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 88-121.

intersubjective interaction and purposeful construction, respectively; the question remains about the actors directly involved in the process of identity development. As already mentioned, the social framework in which identity is constructed is decisive, and subjective elements such as the degree of internalization of collective identity are directly related to purposeful activities in this direction. For example, speaking of national identity, one cannot rule out the fact that purposeful activities to build a sense of nationality, patriotism and related concepts through the implementation of relevant norms and ideas in the education system and public discourse have taken place since the nineteenth century and were carried out at the state level.

The existence of objective bases for the development of identity is not identified with itself, because the process of crystallization of the idea, indicators and forms of manifestation of a particular collective identity is long and rarely chaotic. The extent of the process of internalizing the objective factors of collective identity depends on national elites, civil society and key policymakers. Often the actualization of the expressive features of a certain collective identity occurs in response to a specific threat to social security - when the identity itself becomes a referent of security, or in the case of an external military threat.

For example, Russian aggression was a factor in revising and crystallizing the basic structures of Ukrainian national identity, but later at the state level a number of measures were taken to revise the concept of national history, consolidate the status of the Ukrainian language in public discourse, and form a new attitude to the European foreign policy vector. Thus, external actors are constitutive for the formation of identity, including collective, because they often play the role of "the significant Other". However, the question remains whether external actors, prior to the unification of supranational states such as the EU, can effectively influence the transformation of a nation's identity, its self-determination in the regional dimension and change basic axiological characteristics?

National identity as a specific form of collective identity

Like any concept in the social sciences, national identity has many interpretations. The diversity of definitions of national identity is related to the categorical and conceptual ambiguity of the term "nation". Experts distinguish a number of methodological approaches to the definition of "nation", namely primordialism, essentialism and constructivism. The first two concepts underline the original, unchanging nature of the nation which remains immune to subjective factors, while the latter upholds its artificial and socially constructed character, leaving the room for transformation. By analogy, a single and coherent theory, which would be devoted exclusively to national identity, does not exist today, but most often this phenomenon is studied on the basis of the theory of social identity and the theory of group attachment.

To systemize the plurality of definitions of national identity and its dimensions, we provide a table containing them.

Authors	Definition and dimensions of national identity
B. Keillor, T. M. Hult[8]	A set of values inherent in a particular culture that distinguishes it from other cultures. Four basic components of the national identity framework include cultural homogeneity, belief structure, national heritage and ethnocentrism.
C. Cui, E. Adams[9]	The extent to which a given culture recognizes and identifies a set of focal elements that set it apart from other cultures by exhibiting greater complexity and variation in the institutions of those aspects than others.
R. Vedina, I. Baumane[10]	National or ethnic identity is based on the value attached to the membership of one or another national or ethnic group, various authors relate ethnic identity to a long list of factors such as language, cultural background, geographic region, social class, political conflict, perception of historical events, symbols and myths, created communication and interaction space and biological differences.
T. Blank, P. Schmidt[11]	The sum of cognitive attitudes and emotional reactions that express the relationship of the individual with the nation.
M. Barrett[12]	A multidimensional construct and includes the following components: **1.** Subjective belief (self-identification) about one's belonging to a certain nation **2.** A strong sense of national affiliation as an integral part of an individual's identity

[8] Keillor, B. D., & Tomas M. Hult, G. (1999). A five-country study of national identity. International Marketing Review, 16(1), 65–84.

[9] Cui, C. C., & Adams, E. I. (2002). National identity and NATID: An assessment in Yemen. International Marketing Review, 19(6), 637–662.

[10] Vedina, R., & Baumane, I. (2009). The construction of national identity among minorities and its manifestation in organisations: The case of Latvia. Baltic Journal of Management, 4(1): 94–105.

[11] Blank, T., & Schmidt, P. (2003). National identity in a united Germany: Nationalism or patriotism? An empirical test with representative data. Political Psychology, 24(2), 289–312.

[12] Barrett, M. (2005). National identities in children and young people. In S. Ding & K. Littleton (Eds.), Children's personal and social development (pp. 181–220). Milton Keynes: The Open University/Blackwell.

	3. Positive or negative emotions towards the nation **4.** Stereotypes about typical characteristics and traits of people who belong either to the national group of an individual or to other national groups **5.** Subjective experience of inclusion and perception of oneself as similar to other members of the group, together with important characteristics that determine the essence of the group **6.** Subjective position on modern goals and problems of the nation **7.** Knowledge and readiness to internalize national culture and values and follow national behavioral norms.
A. Smith[13]	National identity consists of many elements, such as culture, heritage, religion, laws and values. It involves some sense of political community, history, territory, patria, citizenship, common values and traditions.
A. Thompson[14]	Each individual engages in many different ways in making sense of nations and national identities in the course of interactions with others.
R. Kiely et al.[15]	'Markers' of national identity can include: place of birth, ancestry, place of residence, length of residence, upbringing and education, name, accent, physical appearance, dress, commitment to place.
B. Anderson[16]	The sense of national identity did not only appear based on the awareness of the unity of the cultural background, ethnicity, religion, or social groups, but rather a strategy of a socio-cultural- political product to construct, produce, and reproduce new self identity as the negation of identity of imposition by the colonial power.

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[13] Smith, Anthony D. (1991). National Identity. Reno, USA: University of Nevada Press.

[14] Thompson, A. (2001). Nations, National Identities and Human Agency: Putting People Back Into Nations. The Sociological Review, 49, 18–32.

[15] Kiely, R., et al. (2001). The Markers and Rules of Scottish National Identity. The Sociological Review, 49(1), 33-55.

[16] Anderson, B. (2006). Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. New York, USA: Verso.

As we can see, the definitions and basic indicators of national identity are different and unique in every specific case. Nevertheless, almost every definition reflects the importance of "the significant Other" in the identity formation, the broad range of factors influencing this process and resulting relation between the individual and the nation. Most definitions of national identity do not refer to the actions of external actors that are aimed at constructing or reformatting identity. Although the role of the "other" in identity formation is a given antithesis to the emerging identity, the role of external regional players such as the EU in transforming the national identity of individual states, which show European integration aspirations and agree to a long and complex process, remains understudied.

For the purposes of this policy paper, **we apply an integrated definition of national identity as a socially constructed phenomenon of fluid and changing character, which reflects the cognitive attitudes and emotional reactions that delineate the relationship between the individual and the nation**. Given the fact our aim is to study the role of the EU as an identity transformative power, we will not describe all the factors and indicators of national identity, but only those where dynamics and significant impact by the external actors can be observed and studied, namely, **geopolitical orientations, political and social values, attitudes towards past, present and future, self-identification in local, national and European contexts**. For the two countries analyzed, the factor of language is crucial as a marker of a specific identity, although not directly related to the influence of the EU, so it will be considered too.

This work **will apply a constructivist approach**, whereby social and historical framework, targeted activity aimed at building the nation and national identity, are crucial for its formation, although not without objective origins. The constructivist approach allows us to focus not only on the direct result of the design, but also to consider in detail the process itself, the factors and actors involved, including external players like the EU and its existing institutional mechanisms that perform many functions.

Regional identity

If definitions of identity, in its various forms such as social, collective or national, create problems for orderly research due to their vagueness and uncertainty, then regional identity in general is an understudied concept and has no clear definition. As A. Paasi writes, "Regional identity refers to the uniqueness of regions and / or to the identification of people with them. The discourses of regional identity are plural and contextual. They are generated through social practices and power relations, both within regions and through the relationships between regions and the wider constituencies of which they are part. The exploitation of history is often crucial in this

process." [17] As evident, the presence of "other" is true for regional identity, i.e. self-awareness of belonging to a particular region occurs through opposition to different regions. On the other hand, the emphasis is on plurality, contextuality and discursive nature - in other words, it is difficult for regional identity to speak of extrapolation of essentialism or primordialism, it is an artificial construct, a product of intersubjective interaction, which in the long run can be a basis for regionalization and formation of international organizations or security clusters for a specific purpose.

Questions about specific features, manifestations and practices that would manifest a regional identity remain unanswered. It is also difficult to determine the factors of its formation, although A. Paasi focuses on the historical component as a key to its construction. However, the similarity of historical destinies or the synchronization of inclusion in certain global or regional processes or events are not a sufficient basis for talking about regional identity. The role of the "Other", in particular in its colonizing or aggressive form, encourages the crystallization of identity in the course of resistance, but at the national rather than the regional level. Appealing to the identical "other", which is an existential threat for several states in the region, may be ad hoc, depending on the specific historical moment when this threat reaches its maximum, but short-term commonality in foreign policy agendas or frequent rhetorical steps pronouncing a common identity are sufficient grounds for declaring the existence of a regional identity. However, the concept of regional identity can be instrumental as a social construct created in accordance with a specific goal or political situation. Unlike national identity, which is a more formalized and researched phenomenon, regional identity remains on the margins of scientific research and its practical application in the political sphere is even more limited. If in the case of national identity the influence of third actors other than "the significant Other", such as the EU remains ambiguous or weak, the assumption of the EU as an active actor in reformatting the regional identity of neighboring states is even more abstract and difficult to study. Accordingly, when extrapolated to the political plane, the number of problems only increases.

The EU as a special case for the formation and shaping of regional identity

The EU as a unique international entity pays considerable attention to the construction of a European identity, which is based not only on a common history, and on a strong axiological basis in the form of anthropocentrism, but also tolerance, freedom in various forms and the rule of law. It is fair to say that efforts to construct the European identity took place after the Second World War and served as a means of deepening the essence of European integration, which relied primarily on economic leverage. For example, in 1973, nine EU member states signed the Declaration of European Identity, which states that despite hostilities and conflicts in the past,

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[17] Paasi, A. (2013). Regional Planning and the Mobilization of 'Regional Identity': From Bounded Spaces to Relational Complexity. Regional Studies, 47(8), 1206-1219.

European countries have common goals and interests, which helped them form European Communities[18].

In 1994, the President of the Czech Republic V. Havel put forward the idea of creating a Charter of European Identity, which was adopted in 1995. This document already specifies that European identity is manifested in the common values that originate in classical antiquity, Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and which are based on tolerance, humanism and fraternity, recognition of fundamental human rights and the rule of law enshrined in general principles confirming the will of individual and social responsibility[19]. In this context, it is necessary to once again emphasize the purposeful and consistent construction of European identity, designed to cement the pillars of European integration and create a roadmap for the applicant states, i.e. there is a practical implementation of social constructivism. Now this sophisticated axiological complex, which embodies the cumulative experience of the Member States, is embodied in the principles of formation and operation of the European institutions and bodies of the Member States, as well as underlying the founding documents and the Copenhagen criteria. For example, in 2000, the Nice Summit adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights of EU Citizens, which was included in the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. In general, the EU's attempts to create a single supranational legal framework between the countries and institutions of the European Union can be interpreted as an attempt to form a legal basis for the EU identity.

The fairness and relevance of the concept of regional identity in attempts to extrapolate it to other regions remain a problematic aspect. For instance, it is unclear if the case of Europe and the EU as its institutional embodiment justify the existence of the concept of regional identity.

Finally, the question of a coherent European identity also has no clear answer. The EU is not stable in the number of its members, depth and spheres of integration, and therefore excessive reductionism and external imposition of the notion of this formation as a unified and standardized phenomenon, homogeneous not only in terms of identity but also in other areas, are erroneous. For example, as a result of several waves of enlargements, the Union has co-opted an extremely diverse set of states with radically different cultural, political and historical backgrounds, axiological characteristics and a vision for the development of the European project. Almost endless internal discussions and disputes over fundamental issues have accompanied the existence of the EU almost continuously, giving rise to speculation about its imminent end. It is no longer the case that the success of coaptation in the economic or political sphere is better tested by empirical research than the question of identity, and the fact that EU enlargement was an irregular and time-consuming process that came to a halt on 1 January 2013 when Croatia joined the organization. After all,

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[18] Declaration on European Identity (Copenhagen, 14 December ... (n.d.). Retrieved November 6, 2021, from https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/02798dc9-9c69-4b7d-b2c9-f03a8db7da32/publishable_en.pdf
[19] Charter of European Identity, October 28, 1995,
[daten.schule.at/dl/Charta_europ_Identitaet_119142657213287.pdf]

although the vast majority of EU citizens feel connected to Europe and the European Union (65% and 57% respectively), national affiliation, i.e. national identity (92% of participants identify themselves according to their national affiliation), remains key[20].

The aspect of the application of the ephemeral European identity as a foreign policy tool remains challenging. The author of the concept of normative force I. Manners proposes a theoretical approach in which the EU shapes the international environment by transforming its standards and norms, not so much through the use of material instruments (military, economic or legal mechanisms), but because of the potential of European projects for third countries, which is rooted in European standards, values, principles and procedures. On the other hand, the instrumental and applied manifestation of European identity, embodied in the organizational and constitutive principles of the European project, is a kind of means to assert the EU's global role by establishing norms, principles and standards of "normal" or "desirable"[21]. In other words, the principles of classical liberalism, transferred to an axiological basis, appropriated by Europeans as the embodiment of their essence and high standard, are a guide for other states, including the countries participating in the Eastern Partnership.

It is debatable whether the desire of some Eastern Partnership member states, including Ukraine and Moldova, to join the EU is a manifestation of the strength of EU regulatory power and a desire to meet European identity markers or choose one of the poles in the Russia-Europe binary modality, which is due to a strong desire to escape from the influence of the first. The question of the role of the EU as an actor that is able to influence not only the formation of foreign policy priorities, but also the transformation of national identity also remains open. Particularly, how exactly should this influence be manifested: by replacing basic values with European ones in the structure of national identity, or by point modifications of attitudes towards certain phenomena? Should identifying oneself as a "European" displace national identity, that is, a regional identity complex potentially gaining a dominant position? Do the Eastern Partnership member states tend to identify themselves as Eastern European, and what is the purpose of such identification - to emphasize belonging to a European home with a geographical denomination or to try to emphasize the region's special experience in the long run? The vagueness of the concept of regional identity as well as EU identity transformative potential is reaffirmed again. In the best attempt to tackle these questions, we consider the Eastern European regional identity and national identities of Ukraine and Moldova as our case studies in the context of European Union's influence with respect to their identification.

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[20] Eurobarometer Standard 95 Spring 2021 Factsheet it en. (n.d.). Retrieved November 6, 2021, from http://www.politicheeuropee.gov.it/media/5881/eurobarometer_standard_95_spring_2021_factsheet_it_en.pdf
[21] Manners, I. (2002). Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms? JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 40(2), 235-258.

2. Eastern European regional identity and the impact of EaP

Despite the methodological and conceptual gaps in the concept of regional identity, its vagueness and debatable nature, we will try to extrapolate this concept to Eastern Europe. The question immediately arises about the definition of Eastern Europe: which countries do belong to it? It is difficult to talk about the specifics of Eastern European regional identity without a clear understanding of the list of countries that constitute it. The answer to this question is a task complicated by the coexistence and competition of a number of concepts that claim to be the embodiment of approximately the same space, namely *Central, Central and Eastern Europe* and *Eastern Europe*. Scientists have different approaches and interpretations of all these regional complexes.

I. Pilyaev considers the concepts of Eastern, Central and Central and Eastern Europe to be identical and include post-communist non-Balkan countries with a predominantly European population, which today are united by the European institutional formats[22]. The Visegrád Group countries and Slovenia, as well as the countries that have been part of the Russian Empire and the USSR for a long time (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Moldova) meet this criterion. This concept is supported by O. Khylko, who, applying to this space the theory of regional security complexes developed by B. Buzan and O.Wæver [23], emphasizes the fundamental importance of the Russian factor in shaping this security environment and the relevance of the analysis of common regional identity as a basis for regionalization[24]. In the interpretations of other researchers, these regions only partially intersect, and therefore their further scrutiny is necessary in order to delineate the boundaries of this region and to hold a further discussion on the Eastern European regional identity.

Central Europe

The concept of "Central Europe" originated in the Middle Ages and was used to denote the territories of the Holy Roman Empire. From the middle of the XIX century, the concept of Central Europe can be associated with the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The idea of "Central Europe" was revived by Polish[25], Czech[26] and Hungarian[27] writers as an alternative to post-war Soviet domination in order to

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[22] Піляєв, І. (n.d.). Концепція регіону Центрально-Східної Європи: актуальний погляд. Retrieved November 6, 2021, from http://journals.iir.kiev.ua/index.php/apmv/article/viewFile/2015/1778

[23] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver (2003) Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security, Cambridge University Press, 564 p.

[24] Khylko, O. (2016). East European Regional Identity: Myth Or Reality? UA: Ukraine Analytica, (4 (6)), 12-20 pp.

[25] Czeslaw Milosz (1984), The Witness of Poetry, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 128 p.

[26] Milan Kundera (1984), The Tragedy of Central Europe, The New York Review of Books, Vol. 31.

[27] Jenő Szűcs, Julianna Parti (1983), The Three Historic Regions of Europe. An Outline, Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Vol. 29, No. 2/4, pp. 131-184

symbolically separate it from "Eastern Europe", which was used to denote Soviet satellites after World War II. In 1984, M. Kundera's essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe" was published, devoted to Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, which, from the author's point of view, were part of the "West" and were only temporarily under Soviet influence[28].

Thus, "Central Europe" was to serve as a link that would forcibly return the countries torn from the pan-European historical process to their true home, which confirms the previously stated idea of social construction in a deliberate manner. After the collapse of the USSR and the socialist camp, "Central Europe" came to be understood as Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, collectively referred to as the Visegrád countries.

Thus, the states of the Visegrád Group successfully distanced themselves from "Eastern Europe" in its definition of the Cold War period, emphasizing their own difference through the separation of "Central Europe". Quoting O. Khylko, "Their idea of belonging to Central Europe turned out to be not so much a unifying concept of regional identity, but rather a technology of "fellow travelers" to jointly escape from the Soviet legacy and integrate into the Western regional security, political and economic structures, namely NATO and the EU" [29].

Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe

The formation of Eastern Europe as a social construct had an objective nature due to historical circumstances, but a subjective factor was also present in this process, because during the Enlightenment, i.e. in the XVII-XVIII centuries, as claimed by L. Wolff in his book "Inventing Eastern Europe", these territories in the imagination of Western intellectuals received the status of "worse half", underdeveloped, barbaric and backward, primitive Europe[30]. Eastern Europe was an eccentric amalgam of certain features of Western European civilization and Eastern barbarism. Thus, Eastern Europe, including Russia, played the role of "Other" for Western Europe, in relation to which the latter developed its identity in the mode of antithesis. As noted earlier, identity at all levels is formed by actively distancing oneself from the "Other" and opposing it.

In post-war Europe, the impetus for the development of the concept of Eastern Europe was provided by the Federation of Historical Societies of Eastern Europe, founded in 1927. In 1928, its magazine presented a conceptualization of the territorial boundaries of Eastern Europe, which included areas from the eastern borders of Germany and Italy and the western regions of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria to

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[28] Milan Kundera (1984), The Tragedy of Central Europe, The New York Review of Books, Vol. 31.

[29] Khylko, O. (2016). East European Regional Identity: Myth Or Reality? UA: Ukraine Analytica, (4 (6)), 12-20 pp.

[30] Larry Wolff (1996), Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment, Stanford University Press, 436 p.

the European part of the Soviet Union. Finland and Greece were, respectively, the northern and southern borders of the region.

Polish historian O. Halecki in 1923, during his speech at the Congress of Historians, stated that Eastern Europe is only a geographical term, and in terms of civilization it is also divided into western and eastern parts, where the former is in the gravitational field of the Western world, and the latter - under the influence of Russia, which continues the continuum of Byzantine and Tatar experience. Instead, he proposed the term "Central and Eastern Europe", which was imbued with the idea of the Polish Jagiellonian tradition[31]. However, the reference to the experience of existence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was not relevant for Czechs and Slovaks, which is not the case with Ukrainians and Belarusians. This obvious miscalculation and a slight touch of Polish imperial phantom pain undermined the operability of the concept.

The approach to the region changed at the beginning of the twentieth century, when German and Swedish scientists created the concept of "Mitteleuropa". The concept covered the space between Russia and Western Europe, which was to act as a buffer under German control.[32] It is obvious that the undisguised expansionism of the German national project did not find a proper response in the countries of the region. The embodiment of the views of regional intellectuals was T. Masaryk, who in 1921 put forward the idea of "Central Europe of small nations", freed from imperial domination.

The definitions of "Mitteleuropa" and "Central Europe" virtually disappeared after World War II, and in the West the term "Eastern Europe" was used to refer to the Soviet "external empire" - the Warsaw Pact countries, the Kremlin's socialist satellites. As a separate region, "Eastern Europe" appeared in UN documents. This definition fit perfectly into the binary thinking of the Cold War, which was based on emphasizing the mutual denial and denunciation of the two camps, while emphasizing the totalitarian nature of the opponent and his encroachment on traditional spheres of influence or integral components of the region. From Szczecin to Trier, behind the Iron Curtain, were the European powers that came under Soviet rule. At the same time, this specificity of historical experience created obstacles for their unambiguous and rapid identification as actually European. Purely geographical barriers in the name served as an important marker of imminent differences within Europe, which in some places remained insurmountable.

Thus, all the above variants of geographical identification have a specific functional purpose: the construction of the "Other", the designation of the zone of influence of the enemy, the transitive concept to distance themselves from the negative historical experience. Some of them are independent, representing self-

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[31] Oscar Halecki (1923), L'histoire de l'Europe orientale. Sa division en époques, son milieu géographique et ses problèmes fondamentaux, [in:] La Pologne au Ve Congrès International des Sciences Historiques, Bruxelles.; Warsaw: Comité National Polonais, 1924, pp.79-94.
[32] Friedrich Naumann (1916), Central Europe, P.S.King & Son: London, 388 p.

identification, some are creatures of external actors. All these features only confirm the previously stated blurring and contradiction of identity, including at the regional level.

Post-bipolar terminological ambivalence

Until the end of the Cold War, there was no problem with the clarity of Eastern Europe's borders, as they were identified with the borders of the Soviet bloc and, symbolically, the Berlin Wall. But in the post-bipolar world, this category has lost its original meaning, as has Central Europe, and with the process of European integration of post-socialist countries there is an active abandonment of the term "Eastern Europe" due to the desire to get rid of associations with the Soviet experience. Ye. Magda explains that after the enlargement of the EU it was necessary to illustrate at the language level the real belonging to Europe, to label oneself as "one's own", at the same time marking Eastern Europe as "not quite one's own"[33]. This was due to the desire to reinterpret the concept of "Central Europe" by the former Soviet satellites. The question of the identification of the former Soviet republics remained open.

The statement about the shift of Eastern Europe to the East and the inclusion of the Commonwealth of Independent States' countries in this space has become widespread. The breadth   of the organization's coverage, as well as the specifics of the participating countries, as well as the model of integration based on asymmetric dependence on the Russian Federation, make such generalizations the subject of large-scale debate.

American experts on Eastern Europe, in particular D. Hamilton and T. Mangott, singled out the category of "new Eastern Europe", which included Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova as a buffer between the EU and Russia[34]. The buffer position itself is a weak basis for the allocation of a particular region - in which case it would be enough to be deprived of the denomination of "Eastern" and "Europe" and the idea of in-between-ness shall suffice. The reference to the two categories raises the question of their essential content.

Some Ukrainian researchers (E. Kish[35], M. Lendiel[36]) also claim that in the second half of the twentieth century there was a geopolitical division of the whole region of Central and Eastern Europe into separate segments. The first is the "new

[33] Mahda, Ye. (2017). Kontsept Tsentralno-Skhidnoi Yevropy v koordynatakh hibrydnoi zahrozy [The Concept of Central and Eastern Europe at the hybrid threat coordinates]. Visnyk Lvivskoho universytetu. Seriia filos.-politoloh. Studii, 10, 140–145.

[34] Hamilton, D., Mangott, G. (2007). The new Eastern Europe: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova. Baltimore; Maryland. URL:
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/200149764_The_New_Eastern_Europe_Ukraine_Belarus_and_Moldova

[35] Кіш Є. Центральна Європа: теоретико-методологічні засади концепту // Науковий вісник Ужгородського університету. – Серія: «Історія».– 2012. – Вип. 28.– С. 192–193.

[36] Лендьел М. Чи є майбутнє у Центральної Європи та центральноєвропейських студій? – URL:
http:// www.uzhnu.edu.ua/uk/infocentre/get/2776 (дата звернення 6.11.2021).

Central Europe", which includes the Visegrád countries. At the heart of this process, scientists emphasize, is the change in the geopolitical status of the Central European region, as part of the EU and NATO, due to the expansion of the integration space. The second is the "new Eastern Europe", which includes Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the Russian Federation. These concepts more accurately reflect the political changes of recent decades and encourage greater differentiation of the characteristics of this space.

S. Plohiy also considers Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova to be the new Eastern Europe not only as an imaginary geopolitical construct of modernity, as it has real geographical, cultural, ethnic and historical factors that separate it from neighboring regions[37]. He proposes to consider the idea of a border or a political and cultural frontier as a paradigm that could unite the countries of the new Eastern Europe. O. Khylko also emphasizes the idea of in-between-ness: "From a geopolitical perspective, Eastern Europe is a large strategically located region consisting of a number of relatively small countries placed between the conflicting interests of the Great Powers neighborhood. It is an area from which the Halford John Mackinder's Heartland might be controlled, a Crush Zone in James Fairgrieve's terminology or a Shatterbelt in Saul Cohen's language" [38].

The idea of the bordering region, in our opinion, is weak for the construction of regional identity in a constructive way - the fundamental existential uncertainty does not contribute to productive creation. As the Bulgarian researcher Maria Todorova wrote, "you can not live on the bridge" - recognition of the presence on the border of civilizational and regional complexes is basic for progress in various fields, but cultivating or transforming it into a basis of identity, especially in the dichotomy format is impossible and contributes to social division and an obstacle to a coherent foreign policy. One should strive for certainty and seek one's place in existing paradigms, unless, of course, the state does not have sufficient resources and the desire to form a new quality or resist the creeping onslaught of existing concepts. As O. Khylko notes, all attempts to construct a regional identity around the idea of regional exclusivity due to its limited position failed: "The concepts exploiting the ideas of regional exceptional mission, from Mitteleuropa to Prometheism, Intermarium etc., turned out to be by far less popular than the perspective to melt down in the Western world, and these ideas failed to become a sufficient substratum for shaping genuine regional identity" [39].

Eastern Partnership and the formation of a new identity in the region

The formation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), during the Paris Summit in 2004, was one of the first important steps when the EU started to invest in

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[37] Плохій С. «Нова Східна Європа»: Геополітична примха чи історіографічна знахідка? – URL: http://www.historians.in.ua (дата звернення 6.11.2021).

[38] Khylko, O. (2016). East European Regional Identity: Myth Or Reality? UA: Ukraine Analytica, (4 (6)), 12-20 pp.

[39] Khylko, O. (2016). East European Regional Identity: Myth Or Reality? UA: Ukraine Analytica, (4 (6)), 12-20 pp.

its border security. The ENP implies the multilateral cooperation in political, economic, and social spheres, between the EU and its 16 neighbours' states in South and East. The primal purpose of the ENP was to bring stability, peace, and prosperity in the region in order to create new strategic partners and to avoid serious security issues which might destabilize the integrity of the Union. In order to create a sustainable partner to negotiate with, one must first have the same values and understandings of the world, therefore the ENP is not only implying numerous economic help, but as well the building of an 'European Identity' under which the EU is promoting the importance of the democracy, human rights, freedom, and other democratic values. The ENP, however, has a logical geographic bifurcation. In the south 10 countries, and in the East 6 countries. The EaP consists of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, and was created by the joint proposal of Poland and Sweden in 2008, in order to prepare the Union and the countries in the East for possible enlargement/accession in the future.

All of them are situated in the same geographical region between 2 influential powers, the EU and the Russian Federation. All have a similar historical past as a part of the Soviet Union. All these countries became independent just 30 years ago. Seems like the initiative should have a more or less equal impact on these six states. However, after more than a decade of the initiative, a clear division among these six EaP countries was artificially created by the governments of the six states. Governments of the countries quickly understood that a closer cooperation with the EU through the EaP initiative does not only imply the attraction of European investments, but also requires democratic governmental reforms. Therefore, these days the distinction is clear. On one side, there is Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, having direct conflicts with Russia and lack of a sustainable partner and investor and have more political will to cooperate with the EU and to implement the reforms and agreements to get more funds and benefits. On the other hand, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, with more authoritarian governments and closer and friendlier relations with Russia, are still refusing to fully collaborate with the EU, keeping a colder and more distant partnership. Moreover, the year 2021 brought even more radical events, accentuating the distinction in the EaP. Due to the hard political and social situation in Belarus involving acute violation of human rights, and the EU pressure on the Belarusian authorities, Lukashenko's government decided to suspend the partnership of the country from the EaP on 28 June 2021. Contrariwise, to further strengthen their pro-European intentions the officials of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine signed a Memorandum recognizing the 'strategic importance of the EaP' in Kyiv on 17 May 2021.

Through their projects, EU policymakers focus on the improvement of democracy, freedom, rule of law, and other European values. Such an approach could help the countries of the region to become more democratic, stable, and independent, and to shift their post-communist regimes towards the western-democratic ones. As Abrams and Vasiljevic (2014) argue, macroeconomic changes affect social identity and vice-versa. With the EaP initiative, the EU wants to achieve the same goal, by sharing European identity and European principles, so that the neighbouring countries could transform their socio-economic level to make it more similar to the European

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one. This goal is to be achieved through the 'more for more' principle, which implies that countries that implement more European policy reforms and engage with the EaP more often, get more funds and possibilities than the countries with a lower level of involvement and implemented reforms.

Over the years, the results of the EaP initiative showed that it is not working as planned from its inception 12 years ago. The EaP in its current form is not fully efficient. The withdrawal of Belarus authorities from the initiative, and the inactivity and lack of cooperation and communication between the EU and Armenia and Azerbaijan, shows a lack of functionality of the EaP, where 6 countries are involved. While Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are putting a lot of effort into institutional change, and constantly cooperate with the EU, the governments and the people of these countries do not want to be treated under the same conditions as the countries and governments that are absent from the initiative. One of the solutions of this bifurcation comes directly from the partner countries, more precisely from a half of them, and it is the Association Trio Memorandum.

Returning to the question of regional identity, there are scholars who propose to equate the concept of "Eastern Europe" with the "Eastern Partnership" program initiated by the EU to promote the European integration aspirations of countries east of the Union, all of which are Soviet.

First, it is not so much the self-identification of states at the regional level, but an externally imposed concept tied to the specific goals and objectives of an individual regional actor in the context of gaining influence in the area of traditional conflict of interests of global actors.

Secondly, this identification, like the program itself, is convenient for Brussels, but ignores the specifics of individual states that have not expressed their position on identification within a single regional complex and have more differences than common features.

Finally, European integration aspirations to some extent are not grounds for asserting a specific Eastern European identity, as they are highly dependent on the political situation and are not static. The Eastern Partnership, formed in 2008, was already eclectic at the initial stage, uniting completely different countries. In addition, although the program is still in place, all participants show varying degrees of commitment to the European project and attach varying degrees of importance to the European vector.

Except for the European integration vector as a priority (which is not sustainable), Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan share only the historical experience of being part of the USSR and other empires, as well as a difficult history full of conquests, invasions and struggles. As O. Khylko writes, "the crucial feature of the East European identity is its negative nature, stipulated by historically driven processes of self-affirmation via opposing or even confronting the

external pressure of the Other. The nomad tribes 'invasions in the Middle Ages, European and Ottoman empires' domination, Soviet subjugation, permanent division, shifting and redistributing territories and peoples, assimilation and imposition of alien values - all of this determined turbulent times for Eastern European nations' statehood development" [40].

But the assessment of the same Soviet experience differs significantly between states - in Belarus it is the basis of identity, and Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity began active decommunization. The format of identification because of the opposition to the "Other" also does not work: although Russia objectively claims this role, more or less clear articulation of Russia as a threat is carried out only by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, all involved in low-intensity conflicts involving Moscow. For the rest of the participating countries, Russia is, if not a close friend, then a partner in relation to whom they show some degree of dependence.

Turning to more fundamental differences, it should be noted that Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan have never been identified as part of Eastern Europe - the term "South Caucasus" was more often used to denote them, respectively, the Eastern Partnership is symbolically divided into two troikas - European and Caucasian. However, in the latter case there is no fragmentation of regional identity, just as there is no South Caucasus regional identity. In the context of regionalization, it is difficult to talk about a common South Caucasian identity, as E. Kuchins and J. Mankoff write[41]. Despite the geographical proximity and common cultural and historical experience, the outlined states have not developed a specific South Caucasian identity[42]. In retrospect, this region was a field of geopolitical confrontation between the Ottoman, Persian and Russian empires and became a complex space for the intersection of cultures, religions and civilizations. The influence of the Russian Empire and then the USSR was decisive for the states of the region: totalitarianism in control of society, the emergence of future interethnic confrontations masked by "friendship of peoples" in Soviet times were transformed into authoritarianism, a number of interethnic conflicts and systemic problems, weak rule of law and corruption.

According to T. Mkrtchyan and V. Petrosyan[43], although Soviet ideology formed a superstructure in the form of artificial homogeneity and synthetic Caucasian identity, it failed to eliminate ethnic differences between nations. For foreign scholars and tourists, Caucasian traditions and cultural specificities, such as hospitality and family relations, music and cuisine, seem common, but for experts from the region, such assessments seem generalized and devoid of depth, as outside observers see

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[40] Khylko, O. (2016). East European Regional Identity: Myth Or Reality? UA: Ukraine Analytica, (4 (6)), 12-20 pp.

[41] Kuchins, A. and Mankoff J. (2016). "The South Caucasus in a Reconnecting Eurasia", Center for Strategic and International Studies.

[42] Gadimova-Akbulut, N. (2020). Common Identity as the Missing Element in the Construction of Regionalism in the South Caucasus. Journal of Caucasian Studies, 5(10), 51-72 pp.

[43] Mkrtchyan, T. and Petrosyan V. (2009) "Integration of Transcaucasia: Continued Failure and Hope", Turkish Quarterly, 59-76 pp.

similarities where they are almost non-existent. The South Caucasus can be called a "negative region", where interdependence is observed between the states, but it is explained by hostility and interstate conflicts and in no way promotes cooperation.

And the EU's actions aimed at reformatting this space by combining these countries into one program and laying the foundations for the revision of regional identification have proved ineffective in terms of achieving this goal. The Eastern Partnership as a format has long been in need of revision and impetus for revitalization, but for the time being it should be emphasized that it did not promote but hindered regional identification, as it brought together civilizationally, politically and culturally distinctive countries, which also have many relationship problems. Thus, it is difficult to talk about the EU as a factor in the revision or formation of regional identity.

Thus, summarizing the above, it should be noted: the vagueness of the concept of "Eastern Europe", its uncertainty and inconsistency in interpretation; lack of factors and features that could be called common or similar between states that in different variations belong to this region, respectively, and active identification and manifestation of regional identity - geographical proximity, common historical processes and European integration aspirations are insufficient grounds; the complexity of operating this concept in the political plane; ineffectiveness and inconsistency of steps of regional actors like the EU, aimed at reformatting or forming a new regional identity, as well as in general - the lack of Eastern European identity as such.

Most of the scientific debate revolves around the list of states that represent this identity, while the list of its features or manifestations is not provided. Attempts to single them out inevitably involve excessive reductionism and simplification, which leads to ignoring national specificity, which often overrides any potential for regional identity. In turn, when trying to weed out the broadest notion of Eastern Europe, which includes non-Balkan post-communist countries, EU members, post-Soviet republics without a clear European integration aspiration or perception of Russia as "Other" in the mode of threat or representatives of the Caucasus region, only Ukraine and Moldova are included.

Again, the temporal coincidence in the foreign policy vector, the similarity of domestic political challenges and problems, and contradictory historical experience are only the initial factors in the formation of identity, but not identity itself. Moreover, none of the countries articulates its affiliation with Eastern Europe, but instead seeks to identify with Europe as a whole, the institutional embodiment of which is the EU - the countries surveyed do not intend to use "Eastern Europe" as a transitive identity concept to legitimize their claims to the EU membership, as was the case with the Visegrád countries.

In accordance with the abovementioned factors, this work analyses the influence of the EaP on the national identities of Moldova and Ukraine, the two countries having similar interests in the EaP initiative. Both countries signed and

ratified Association Agreements (AA), giving them the possibility to benefit from higher financial help and political and governmental cooperation. Furthermore, as a part of AA countries benefit from the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), offering them the possibility to participate in and benefit from the European Single Market and its freedoms (free movement of goods, services, capital, and people). We consider that the EU is using the EaP as a tool of spreading the European Identity, or more specifically the European values such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equality, etc. However, given the impossibility of application of the Eastern European regional identity concept, we will analyze the impact of the EU and EaP as its tool in the context of countries' national identities.

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3. Transition from the Soviet to the National identities: Ukraine and Moldova

The collapse of the Soviet Union is considered one of the most important event in the 20th Century. The fall of Communism was a 'liberating destruction' for the countries in the East and was perceived as the beginning of democratization in the world. Moreover, the collapse of the Union, which has existed for 69 years, strengthened the politico-philosophical concept of the 'end of history'. As Francis Fukuyama claimed[44], the defeat of the biggest symbol of Communism – the USSR, proves the superiority of liberalism, democracy and free market, and that humanity finally found its final form of perfect government. However, history never stopped with this affirmation and Fukuyama, himself, denied the concept he believed in. Moreover, most post-Soviet countries have never become truly democratic. History continues and is being written right now, and the influence of the USSR is still present in the post-soviet states.

The goal of the USSR was to create the perfect socialist society in order to finally achieve an ideal societal order – Communism. Consisting of 15 republics with diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, the first challenge to achieve the final goal for the Soviet government was how to unite the countries and transform their uniqueness into a single fluid union. This process implied the eradication of the true historical identity, religion, language and narrowing them to a single, homogenous Soviet identity. The creation of this common identity in the 15 soviet republics was done systematically by transforming the local aspects of identity. The perception of local, national, and regional identity was changed, leading to the concept that people from all soviet republics are equal and that before identifying oneself as a Latvian or Ukrainian, one must identify as a Soviet person first. To avoid misunderstanding of the soviet people, the lingua franca became Russian – taught in schools and used in all public institutions across the union. Geopolitically, the common enemy - the significant other - of the Soviet people was the West led by the USA and its capitalistic ideology. Moreover, the values of the people changed, because the Communist party was based on equality, education, and labour. Finally, the attitudes towards the past, present and the future of the society was changed, and the new soviet order brought its own ideals: denial of the past where the bourgeoisie ruled the society, respect the present and work for socialism, and finally aspiration for achieving communism.

Such a process was underway in all the soviet countries, and the same happened with the identity of Moldova where the USSR tried to eradicate the historical belongingness with Romania and its linguistic affiliation with Romanian language, creating an artificial Moldovan national identity, implying that Moldovans and Romanians are two different nations speaking two different languages. And in Ukraine, any attempts to cultivate a distinct Ukrainian identity made by the Ukrainian intelligentsia were strongly suppressed during the Soviet times. The Ukrainian language was driven out of education, the sciences, the media, and public culture,

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[44] Francis Fukuyama - The End of History and the Last Man, The Free Press, New York 1992

which led to further Russification and a more significant linguistic divide.

In the next chapters, the two case studies of Ukraine and Moldova will be discussed, with the focus on the change and transition of the identity, depending on internal and external factors. The two case studies are tackled using a slightly different approach - due to different availability of reliable data and sociology regarding identity in Ukraine and Moldova. However, both case studies discuss how the identity was changed in the two countries over time, using similar indicators such as language, geopolitical orientations, and socio-political values.

CASE STUDIES OF MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

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4. National identity of Ukraine

Thirty years ago, Ukraine started its own nation-building journey as an independent and sovereign state willing to manage a transition from a post-Soviet communist country to a democratic European state. Despite the numerous official declarations of support for modernization, a market economy, reforms, and democratic values, Ukraine's political system, as well as Ukrainian society, remained post-Soviet and post-communist in the 1990s. For instance, 61.6% of voters voiced support for the Former head of the Communist Party – Leonid Kravchuk at the presidential election in 1991, while the national democratic candidate Vyacheslav Chernovil was supported by 23% of the voters. This fact testified that Ukrainian society was not yet ready to implement the national project at that time.

During the process of state-building, the formation of national identity remained problematic in Ukraine. Having been part of different empires and states for significant periods of time made Ukrainian society highly polarized. Internal regional, religious, linguistic differences, as well as the absence of commonly shared collective memory and myths, left little opportunity to build shared national identity in the 1990s and early 2000s. Articulated by M. Ryabchuk, the narrative about two Ukraines with two different types of identity - non/anti-Soviet and post/neo-Soviet, 'European' and 'East Slavonic', has become immensely popular within Ukrainian and international scholars at that time.

From 1991 to 2004, Ukrainian national identity has been trapped between democratic pro-European future and communist past where the concept of a Ukrainian national revival coexisted with Soviet-era mythology. According to I. Prizel, the political regime during Kuchma's presidency was national by form and Brezhnevite in essence. Political maneuvering between the West and Russia as well as between nationalist and Soviet/Russian narratives resulted in the further regional and political polarization of Ukrainian society.

The first watershed moment that marked a new era of Ukraine's national awakening was the Orange Revolution in 2004. It had an immense effect on the way Ukrainians perceive themselves and their future. Moreover, it resulted in a gradual shift from being a post-Soviet state with blurred identity boundaries towards a more democratic European one. Despite the fact that six years later Kremlin-backed candidate Victor Yanukovych mounted a comeback by winning the presidential election, the Orange Revolution has become a first step towards building Ukraine's own national identity grounded on European values.

The Revolution of Dignity was the second watershed moment that raised a crucial question of not only a well-formulated national agenda but also the question of civilizational belonging. According to N. Henke, the Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea and the armed conflict with Russia have intensified the 'us–them' line of self-

identification of the "Ukrainians" versus the "Others"[45]. Hence, Russian aggression has been one of the critical factors shaping the process of both state-building and identity-building in modern Ukraine history.

As mentioned above, key features of the national identity that we concentrate on for the purposes of our study are national affiliation, language, commonly shared values, and attitude towards the past, present, and future. Given the geopolitical context, another important element of Ukraine's national identity is geopolitical orientations or paths of integration. Below we present key findings regarding the aforementioned elements of national identity in order to trace the dynamics of identity transformation in Ukraine from 1991 to 2021.

Local vs National vs European identity

National, as well as civil identity, is defined through the marker of affiliation with the state. During the Soviet period, the creation of local identity and its dominance over the national identity served as a tool to prevent nationalism and different national movements. After the Dissolution of the Soviet Union, national identity started to crystallize in almost all newly independent states.
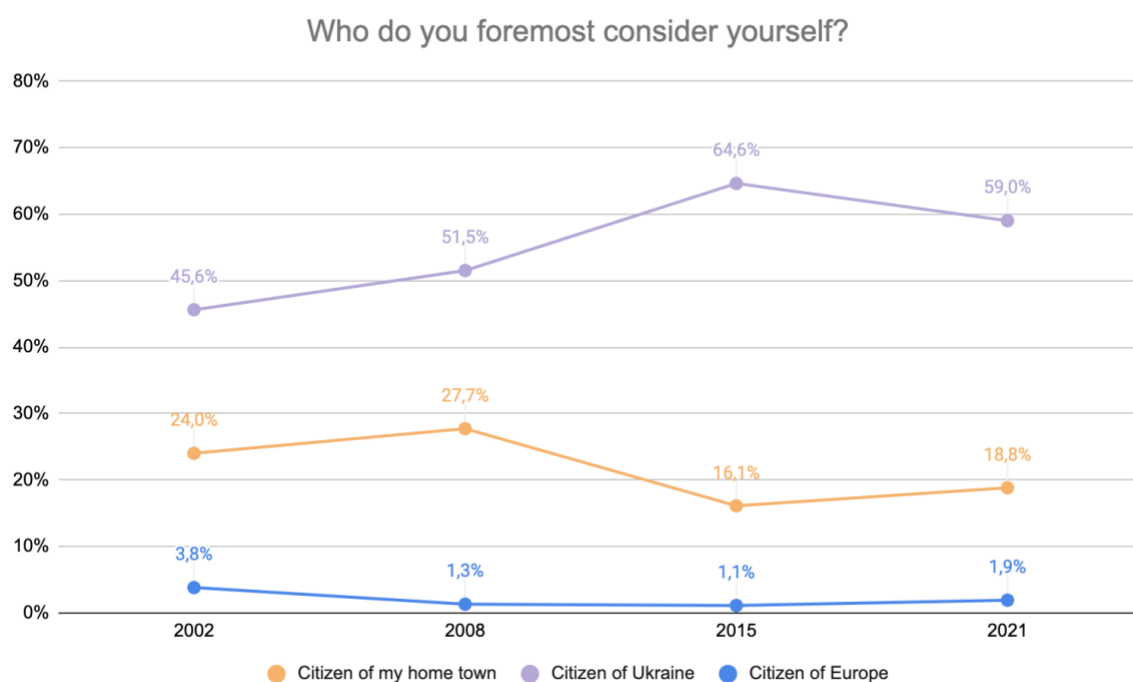
According to the study conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with the Razumkov Center sociological service in 2021[46], over the last 19 years, a steady upward trend has been observed in the number of those who identify themselves primarily as citizens of Ukraine. The Revolution of Dignity resulted in a significant increase up to a peaking point as it was a key driver of a national renaissance in Ukraine. Similarly, the poll indicated that the local identity of Ukrainians after Euromaidan became less important compared to the national identity.

With regard to European identity, only 1,9% of respondents identify themselves as a citizen of Europe while answering the question "Who do you foremost consider yourself?". The respective figure in 2002 was 3,8%. At the same time, in another study entitled "Ukraine: 30 Years on the European Path" conducted by the Razumkov Center in 2021[47], when answering the question of whether respondents identify themselves as Europeans and have feeling of belonging to European history and culture, 41,2% of respondents answered positively, whereas 49,4% answered negatively. The respective figures in 2005 were 36,1% and 58,0%.

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[45] Henke Nina, Identity and Nation-Building in Ukraine: Reconciliation of Identities from a Conflict Prevention Perspectiv, ECMI Research Paper #125 European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2020, p.3

[46] 'Thirty Years of Independence: what accomplishments and problems of growth do Ukrainians see and what are their hopes for the future', the study was conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation jointly with the Razumkov Center sociological service, 2021
https://dif.org.ua/en/article/thirty-years-of-independence-what-accomplishments-and-problems-of-growth-do-ukrainians-see-and-what-are-their-hopes-for-the-future

[47] Україна: 30 років на європейському шляху / Ю.Якименко [та ін.]; Український центр економічних і політичних досліджень імені Олександра Разумкова, — К.: Заповіт, 2021, с. 357
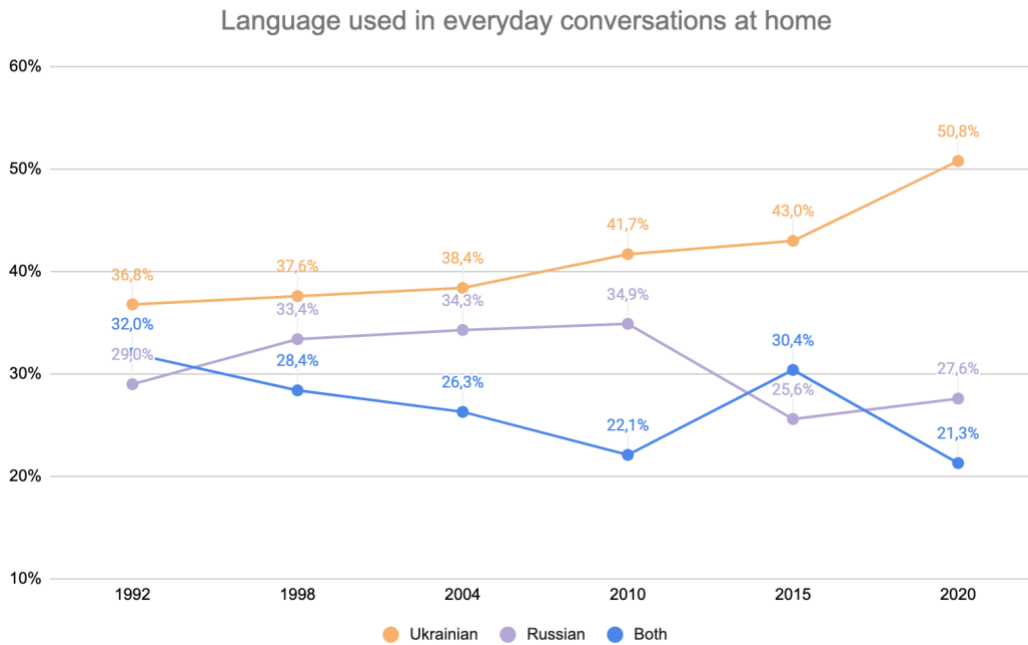https://www.razumkov.org.ua/uploads/2021-nezalezhnist-30.pdf

Who do you foremost consider yourself?

Source: Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2021

Language

Language is one of the most important identity markers and might be seen as a distinguishing feature of one community from another. Being on Ukraine's political agenda since independence, language has always been a highly politicized and sensitive issue. In order to mobilize voters, politicians frequently appeal to language issue which results in further manipulations. Moreover, language has always been one of Russia's destabilization tools that exploit linguistic factor to assert its influence on Ukraine's internal politics.

According to the findings of a social survey initiated by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2020, a steady trend of increase in the number of those who prefer speaking Ukrainian at home for the years 1992-2020 has been traced. At the same time, the number of respondents who speak Russian fluctuated until 2014. After the Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea, and the armed conflict with Russia the number of respondents who claim that they speak Russian at home showed a decrease. Based on the survey for 28 years of independence, the number of bilingual Ukrainians decreased from 32% in 1992 to 21,3% in 2020[48].

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[48] Українське суспільство: моніторинг соціальних змін, Збірник наукових праць, Випуск 7 (21), Інститут соціології НАН України, 2020, с.485 https://i-soc.com.ua/ua/edition/ukrainske-suspilstvo/issues/

Language used in everyday conversations at home

Source: Institute of Sociology NAS of Ukraine, 2020

Geopolitical orientations and paths of integration

Foreign policy orientation is an essential indicator of identity transformation dynamics in Ukraine. According to V. Kulyk, it is the foreign policy preferences of candidates, rather than their native language or ethnicity that best predicts electoral support.

Throughout 30 years of independence, Ukraine has followed different foreign policy trajectories in accordance with domestic factors and international context. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Ukraine predominantly pursued a multivector foreign policy intended to manage economic and security challenges. While preserving economic cooperation with Russia, both Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma developed closer relations with the European Union and Western security structures. After the Orange Revolution in 2004, newly elected President Victor Yushchenko (2005-2010) put European integration at the top of his foreign policy priority. Despite the success in developing democracy, the rule of law, and freedom of the press during his term, Kremlin-backed candidate Victor Yanukovych was elected president in 2010. Consequently, the pro-European and pro-Western foreign policy of Yushchenko was replaced by the multivector policy of Yanukovych. During the next four years democratic regression, ambiguous foreign policy, and deterioration of relations with the EU led to national protests and the Euromaidan Revolution. The annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine resulted in a fundamental change in foreign policy preferences of the political elite and the wider population. Ukraine's geopolitical ambivalence and the foreign policy fluctuation between East and West have been no

longer on the agenda. Petro Poroshenko as well as Volodymyr Zelensky also followed a policy of EU and NATO integration as a top foreign policy priority.

In order to trace the evolution and dynamics of change in public opinion with regard to foreign policy preferences, we need to examine a series of surveys and polls conducted by a range of Ukrainian sociological institutions.

Before the narrative of the EU-Russia integration rivalry had become a matter of intense debate, according to a survey[49], from 2002 to 2008 the number of those who support close relations with Russia prevailed over those who support the EU as a main foreign policy direction. After the Eastern Partnership initiative was launched in 2009 and the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia was established in 2010, the question of a preferable integration path became a central point of Ukraine's foreign policy agenda.

Another report showed that from 2011 to 2014, the number of supporters for European integration increased from 43,7% to 50,5%. Whereas the number of respondents who were in favor of Eurasian integration decreased from 30,5% in 2011 to 21,4% in 2014[50]. The primary factor that mostly contributed to such a decrease was Russia's annexation of Crimea and military aggression in the Donbas. It should be noted that the number of respondents who preferred Ukraine to be a neutral state increased from 9,3% in 2011 to 17,4% in 2014.

The most recent poll "Geopolitical Orientations of Ukrainians" conducted by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in June 2021, showed that from 2016 to 2021, the number of respondents who support Ukraine's integration into the EU fluctuated from 47% to 51%. At the same time, the number of those in favor of Eurasian integration has decreased dramatically to 12% in 2021. Interestingly, the number of respondents who remain neutral and unwilling to join both integration unions is 28% in 2021[51].

Based on the aforementioned figures we can observe the rising trend of people's desire to distance themselves from both integration unions. While Ukrainians mostly tend to be supportive of pro-European foreign policy stance, yet there is still room for Euroscepticism. Lack of membership perspective is one of the reasons why this is happening. The absence of a definite enlargement strategy left both Ukrainian

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[49] Ставлення громадян до основних напрямів зовнішньої політики України". Аналітична записка, Центр Разумкова, 2008 https://niss.gov.ua/doslidzhennya/mizhnarodni-vidnosini/stavlennya-gromadyan-do-osnovnikh-napryamiv-zovnishnoi-politiki

[50] Євроінтеграція України: досвід сусідів та перспективи об'єднання суспільства, Інформаційно-аналітичне видання
фонду «Демократичні ініціативи імені Ілька Кучеріва», 2014, с.10
https://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/1407765948_3132.pdf

[51] Geopolitical Orientations of Ukrainians, opinion poll conducted by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, June 2021
https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1054&page=1&t=3

foreign policymakers and the society frustrated about the future membership prospects. Another reason is the political elites' behavior. After 2014 when pro-Western groups got power they started using pro-European rhetoric while maintaining a post-Soviet political system with a high rate of corruption. Consequently, such policy brings discredit to the idea of European integration and at the same time limits Europe's interest in Ukraine.

Which path of integration should Ukraine follow?
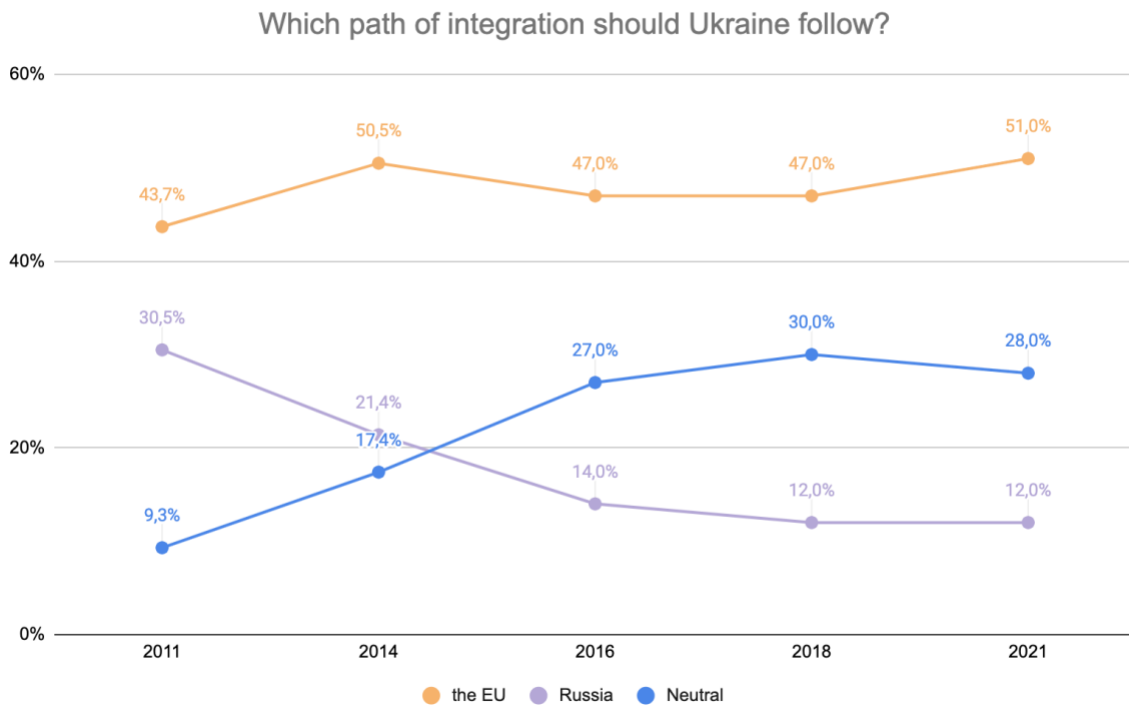
Source: Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2014; Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2021; Sociological Rating Group, 2021

Social and Political Values

Another vital component of national identity is commonly shared social and political values such as freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. The formation of a shared system of values will ensure not only political and social consolidation but also cultural and ideological cohesion of the society.

The sociopolitical environment is one of the key factors affecting the formation of the values system of Ukrainians. For instance, during the Soviet period such factors as a one-party dictatorship, centralization of the economy, strict party-state control, limited civil freedoms, and ideological indoctrination had a significant impact on people's system of values.

According to findings of an annual survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine[52], during the period from 1991 to 2000, respondents tended to prioritize materialistic values – health, physical and financial security, economic-wellbeing, employment, happy family life. Whereas social values such as freedom, democratic development and social equality were less important. The major reason was the economic recession in the 1990s that led to hyperinflation, a high poverty rate, and as a result to political instability in general. Having experienced difficult economic times people would most likely put materialistic values on a high priority.

During the second period from 2001 to 2010, traditional materialistic values remained to be of great importance. However, such sociopolitical values as democratic development, state independence, freedom of speech, respect of human rights and the rule of law, participation in state's political life became more important to Ukrainians. The relevance of the aforementioned values increased due to the following factors: Ukraine's economic recovery in the 2000s and the Orange revolution in 2004.

The third period lasting from 2011 until 2020 has been characterized by a range of events and processes (The Euromaidan, annexation of Crimea, war in Eastern Ukraine) that had an immense effect on Ukrainians' system of values. While the traditional materialistic values remained dominant in Ukrainian society, the importance of the top-level needs such as state independence, fundamental political and economic freedoms, democracy, and human rights have increased compared to the previous period. Moreover, cooperation with the European Union via the Eastern Partnership program, signing the Association Agreement, and liberalization of the visa regime has enhanced the promotion of European values including democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Attitudes towards Past, Present, and Future

The formation of national identity is inevitable without a sense of shared historic destiny as well as without a common vision of the future. Hence having a collective memory and common perception of the past are an important consolidating factor of national identity. While political instrumentalization of history and the formation of competing narratives of the past might lead to the establishment of dividing lines in the society.

The historical conditions influenced the way Ukrainians view the past. The soviet narrative of history and forms of commemoration dominated for decades within Ukrainian society (with some exception of Western Ukraine). For instance, the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) was a foundational grand narrative during the Soviet era

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[52] Ручка А., Динаміка ціннісних пріоритетів населення України за останні три десятиліття (1991–2020 рр.) Українське суспільство: моніторинг соціальних змін, Збірник наукових праць, Випуск 7 (21), Інститут соціології НАН України, 2020, с.71
https://i-soc.com.ua/ua/edition/ukrainske-suspilstvo/issues/

and still remains such in modern Russia's memory politics. The proclamation of independence in 1991 raised the question of creating a feeling of national belonging and common identity of Ukrainians. Thus, re-discovering Ukraine's own past by re-producing new myths while re-ideologizing the old ones has become of great importance.

Since the 1990s such topics as establishing the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1917-1921, Holodomor in 1932-1933, the Wartime Nationalist Movement have become focal memory nodes. The Revolution of Dignity in 2014 has intensified the discussions on memory politics in Ukrainian society and itself has become a new building block of national identity.

While there is a public consensus regarding the recognition of Holodomor (1932-1933) as a genocide against the Ukrainian people[53], the topic of the Wartime Nationalist Movement remains to be highly controversial and generated a lot of debate within Ukrainian society[54] [55].

Nevertheless, according to data presented in the aforementioned surveys the dynamics toward consensus can be traced vividly. The Revolution of Dignity has become a major factor that shaped public opinion and broke the trend with respect to people's attitudes towards a range of sensitive historical events and processes, including OUN-UPA. It is noteworthy that the Revolution of Dignity itself generates an intense debate in Ukrainian society as the interpretation of the events of 2013-2014 varies significantly especially with regard to the region of respondents' residence[56].

Regarding attitude towards the future, according to a study titled 'Citizens of Ukraine about Themselves, the Country and its Future' conducted by the Razumkov Center sociological service in 2019, 41,5% of respondents see future Ukraine as a highly developed, democratic, and influential European state. At the same time, 19,9% of respondents believe Ukraine will be a country that follows its special course of development (like China)[57]. It should be noted that when answering the question "What

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[53] Динаміка ставлення до Голодомору 1931-2-1933 рр., результати опитування Соціологічної групи "Рейтинг", 2019
http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/dinamika_otnosheniya_k_golodomoru_1932-33_gg.html

[54] Опитування до Дня Захисника України проведене Соціологічною групою "Рейтинг", 2018
http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/ko_dnyu_zaschitnika_ukrainy_oktyabr_2018.html

[55] День Перемоги і його місце в історичній пам'яті українців: який сенс громадяни вкладають у цю дату?, опитування проведене «Демократичні ініціативи» імені Ілька Кучеріва спільно з соціологічною службою Центру Разумкова, 2021
https://dif.org.ua/article/den-peremogi-i-yogo-mistse-v-istorichniy-pamyati-ukraintsiv-yakiy-sens-gromadyani-vkladayut-u-tsyu-datu

[56] Ставлення українців до подій на Майдані наприкінці 2013 — на початку 2014 року (соціологія), Дослідження проведено соціологічною службою Центру Разумкова спільно з Фондом «Демократичні ініціативи», 2019
https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/stavlennia-ukraintsiv-do-podii-na-maidani-naprykintsi-2013-na-pochatku-2014-roku

[57] Citizens of Ukraine about Themselves, the Country and its Future, study conducted by Razumkov Centre,2019, p.13-14 https://razumkov.org.ua/uploads/other/2019_DUMRA_GROMAD_ENG_UKR.pdf

do you usually feel when you think about your life?", 21,2% of respondents said that they have a "Fear of the future".

To conclude, the formation of national identity is a dynamic process that develops over time. The absence of independent statehood due to prolonged periods of foreign rule makes this goal even more difficult to achieve. Based on the aforementioned findings, Ukraine made significant progress towards strengthening national identity, preservation of national culture, language, traditions, and values. While national and local self-identity remains to be dominant for Ukrainians, supranational European self-identification remains of less importance. Nevertheless, Ukraine's integration aspiration, as well as shared European values, has become an integral part of Ukrainian national identity over the last decade.

The Revolution of Dignity and Russia's aggression were not only a watershed moment for identity revival in modern Ukrainian history but also major factors that shaped the identity transformation in Ukraine. However, the building blocks of Ukraine's national identity remain fragile as can be affected by both internal and external factors. Thus, developing societal cohesion and a shared sense of collective belonging is a significant factor of national resilience.

5. National identity of Moldova

Independence and formation of the state – between West and East

Moldova became an independent country and started the path of nation formation on 27 of August 1991. The sovietism and socialism remained in the past and the new government was West-oriented. The period of the 90s was a difficult challenge, not only for Moldova, but for all post-soviet countries, when the old arrangements of the nations were no longer functionable, the states had to construct the internal governmental system from the beginning. However, the officials of Moldova from that time were clearly West-oriented, the Transnistrian conflict in the region, and the Gagauzian autonomous region, were mostly East and Russian oriented[58]. More than that, the armed conflict on the Dniester River, with the implication of the Russian 'peacekeeping army' was a major impediment for the Moldovan europeanization. Another challenging internal aspect of state-building and geopolitical orientation for Moldova was the diverse ethnic groups of the country. According to the 1989 census the population of Moldova consisted of 64,47 % Moldovans, 13,85 % Ukrainians, 12,97% Russians, 2,04% Bulgarians, and other minority nations such as Jewish, Belarusians, Polish, Germans, and Romanians.
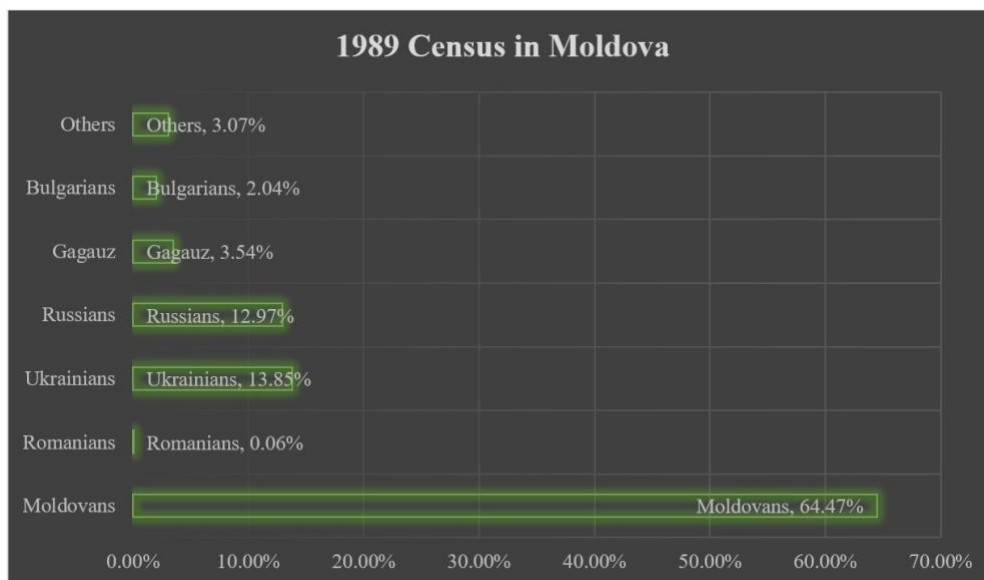
Own Compilation. Data extracted from: http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=9

In the period after the independence, with the change of the governments, the identity of the population was transforming as well. The perception of local, national, and regional identity experienced a transformation process - the idea of a Soviet

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[58] Regionalism in Moldova: The case of Transnistria and Moldova - Steven D. Roper. Regional and Federal Studies 2001.

person disappeared, and instead, the most important identification for the people became the national identity – Moldovan. Local identity also had a relative importance, since Transnistria became a frozen conflict, and Gagauzia had an official status of autonomous region. Regionally, since the idea of the Soviet Union disappeared, post-soviet identification was created. The Russian language ceased having an official status, and was replaced by the Romanian language, or how it is officially written in the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova adopted in 1994, the Moldovan, which is an inexistent language, but rather a dialect of Romanian, and was artificially created as a separate language by the Soviet Union to underscore a historical difference between Moldova and Romania. However, even after the independence of Moldova the Russian language was extensively used in everyday life and was even required for most jobs. Geopolitically, the orientation of the country was Western, more precisely European, with an ambition to leave behind the Soviet past. The values system was in a period of transition as well, from socialism and planned economy to democracy and free market.

The influence of the Communist Party

The 2000s in Moldova are characterized by the domination of the Communist Party, led by Vladimir Voronin. In 2001 The Communist Party gained 71 out of 101 mandates in the Moldovan Parliament, getting 49,9% of votes in the whole Republic. The president of the country became Mr. Voronin, and during his mandate, April 2001 – September 2009, the country's foreign policy was reoriented several times, from good relations with Russia to the necessity of the European integration of the Republic of Moldova. However, Mr. Voronin declared the necessity of European integration, and the actions of the country led by the Communist Party were contradictory to the aim declared by the president. The peculiarity of the fact that after escaping the Soviet Union, the reinvented Communist Party came back to power in Moldova could be explained by the hard transition period of the 90s, longing for the past times, and indubitable the effective political campaigns of the Communist party in the whole Republic.

The people's perception of identity was slowly changing, reorienting their place in the world order from the Soviet and post-Soviet to the European, a goal which the Communist party promised to the people – European integration. The identity challenge of the language however still remained unresolved, and specifically what is the official language of Moldova: Romanian or Moldovan? The geopolitical orientations of the Communist Party between 2001 and 2009 were theoretically pro-European, however the party did not manage to practically Europeanise the country successfully, and just gave the people the hope that the future will be European, without making clear steps to bring that future closer.

The fall of Communist party and the reorientation towards the EU

The point of major change, in the tradition of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, happened on 7 April 2009, when Moldova experienced the second fall

of communism. After the fraudulent Parliamentary elections held on 5 April 2009, the Communist Party gained 60 out of 101 mandates in Moldovan Parliament, and Mr. Voronin was re-elected as the president of the country. Dissatisfaction of the young people desiring a real European future for their country, led to massive protests and demonstrations against the legitimacy of the elections and the Communist Party in the capital city, Chisinau, and other major cities of the country. The peaceful protests shortly escalated into aggressive riots and violent attacks directed towards the building of the Parliament and the Office of the President. The low standards of living, the high rate of unemployment, and the lack of development perspectives for the country were already complex issues which the Communists could not address during two consecutive mandates in the Parliament. The fraudulent elections and the win of the Communists for the third time was the last drop for the young generation, which eventually started the 'anti-communist revolution' in Moldova. With a violent defence of the law enforcement forces and communist authorities, and international support of the democratic countries and international organisations for the repressed citizens and against the human rights violations manifested by the government, the protesters achieved their goal and snap elections took place in Moldova. Where the Communists took 48 out of 101 mandates, and a pro-European alliance - AIE -1.

This turning point in the history of the young Republic of Moldova was promising at that time for the young generation. It brought a new wave of hope for the citizens and the dream for the European future seemed achievable. More people and parties were identifying themselves as pro-Europeans, and the geopolitical orientations of the country became West-oriented. The political parties and people started to prioritize the values such as rule of law, democracy and human rights, and European integration seemed closer than ever before.

The orientation towards the EU - reality or wishful thinking?

The events of 7 April 2009, which led to the change of power in the country, brought new pro-European aspirations for the citizens. Despite the popular belief at that time, the change of the government and the ruling alliance did not change the situation in the country radically. The most important achievement of the AEI-1, however, was the signing of the Association Agreement between the EU and their member states with the Republic of Moldova, hence including Moldova in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. This agreement is one of the most important steps for the future integration of Moldova in the EU.

It enabled numerous funds, created an easier way to travel and work in Europe, and eliminated several import/export duties for the country and its producers. Although the pro-European political force of Moldova managed to sign such a core agreement for Moldova, besides grants from the EU, it implied a lot of responsibilities from the Moldovan government. The internal restructuring of the country and the democratization of the institutions were the core processes which had to be done from the Moldovan part in order to further benefit from the European assistance programmes. Unfortunately, the 'second fall of communism' in Moldova did not solve

the problems of the country and did not eradicate the kleptocratic and corrupt political powers.

The AIE and the whole system created by the Democratic Party and its oligarch leader Mr. Plahotniuc, was promising a lot to the EU officials, but was just consuming the European funds. Moreover, during the rule of the so-called Pro-European forces, the scandalous Moldovan bank fraud happened when 1 billion $ disappeared from 3 Moldovan banks in 2014. The bank fraud, the lack of positive change in the country, and the transformation of the country into an oligarchy led to more emigration of the citizens abroad and another wave of confusion among citizens. The disappointment of the citizens with the pro-European forces offered political credit to the new pro-Russian forces – the Socialist Party. The peak of the popularity of the Socialist Party was during the 2016 Moldovan presidential elections, when the Socialist's Party leader, Igor Dodon, became the president.

With such a political context in the country, the Moldovan society went through different stages from 'love to hate' towards the EU. This is explained primarily by the activity of the political parties. On the one hand the so called pro-European forces and the Democratic party were using the image of the EU to get people's votes to remain in power, however by not implementing useful policies and by not solving the problems of the citizens, compromised the good image of the EU in the eyes of a lot of citizens. On the other hand, the Socialist party was manipulating the citizens with the idea that the EU is a destructive force for Moldova, by using the example of how under a pro-European government the bank fraud happened. The Socialists were using the image of the EU as a scarecrow to influence the people to vote for them and keep them in power. With such a mess in the Moldovan politics, the dynamics of the identity transformation in Moldova in the period 2009-2019 was complex. The attitudes of the citizens towards the EU were fluctuating between trust towards the European forces to distrust and back very fast in a period of 10 years.

Moldova Today

On 11 July 2020, Moldovan citizens experienced another Parliamentary election, the snap parliamentary elections, were preceded by the Presidential elections when the leader of the PAS party won the elections and Maia Sandu became the President of Moldova. The failure of the Chicu Government to tackle the pandemic, and the inactivity of the previous Parliament made it possible to dissolve the parliament and to proceed to the snap elections. The results of the 2021 elections were pleasantly surprising for the citizens, the EU officials, and for the whole world. PAS gained the majority in the Parliament, having 63 seats in the new parliament. This victory of the genuine pro-European forces in Moldova was even mentioned by the US President Joe Biden in his Speech at the United Nations Assembly in New York: "The democratic world is everywhere… It lives in the proud Moldovans who helped deliver a landslide victory for the forces of democracy, with a mandate to fight graft, to build a more

inclusive economy,"[59]. However, according to the international indexes and indicators, Moldova is still not considered to be a stable democratic country, but rather a transitional or hybrid regime[60]. According to the Global Freedom Score[61], Moldova is a partly free country, and according to the Transparency International[62], the level of corruption is very high in the country, 34 out of 100, where 100 is the best possible result.

The identity of Moldova from independence until today was unstable and circumstantial, depending on political, economic and geopolitical events. It was rather fluid, and in a constant process of crystallization, in a political environment when the concepts like language, geopolitical orientation of the country, attitudes towards the past, and social values of the people were constantly politicized and used by the political parties in order to get electoral credit. In other words, the identity in Moldova was more politically rather than historically driven. Such an uncertainty with the Moldovan identity was created due to a combination of factors, such as local political culture, the Soviet past, and the insufficient interaction of the country with the EU systems. The 2021 elections showed the massive identity change of the Moldovan citizens, who collectively voted for an European future, West-oriented politics, and democratic values such as rule of law, equality, sustainable development, and human rights. However, different results of the elections in Moldova do not necessarily represent a certain change of identity. To truly define and assess the Moldovan Identity, representative sociology which is currently lacking must be relied upon.

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[59] Remarks by President Biden Before the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-the-76th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly/

[60] Freedom House. Retrieved from: https://freedomhouse.org/country/moldova/nations-transit/2021

[61] Freedom House. Retrieved from: https://freedomhouse.org/country/moldova/nations-transit/2021

[62] Transparency International. Retrieved from: https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/mda

6. Other factors influencing identity

Apart from the EaP, other factors have to some extent an even bigger effect on identity transformation in both Moldova and Ukraine. Change of generation is one of the most important ones. People born after the 1990s do not have a personal feeling of belonging to the former Soviet state. Thus, young people are more resilient in the face of Russia's propaganda, while older generations usually tend to have nostalgia for the Soviet times. Moreover, the young generation in both countries represent a cornerstone of pro-democratic and pro-European movements; they less tend to tolerate corruption, election falsification, violation of human rights compared to the older generation who were born and raised in authoritarian Soviet times.

In addition, young people benefit from a variety of educational programs, student exchange and youth-oriented projects which the EU supports via Eastern Partnership programs. All this involvement significantly impacts young people's identity and most likely strengthens their sense of belonging to European civilization.

Another factor influencing identity transformation in both Moldova and Ukraine was internal political dynamics. The Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, the Moldovan Revolution in 2009, and the most recent Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine in 2014 have raised a question of identity. All these events were a bottom-up call for change and watershed moments of national awakening. While none of the three Revolutions could manage to break a political system, they have been crucial shapers of the identity transformation in Moldova and Ukraine.

Russian aggression has also been a significant factor that provoked a debate about identity and civilizational belonging. In the case of Ukraine, before 2014, the East-West dichotomy was a part of the political agenda dividing Ukrainian society into those who supported the European integration path and those who favored Eurasian integration. Russian military aggression in Ukraine in 2014 was a turning point that put an end to the integration dilemma. Russia itself undermined its image of a trustworthy partner and is no longer perceived as a potential center for integration within Ukrainian society.

Factors that have a negative impact on identity transition in both Moldova and Ukraine predominantly are connected with the internal socio-economic conditions. Poor economic performance, high rate of corruption, political incompetence, weak institutions and poor governance remain significant obstacles for further progress of nation-building as well as identity-building. Moreover, in both countries, political parties and elites usually use pro-European liberal democratic rhetoric while in practice maintaining a post-Soviet oligarch-controlled political system. Consequently, such a myopic policy not only limits deeper cooperation with the EU but also brings discredit to the idea of European integration per se.

Overall, assessing the dynamics and aforementioned factors that affected identity transformation in both Moldova and Ukraine, it can be stated that the Eastern

Partnership and European Union foreign policy in general, played a certain role in shaping identity transformation in both countries. However, the internal processes, as well as the Russian factor, have had a dominant impact on identity transformation in Moldova and Ukraine.

7. Conclusions

The multiplicity of conceptualizations and definitions of identity raises problems with the methodological harmony, clarity and operability of the construct itself for research. Regional identity refers to the uniqueness of regions and / or to the identification of people with them. The discourses of regional identity are plural and contextual. National identity as a socially constructed phenomenon of fluid and changing character, which reflects the cognitive attitudes and emotional reactions that delineate the relationship between the individual and the nation.

Given the fact our aim is to study the role of the EU as an identity transformative power, we will not describe all the factors and indicators of national identity, but only those where dynamics and significant impact by the external actors can be observed and studied, namely, geopolitical orientations, political and social values, attitudes towards past, present and future, self-identification in local, national and European contexts. For the two countries analyzed, the factor of language is crucial as a marker of a specific identity, although not directly related to the influence of the EU, so it will be considered too.

The vagueness of the concept of "Eastern Europe", its uncertainty and inconsistency in interpretation should be noted, as well as lack of factors and features that could be called common or similar between states that in different variations belong to this region, respectively, and active identification and manifestation of regional identity - geographical proximity, common historical processes and European integration aspirations are insufficient grounds. Moreover, the complexity of operating this concept in the political plans takes place, simultaneously with the ineffectiveness and inconsistency of steps of regional actors like the EU, aimed at reformatting or forming a new regional identity, as well as in general - the lack of Eastern European identity as such. Most of the scientific debate revolves around the list of states that represent this identity, while the list of its features or manifestations is not provided.

Attempts to single them out inevitably involve excessive reductionism and simplification, which leads to ignoring national specificity, which often overrides any potential for regional identity. In turn, when trying to weed out the broadest notion of Eastern Europe, which includes non-Balkan post-communist countries, EU members, post-Soviet republics without a clear European integration aspiration or perception of Russia as "Other" in the mode of threat or representatives of the Caucasus region, only Ukraine and Moldova are included. The temporal coincidence in the foreign policy vector, the similarity of domestic political challenges and problems, and contradictory historical experience are only the initial factors in the formation of identity, but not identity itself. Moreover, none of the countries articulates its affiliation with Eastern Europe, but instead seeks to identify with Europe as a whole, the institutional embodiment of which is the EU - the countries surveyed do not intend to use "Eastern Europe" as a transitive identity concept to legitimize their claims to the EU membership, as was the case with the Visegrád countries.

In accordance with the abovementioned factors, this work analyses the influence of the EaP on the national identities of Moldova and Ukraine, the two countries having similar interests in the EaP initiative. We consider that the EU is using the EaP as a tool of spreading the European Identity, or more specifically the European values such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equality, etc. However, given the impossibility of application of the Eastern European regional identity concept, we will analyze the impact of the EU and EaP as its tool in the context of countries' national identities. The two case studies are tackled using a slightly different approach - due to different availability of reliable data and sociology regarding identity in Ukraine and Moldova. However, both case studies discuss how the identity was changed in the two countries over time, using similar indicators such as language, geopolitical orientations, and socio-political values.

The formation of Ukrainian national identity is a dynamic process that develops over time. The absence of independent statehood due to prolonged periods of foreign rule makes this goal even more difficult to achieve.

Based on the aforementioned findings, Ukraine have made significant progress towards strengthening national identity, preservation of national culture, language, traditions, and values. While national and local self-identity remains to be dominant for Ukrainians, supranational European self-identification remains of less importance.

Nevertheless, Ukraine's integration aspiration, as well as shared European values, has become an integral part of Ukrainian national identity over the last decade. The Revolution of Dignity and Russia's aggression were not only a watershed moment for identity revival in modern Ukrainian history but also major factors that shaped the identity transformation in Ukraine. However, the building blocks of Ukraine's national identity remain fragile as can be affected by both internal and external factors. Thus, developing societal cohesion and a shared sense of collective belonging is a significant factor of national resilience.

The identity of Moldova from independence until today was unstable and circumstantial, depending on political, economic and geopolitical events. It was rather fluid, and in a constant process of crystallization, in a political environment when the concepts like language, geopolitical orientation of the country, attitudes towards the past, and social values of the people were constantly politicized and used by the political parties in order to get electoral credit. In other words, the identity in Moldova was more politically rather than historically driven.

Such an uncertainty with the Moldovan identity was created due to a combination of factors, such as local political culture, the Soviet past, and the insufficient interaction of the country with the EU systems. The 2021 elections showed the massive identity change of the Moldovan citizens, who collectively voted for an European future, West-oriented politics, and democratic values such as rule of law, equality, sustainable development, and human rights. However, different results of the elections in Moldova do not necessarily represent a certain change of identity. To truly

define and assess the Moldovan Identity, representative sociology which is currently lacking must be relied upon.

Overall, assessing the dynamics and aforementioned factors that affected identity transformation in both Moldova and Ukraine, it can be stated that the Eastern Partnership and European Union foreign policy in general, played a certain role in shaping identity transformation in both countries. However, the internal processes, as well as the Russian factor, have had a dominant impact on identity transformation in Moldova and Ukraine.

8. Recommendations

Recommendations (EU and EaP)

1. Elaborate a coherent and all-encompassing strategy for the next decade of the EaP policy beyond 2020 with due note of:

   - resilient, sustainable and integrated economies
   - accountable institutions, the rule of law and security
   - environmental and climate resilience
   - digital transformation
   - fair and inclusive societies

2. Reconsider the EaP itself by applying a differentiated approach and encouraging the institutionalization and enhanced cooperation of its countries whose aspirations towards European integration are resolute, definite and immune to political conjuncture, as well as their determination in the implementation of reforms (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) and support the newly-established Associated Trio.

3. Consider creating for the three associated countries an improved collaboration strategy, which could establish a reform and investment support programme in areas such as capacity building, transport, infrastructure, energy, justice and the digital economy.

4. Launch supplementary measures for a deeper integration and further sectoral cooperation of the EaP countries with the EU and their participation in selected EU agencies, investment platforms and intra-EU programmes and initiatives.

5. Provide additional political, administrative and financial support framework for the three associated countries within the overall EaP, based on individual approaches, that would address their specific structural reforms, modernisation and institution-building needs.

6. Carry out regular impact assessments of the EU support programmes in order to increase their efficiency and apply timely adjustments; react faster to the deterioration of the rule of law and democratic accountability in the EaP countries

7. Launch socio-cultural projects within the framework of the EaP aimed at the strengthening of the key features of European identity within the national identities of Moldova and Ukraine, namely, the promotion of the rule of law, universal freedom, equality, human rights and individualism in various forms as an integral part of successful European integration.

8. Establish communication and cooperation with non-governmental, grassroots and civil society organizations, think tanks from respective countries on questions related to transformation of national identity in the context of its European component by promoting workshops, public events, educational seminars and scientific research on the aforementioned topic.

Recommendations Moldova

1. The creation of additional projects with the aim to integrate the people from the region of Gagauzia and Transnistria within the Moldovan society, by investing into educational projects, free Romanian language courses and cultural projects uniting and promoting the traditions of Moldova, and its regional minorities.
2. Creation of additional conflict mediation projects at the official level, which could help the Government of Moldova to have a more efficient communication and collaboration with the auto-proclaimed authorities of Transnistrian region, where the EU specialists could be involved.
3. Creation of long-term funding strategies, within which the EU is disbursing additional financial support to the Moldovan Government, if according to the international indicators measuring the level of democracy, corruption, equality, freedom of press, European integration linkage, etc. the situation is changing in a positive direction. Thus, the Government and the people in power will be in constant motivation to change the internal structure of the country and to improve the systems.

Recommendations Ukraine

1. Establish a dialog with the EU to develop a coherent strategy concerning common identity politics to strengthen identity resilience and promote a sense of belonging to European civilization among Ukrainians.
2. Initiate the launch of exchange programs for target groups with a lack of opportunity and financial resources which are less likely to identify themselves as Europeans. In particular, such programs should address middle-aged people from the working class from small cities or villages who have specific expertise and are willing to gain international experience.
3. Promote positive self-image of the EU as a normative power placing high values of human rights, democracy, liberty, ecological sustainability, and social justice through Social Media.
4. Intensify practical cooperation with the civil society organization and local think-tanks with the particular focus on people from Southern and Eastern Ukraine to foster identity transformation within the society.

NOTES

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