
THE FORMATION OF THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY OF UKRAINE: KEY FACTORS AND PRINCIPLES

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Abstract

This article analyses the main determinants of the formation of the European identity of Ukraine. Using the historical background of the Ukrainian statehood the author focuses on European cultural and political components inherent to the mentality of Ukrainians. It is proved that Ukrainian regionalism does not separate the population into groups with different mentalities but contributes to the realisation of their specific features. The long absence of statehood caused the detraction of importance of some Ukrainian mental traits, which is why it is only nowadays that the Ukrainian population can be considered to be a conscious nation. This article focuses on the main features that unite Ukrainian people with Europeans: individualism, constitutionalism, democratism, etc. It also analyses the geographical component of Ukraine's identity, and the current trends in the formation of the latter. The author concludes that the formation of the European identity of Ukraine is possible only through the perception of Ukraine as a part of Europe by the European nations.

Introduction

Throughout the history of the European continent, and therefore Europe as a separate region where different social groups and, consequently, states co-existed, the issue of the identity of Ukraine has been on the agenda. The nature of this concept was always determined by the problem of the uncertainty of the geographical territory of Ukraine, its civilisation and cultural belonging, and therefore the lack of an ascertained Ukrainian mentality, which would allow the construction of a unified, politically conscious community that forms an entire Ukrainian nation. Located in Europe, Ukraine remains a kind of *tabula rasa* if one determines its identity, and receives epithets such as “buffer zone” (from the

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political perspective), “torn civilisation” (in the cultural and ideological context), or simply a “black hole” (in the state and social dimension). However, taking into consideration the geopolitical factors affecting the development of the Ukrainian state and its foreign policy priorities, further ignoring the identification of the state leaves Ukraine at a crossroads of the existing vectors to create an international political space. In fact, it is not enough to determine the exclusive priorities that could define the preemptive Ukrainian foreign policy interests and give preference to one of the poles of the “East-West” axis: it is necessary to detect the fundamental factors that form the Ukrainian identity, and, thus, the essence of the latter.

Historically Europe has always played a crucial role in the formation and maintenance of the state identity of Ukraine. Considering the meaning of the concept of identity in the most general terms, one should conclude that any identity is based on three interrelated coordinate systems – spatial, temporal and mental. That’s why it is no accident that the concept of Europe is so important for the Ukrainian self-identity: it includes all three dimensions. Europe combines the spatial and geographical meaning, and the distinct temporal component associated not only with the historical past, but also with a projection into the future. At the same time, Europe designates the mental unity which appears as a set of common values, e.g., democratic rights and freedom of people and of citizens, the rule of law, respect for the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of European countries (the principle of “unity in diversity”), and others.¹

It is equally important that in the Ukrainian context the issues relating to its European identity are currently connected with the problems of the state’s integration into the European Union. These problems, which Ukraine faces during the development, formation and maintenance of its modern political, cultural and civilisation identity, are not only a result of the specifics of its history and its geographical location. The same importance can also be attributed to the overall global context and the particulars of the international environment in which, during the last two decades, there have been cardinal changes caused by globalisation and the end of the Cold War. Ukraine took the chance to establish its independence in that new context. To some extent, the emergence of Ukraine in the international political arena is one of the consequences of the formation of a new world order. Therefore, the sensitivity to global changes and the willingness to take new opportunities and meet new challenges, particularly through the participation

¹ Яворська Г., “До проблеми формування європейської ідентичності в Україні” [“To the problem of formation of the European identity in Ukraine”], *Наукові записки Інституту політологічних і етніонаціональних досліджень ім. І.Ф. Кураса НАН України*, No 42, 2008, pp. 269-270.

in integration associations, are a prerequisite for the further development of the Ukrainian statehood².

1. Ethnic regionalism as a display of European features in the Ukrainian mentality

1.1. Ethnic diversity as a feature of Ukrainian and European peoples

During the first half of the 19th century, one of the most productive periods of the formation of the idea of a Ukrainian national identity, Ukraine obtained two models of social identification that still retain their influence today. The first model, in terms suggested by H. Hrabovych, is the “focus on itself” (i.e., the dominant Russian mental, cultural and political background), and the second is the “orientation to the world”, or, rather, toward the West and Europe.³

However, theoretically understanding the necessity of the pro-Western orientation of the further political development of Ukraine, its ideologues were in a condition that made the implementation of their plans impossible in reality. Indeed, the peculiarities of the social and cultural situation that emerged historically in Ukraine had always been determined by the fact that for many centuries the space that is now the territory of Ukraine had been segmented by variable internal borders: among the different languages and ethnic groups, states, religions, political and cultural systems, and areas with different economic structures. This transformed it into a strongly pronounced contact zone including a diverse spectrum of cultural phenomena.⁴

The Ukrainian political scientist M. Riabchuk even states the existence of “two Ukraines”, where there are “different worlds, different civilisations” that differ in the ways of speaking and thinking among the locals, who “are guided by the diverse cultural models, civilisation and geographical centres; profess fundamentally

² Яворська Г., (note 1), p. 270.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁴ Яковенко Н., *Паралельний світ. Дослідження з історії уявлень та ідей в Україні XVI-XVII ст.* [‘The parallel world. Research of the history of notions and ideas in Ukraine of the 16th and 17th centuries’], Київ: Критика, 2002, p. 333.

irreconcilable and incompatible historical myths and narratives; see not only the past, but also the future of the land quite differently”.⁵

However, the internal social differentiation of the Ukrainian nation cannot be considered as an exception in the context of the development of European states. For example, F. Braudel notes that “the very nature of France is diversity”, and agrees with the conclusions of H. Le Bras and E. Todd, made on the basis of studying regional differences, that, according to all indications, France as one nation should not exist: that’s why it had to be “invented”. He scrupulously examines the depth of division into the French south and French north, and notes that France can be understood as a tapestry of different, divergent regions. But such a tapestry can be found everywhere in Europe. Therefore, F. Braudel logically concludes that each nation is divided, but it exists and develops on the basis of these divisions.⁶

Consequently, the European nations as well as the Ukrainian meta-ethnos are not homogeneous, unified entities; each of them includes various ethnic communities that have their own specific forms of displaying their mentality. At the same time, different regional ethnic communities in Ukraine share significant mental traits, which are distinctively modified through their forms of expression. The same commonality of determinative ethnic and psychological features also characterises the Europeans.⁷

1.2. Absence of statehood as the main cause for the ungrouping of Ukrainian society

The absence of its own statehood during previous centuries had a decisive influence on the display of the mentality of the Ukrainian ethnos. This is caused by the fact that statehood is the basic platform for an ethnos to find its political and legal structure and to produce the forms of social and cultural life that mostly correspond to its profound mindset.⁸

A nation that has been under foreign oppression and that has experienced a total denial of its social and cultural life for a long time begins to acquire new

⁵ Рябчук М., *Дві України* [‘Two Ukraines’], part 10, Київ: Критика, 2001, p. 10.

⁶ Braudel F., *The identity of France: History and environment*, vol. 1, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990, p. 107.

⁷ Старовойт І., *Західноєвропейська і українська ментальність. Компаративний аналіз* [‘West European and Ukrainian mentality. Comparative analysis’], Тернопіль: Тернопільська академія народного господарства, 1995, p. 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

forms of expression of its mental characteristics that are, in fact, the deformation of its own mentality. It invents peculiar ways to adapt to the way of life of 'alien' cultures, the formal perception and even endorsement of the social system, norms and behaviour stereotypes of the dominant ethnic group. Consequently, its own mental traits continue to function at a deep psychological level but they begin to be stratified by the rules of the perception of the world, and the behavior within it, that the ethnos had obtained during the time of its subjugation. In due course, these acquired alien values and guidelines have increasingly blocked, deformed and pushed to the background the components of the Ukrainian mentality.⁹ Accordingly, people from different regions developed diverse attitudes towards the problems of usage of the Ukrainian language, the independence of Ukraine, its further development and other fundamental national issues.¹⁰

The basic components of social and political unity of society were also partially destroyed, causing the establishment of different cultural groups. The foundation of the separation and continuity of the national group is its culture, which is common in form and nature and has its own creations, language, customs and traditions, historical fate and values: economic, technical, aesthetic, theoretical (philosophical), social and political, and religious ones.¹¹ This culture becomes the basis of the group's awareness of its separateness from other groups and, despite the globalisation of the modern world, still continues to be dominant.¹² The development of this group community itself and the formation of its consciousness require a certain degree of attraction and duration as a form of unity. The existence of such a group promotes the construction of its collective identity, which helps to build a separate 'We' feeling between the individual members of the community and to represent it as a unitary entity for the external Others. However, the structuring of this type of identity and its comparison with the other identity types become possible, firstly, due to its multidimensional relationships with the state as one of the institutions that construct the nation (despite its absolute influence in the past); specific focus

⁹ Старовойт І., (note 7), p. 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹¹ Піскун В., "Спільна дія як засіб подолання *Vita minima* українців (теоретичне бачення історичної практики спільнотного згуртування)" ["Common action as a means to overcome Ukrainians' *vita minima* (theoretical view of the historical practice of the community's unification)"], *Український досвід спільнотного згуртування. Матеріали міжнародної наукової конференції. 26 жовтня 2006 р.*, Київ: Українська Видавнича Спілка, 2006, pp. 57-58.

¹² Ольшанский Д., "Психология больших групп в политике. Большие национально-этнические группы" ["Psychology of big groups in politics. Large national and ethnic groups"] in Тарас А., ed., *Современная этнопсихология. Хрестоматия*, Минск: Харвест, 2003, p. 267-268.

of the state ideology (liberal and illiberal democracy); and, as a consequence, the possibility of the existence of other social non-governmental institutions and their influence on the procedural development of the consensus principles. The overall impact of these factors creates different configurations of developing social relations. Another fundamental aspect influencing the construction of the social collective identity is the establishment of ties between state institutions, NGOs and individuals at the levels of “object – object” and “object – subject” interaction.¹³

The feedback relationships (between the individual and the state, and the individual and the movements to be created or non-governmental social institutions) are also important for consolidating public relations and increasing the level of individualisation. Accordingly, despite having enough mental resources to consolidate society, for a long time Ukrainians haven't had the necessary mechanisms to organise the process that would unify different regional groups into a single consolidated society through the use of appropriate instruments. But the existence of such groups cannot deny the European characteristics of Ukrainian society because the ability to express their “sub-mentalities” is a direct analogy to European ethnic diversity.

2. Individualistic world view in the context of Ukrainian and European ethnic development

It can be stated that at the level of existing communities the Ukrainian and European ethnics have a common key mental trait of individualism and, therefore, Ukraine's entry into Europe will be quite natural and a psychologically painless phenomenon. According to the Ukrainian historian M. Hrushevsky, the Ukrainian people belong to the western European or, in short, to the European area, not only because of the power of the historical ties that have connected Ukrainian life with the West for centuries, but also because of how the national character is moulded.¹⁴

Individualism in the European context, first of all, means the form and method of the individual's establishment in society. Roman law and the elements of democratic governance, which were asserted in Europe both legally and culturally

¹³ Побєса Н., “Моделі української ідентичності” [‘Models of Ukrainian identity’], *Україна – проблема ідентичності: людина, економіка, суспільство. Матеріали конференції українських випускників програм наукового стажування у США. Львів, 18-21 вересня 2003 р.*, Київ: СтилоС, 2003, pp. 205-206.

¹⁴ Грушевський М., *Хто такі українці і чого вони хочуть* [‘Who the Ukrainians are and what they want’], Київ: Т-во “Знання України”, 1991, p. 147.

during the Renaissance, determine the social status of the individual. They codify the boundaries of individuals' freedom, guarantee their rights, and protect them from the pressure of more powerful forces, such as society and the state. The vector of the European individual is directed to their environment: each person acts to assert their Self in the world and, if the world of society does not correspond to their ideals, they try to transform it. The individual may fail in this struggle (and it happens very often) but he or she does not passively submit to society. All the European discourse of the Renaissance and the New Age concerns the glorification of a person, their public role, and the personal moral responsibility of an individual for their actions.¹⁵

European individualism is a form of assertion of the personality in the natural and social environment. A *socium* is an open society where every individual, regardless of their origin and social status, can achieve a high social position in accordance with the accepted and approved norms but due to their own efforts, energy and abilities.¹⁶

In a theoretical respect, the individualistic world view is primarily based on common sense that ultimately leads to ignoring or even denying the metaphysical knowledge and problems that mainly concern the world as a whole and are important for the evolution of communities.¹⁷ Groups based on a rational component derive from the need of a person in total freedom, which is bound with equality. Existing within such groups, the individual focuses on a conscious choice; the achievement of their particular goals by means of public and political methods. The specialities of individualisation in social relations and of the conscious approach to resolving various issues allow the community to be considered not only in the light of spontaneous will, but also in the context of the combined precise positions of its individual members.¹⁸

Having initially considered individualism as an integral feature of the Ukrainian character, after the split between Rome and Constantinople the Kievan Rus took the side of the Byzantine Empire and acquired such values of the Byzantine world as the subordination of the individual to the collective. This fact significantly

¹⁵ Старовойт, (note 7) p. 117.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Бойко Т., "Взасмодоповнення спільнотного та суспільного як шлях творення української нації" ['Mutual supplement of communities' and social features as the way of Ukrainian nation formation'], *Український досвід спільнотного згуртування. Матеріали міжнародної наукової конференції. 26 жовтня 2006 р.*, Київ: Українська Видавнича Спілка, 2006, p. 359.

impacted the whole subsequent history of the relationships between the individual and society.¹⁹

At the end of the 16th century the status quo was broken once again, by the religious and faith factor (after the signing of the Union of Brześć in 1596), which urged the socium to engage in social confrontations and oriented it to the dominance of separate small groups. Thus, Ukrainian individualism did not go beyond the boundaries of the group, nor beyond the borders of ordinariness. Even group “conductors” did not impose their fantastic impromptus on their subordinates.²⁰ However, at the same time, the unification of groups within the Ukrainian people always took place voluntarily, in accordance with agreement and democratic declaration of will.

This trend was drawing Ukrainian society toward European values, making feasible the assertion of the cult of personality, even within small groups. However, for a long time the Ukrainians’ existence within various states (Russia and Poland) made the formation of the all-group consciousness impossible, while the other European nations formed it on the basis of a joint territorial matrix and general ideas about their native countries, power, ownership, and responsibility.²¹

In this sense, individualism is a prerequisite for the emergence of a personality as the subject, which, internalising the social and communicative framework, is capable of the deliberate building of civil society in the traditions of European development. Furthermore, the fact of the obvious appreciation of the individual that certainly becomes a positive consequence of the existential individualism of the Ukrainian mentality gives the researchers every reason to express some optimism about the prospects for the democratic evolution of Ukrainians. Ukrainian individualism mostly closes the state to individualistic Europe while distancing it from Moscow, which has always had an autocrat; it is no matter whether that was the king or dictator: Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Stalin.... So, in the independent Ukraine, the distinctive Ukrainian individualism can be considered as an important component of the development of branched civil society functioning according to the principles of liberal freedoms.

¹⁹ Старовойт (note 7), p. 119.

²⁰ Антонюк Т., “Особливості українського досвіду спільнотного згуртування в дослідженнях Юрія Липи” [‘Peculiarities of the Ukrainian experience of communities’ unification in the works of Yuri Lipa’], *Український досвід спільнотного згуртування. Матеріали міжнародної наукової конференції. 26 жовтня 2006 р.*, Київ: Українська Видавнича Спілка, 2006, p. 124.

²¹ Піскун (note 11), p. 56.

3. The main features of the Ukrainian mentality: pro-European component

Due to the territorial and mental fragmentation of the Ukrainian regions, for a long time the entire ethnic territory of Ukraine has been under the influence of various cultural factors. At different times the “generators” of their influence appeared in Lviv, Galicia and Volyn (Ukrainian western lands); in the Kiev and the Dnieper region (the central part of the state); the Zaporozhian Host; or Poltava, Kharkiv and the Sloboda Ukraine (the eastern regions of the country). So, the national and cultural revival of the 15th and 16th centuries was marked with the establishment of national and religious handicraft brotherhoods initially in Lviv, Lutsk, Ostrog and other cities in western Ukraine, and later in Kiev. In time the latter strengthened its role as the biggest cultural centre, presented with the glorious Kiev-Mohyla Academy. The seats of the national and cultural renaissance and Romantic movement of the early 19th century were Poltava and Kharkiv. The development of modern Ukrainian literature in the Left Bank area and the Dnieper region was a powerful catalyst to similar processes in Galicia and Bukovyna.

That is, the continuous development of the cultural component in the entire ethnic territory of Ukraine contributed to the formation of a single cultural area of Ukrainian society, even within the political framework of various states. This sense of symbolic cultural unity was supplemented with a sense of political unity, which had its peaks during the national liberation struggle led by the hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky (1648-1654), during the flourishing of the nationalist and civic movement in the 19th century, and, most intensively, during the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1920.

These short periods when the Ukrainian people established their statehood allowed the identification of several key features of the Ukrainians’ political mentality, which are largely still inherent to them today. Democracy, constitutionalism, egalitarianism and regionalism should primarily be mentioned as the basic features of Ukrainian political mentality. The democratic component of the Ukrainian mentality is dominant in the Ukrainians’ *étatisme*. Thus, it is observed to be the invariable presence of certain institutions with popular representation in all Ukrainian states (the organ of direct democracy in the Kievan Rus was the viche (the popular assembly); the Cossack Republic had its military council; in the early 20th century the representative democracy was embodied by the Central Council of the Ukrainian People’s Republic and by the Ukrainian National Council of the West Ukrainian People’s Republic). The constitutional guidelines had been in

special agreements in the forms of relationships between the prince and the viche in the Kievan Rus; then, those guidelines were represented in the agreements of the Cossack state, and particularly in the documents of the beginning of the 20th century.²²

In accordance with the draft constitution of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR), the main principles of development of the modern Ukrainian state were traditional democratism (which showed that popular representation was dominant in the political mentality of Ukrainians), the separation of powers, all-round guaranteeing of minorities' rights (which indicated the unconditional Ukrainian tolerance in relations with the citizens of other nationalities), and others. The draft constitution of the UPR provided for the establishment of the parliamentary republic because the National Council (the parliament) had to become the main source of state policy formation, e.g., it was authorised to pass a vote of no confidence in the government as a whole and its individual ministers.²³ That is, despite the significant legal drawbacks, at that time the contents of the draft constitution of the UPR pointed to the quite European nature of political thought of the Ukrainian leaders who, even in the absence of the statehood, were able to put forward the idea of the independence of Ukraine and developed a specific programme for its realisation in a short space of time. The foreign-policy priorities of Ukraine were not directed to the East (to Bolshevik Russia) but focused on relations with the European states: during the national liberation struggle the political leaders of Ukraine established diplomatic relations with the Czech and Slovak Republic, Germany, Bulgaria, Latvia, Hungary, Finland, Switzerland, Sweden, Poland, Austria, etc.

4. The territorial principle of the unification of the Ukrainian nation

4.1. Historical legitimisation of Ukraine's current borders

In principle, the contents of the Constitution of Independent Ukraine (of 28 June 1996), as well as the further development of the state, underline its adherence to the fundamental principles of European democracy, political development and

²² Чигринов В., Поліщук І., *Політична ментальність українського суспільства: історія і модерн* [Political mentality of the Ukrainian society: Historical and modern], Харків: ХІБМ, 2001, pp. 87-88.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

social relations. However, the existing mental separation of the Ukrainian ethnos, which is now strengthened by the economic component (and the myth of the West-East dichotomy) raises issues on the legitimacy of the territorial location of Ukraine and, therefore, its geopolitical role in the continent. That is, whether Ukraine corresponds with the historically formed model of the European “nation-state” still remains uncertain. Even if the Ukrainian population can be considered as a kind of multi-layer ethnic community according to its mental features, the legitimacy of the territorial boundaries of the state often causes a number of issues, primarily related to the historical division of its territory.

In fact, from the very outset of the development of its civilization the community has had to replace the tribal system with ethnic integrity. This required some uniting events, including the foundation and development of the ancient empires (such as the Kievan Rus and the Frankish state), the adoption of written culture and synthesis of the first written texts (legal and religious annals; historical chronicles), as well as the military campaigns and other military activities of the most effective social groups.²⁴ Accordingly, considering the ancient Slavic tribes to be their ancestors the Ukrainians associate their past with the glorious Kievan princes whose state was retained within certain boundaries through the spillover of power from Kiev to Halych and from Kyiv to Wilno. Thus, the past of the five largest princely capitals (Kiev, Halych, Holm, Lviv and Vladimir) and reigns became the main means to mobilise the historical memory of Ukrainian society, and thus legitimised the idea of its political succession in its territory.

Another object to link the Ukrainians to the princely Rus, which was the Cossacks, appeared in the Ukrainian historical and political doctrines in the early 1620s. The sacralization of the Cossacks, associated with the glory and sacred things of the Kievan Rus, their popularisation in poetry, and the determination of their place within society became the components of the early national myth, and the means to expand the social content of the Ukrainian (“Ruthenian”) people and form their national identity.²⁵

²⁴ Мостяев О., “Соціальна мобілізація як спосіб згуртування спільнот” [‘Social mobilisation as a means of communities’ unification’], *Український досвід спільнотного згуртування. Матеріали міжнародної наукової конференції. 26 жовтня 2006 р.*, Київ: Українська Видавнича Спілка, 2006, р. 297.

²⁵ Дячук Л., “Проблема національної ідентичності українців у міфосторичних концепціях XVII та початку XIX століть” [‘Problem of the Ukrainians’ national identity in the myth and historical conceptions of the 17th and the beginning of the 19th centuries’], *Етнічна історія народів Європи: Збірник наук. праць: Секція 1. Теоретичні проблеми етнології*, Київ: Видавничий центр «Київський університет», 1999, р. 21.

The main objective of the Cossack chronicles of the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries was to justify the legitimacy of “Cossack” Ukraine, which caused some psychological tensions in the people’s consciousness because the Cossacks had come to power “using the sword”, i.e., breaking the rules of the divinely instituted system. Such justification caused the development of the myth and historical concept of the “Cossack and Ruthenian Motherland”.²⁶ Indeed, the activity of the Cossacks, who struggled for the right of their nation to exist, pushed into the background the military dimension of their policy and gave hope to the Ukrainian ethnos for the establishment of its own statehood, which the common people thought to be a “divine affair”.

Accordingly, during the national liberation war led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky the Ukrainians had the opportunity to act as one, and almost completely transformed into a single Cossack and peasant nation that held all the historical ethnic lands. At that time, the integral image of Cossack and Ruthenian Ukraine was born. The ethnic territory was firstly identified with the terrain where the Cossack system had spread (i.e., the state) and the people obtained the features of the political community, which absorbed all groups of different social levels and even the different types of individuals inherent in those groups.

The consolidation of the modern Ukrainian nation, then, was based on the territorial and civic principle, and the national idea, in particular the main ethnic and cultural values of the Ukrainian people, spread within the historically determined area of its existence, which had been inherited from the Kievan Rus.

4.2. The main factors of the formation of the Ukrainian image in Europe

Geographical images (maps or imagined borders of the states) usually change much more slowly than the “objective” world, but they also exist for much longer than the geographical actuals they are based on.²⁷ The European foreign-policy

²⁶ Дячук Л., “Проблема національної ідентичності українців у міфологічних концепціях XVII та початку XIX століть” [‘Problem of the Ukrainians’ national identity in the myth and historical conceptions of the 17th and the beginning of the 19th centuries’], *Етнічна історія народів Європи: Збірник наук. праць: Секція І. Теоретичні проблеми етнології*, Київ: Видавничий центр «Київський університет», 1999, р. 22.

²⁷ Колосов В., ed., *Мир глазами россиян: мифы и внешняя политика* [‘The world through the eyes of Russians: Myths and foreign policy’], Москва: Институт Фонда «Общественное мнение», 2003, р. 30.

orientation of the Kievan Rus and, accordingly, the consideration of that state as a truly European sovereign, contributed to the peculiar “overflow” of the Slavs’ territorial legacy to the Ukrainian people, which continued positioning its own state formations as a part of Europe. The same trend was retraced during the existence of Cossack Ukraine, which, moreover, helped the Ukrainian nation to elaborate on its own political ideology in order to prove its right to the historically defined territory.

In the 19th century, when Ukraine was considered as a geographical space to represent the separate provinces of the Russian and Austria-Hungarian empires, the historical memory of its population was not eradicated because the people supported the existing territorial image that had been created much earlier. Due to geopolitical and cultural factors, that geographical image acquired the traits of a multi-layer formation because, like any other geographic object, it was seen at different spatial levels. At that time, its versatility was also reinforced by the fact that various aspects of that image were directed towards different addressees, and the components of its representation were shared by different social groups.²⁸

As geographical images are usually built on antitheses, they clearly show the willingness of a person or social group to divide countries and regions into “their own” and “alien”, friendly and hostile, mentally mastered and mentally distant. The “territoriality” of the geographical images is an integral element of identity. As a result, the image almost always includes the notion of territorial borders. The borders are characterised by the possibility not only to provide contact between neighbouring regions, but also to separate them. This makes the images sharp and deprives them of halftones and shades.²⁹

The identity of any country (constructed within a given territory) must include ideas of foreign countries that help people realise the characteristics that distinguish them (as group united with belonging to their country, a common language, history, culture, contemporary problems, etc.) from Others as the residents of other countries. The extremely important ideas on national (state) territory and its boundaries, which do not necessarily correspond to those recognised by the international community, are formed in conformity with the “We–They” opposition. Accordingly, in the early 20th century the existence of Ukrainians’ notions of their own (even potentially independent) state allowed the ideologists of the Ukrainian political movement to build the concept of an independent Ukrainian state delimited with clear borders.

²⁸ КОЛОСОБ В., (note 27), pp. 30-31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

In principle, the image of the outer world as a criterion for self-discovery shows deep existential, religious and mythological grounds of the relationship between culture and the world. But the existential world view is not static; it is constantly changing. The geographical images are in constant motion; they are born, dividing, becoming out of date, and renewing. They can also endure conditional death, but during new rounds of historical development the half-forgotten and erased images are often required and revived.

The evolution of countries' images depends on changes in the society in which they are created (endogenous notions), as well as on changes taking place in the country itself, so that country can be perceived in a certain way abroad (exogenous components)³⁰.

The exogenous notions were always formed outside Ukraine, mostly in European countries. Occupying the "border position" between the majority of European countries and Russia (and it has been considered as a part of the latter for a long time), in the external dimension Ukraine could rely on the probability of being recognised by European sovereigns as an existing state. Their recognition is still a kind of legitimization of the existence of Ukraine within its borders as a part of the European continent.

If one carefully analyses the genesis of geographical images, it would be easy to identify several sources of their formation. Deep beliefs come from transcendental, cultural and symbolic ideas, and superficial knowledge is based on opportunistic political information, which today is mostly presented in reports by the media.³¹

The transcendental, or religious and mythological, component of the image, in contrast to the historical and political ones, is the most universal and generic. The transformation of the environment into the sign system (in which the roles of the signs are played by geographical objects, and the roles of the designata belong to the archetypes, transcendental concepts and categories) creates a religious and mythological, or sacral, geography. As a result, the world map turns into a specific panel that reflects the traditional world view expressing the "vertical", spiritual layers of the universe on the plane. The image of such a world was dominant in the Middle Ages. At that time, the Ukrainian state, as its integral geographical component, had the image of an area where Christian values were spread and supported at the state level.

However, in this sense the cultural and symbolic component was key, as it allowed the geographical image of the concrete state and its social contents to

³⁰ КОЛОСОВ В., (note 28), p. 183.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

be passed on more accurately. But the greater the cultural distance that existed between nations, the less concrete the image of a country appeared to be. That's why cultural associations often changed after a change to the symbolic guidelines. For example, at the time when Anna Yaroslavna moved from the Kievan Rus to France, the latter was considered by her compatriots as a barbaric country (in comparison with the civilised East), but in the 18th and 19th centuries the attitude of the Ukrainian population to France, in contrast, was formed according to the perception of the Ukrainian territories as a kind of cultural "satellite". It was caused not so much by the actual correlation of cultural worlds but with the internal fluctuations of the Ukrainian culture and its lack of legitimacy.

The opportunistic political component of the world image based on the continuous and increasing flow of information is the brightest and most transient one. However, the lack of information, as history shows, generates no less striking mythological notions (e.g., medieval images of countries inhabited by people with dogs' heads and other monsters). In the modern era, one can give numerous examples of evidence of the decisive influence of the media, primarily the television, on the formation of geographical concepts and images of the countries. So, the large amount of coverage in the Western press about the spread of racism and xenophobia in Ukraine that appeared before the European Football Championship "Euro 2012" almost instantly obscured all the images of the Ukrainian state that had been constructed via numerous promotions and advertising campaigns before.

As a result, the countries' images are emerging and evolving both in the minds of society as a whole and in the minds of individuals throughout their lives. Different factors connected with the collection and interpretation of information play a role in both cases. Sometimes these factors overlap, but often do not match. So, historical and political events influence the formation of the country's image in the social and individual consciousness: the historical events act directly, and the political ones are mediated by personal experience. That's why the so-called Iron Curtain, which separated Ukraine (and other former Soviet republics) from the other European states, historically moved Ukraine aside from other European countries because for almost 70 years the Europeans had not considered Ukraine as an independent state. That, respectively, contributed to the loss of its geographical image. Nowadays its geographical image is only just being renewed, but its political component, represented by quite diverse news coverage about the activities of the Ukrainian authorities, often undermines the importance of the European component of the Ukrainian identity, attributing only post-Soviet (and often pro-Russian) features to its nature.

5. Current trends of the Ukrainian formation of identity

At the present stage, the problem of determining the geopolitical and civilisation identities of Ukraine is really quite pressing because the intention of our state to join the family of European nations (or to remain in the area of post-Soviet interactions) has once again put on the agenda its priorities and orientations, and, as a result, the significance of the determination of its foreign-policy course. In addition, a key geostrategic decision, which should now be taken by the Ukrainian authorities, should, in fact, determine the nature of identity beliefs supported by all of the Ukrainian society.

In recent years, the issue of determining the identity of Ukraine has become highly influential, taking into account the strategic priorities set forth in the Law of Ukraine “On Foundations of Domestic and Foreign Policy” of 1 July 2010,³² and social and cultural ties with most of the former Soviet republics supported by the Ukrainian population. The reasons why the Ukrainian authorities were forcing the conclusion of the Association Agreement with the EU were not always clear to the average citizen of the Ukrainian state. Supporting the idea of the “European Ukraine” and, at the same time, understanding its historical implications, Ukrainian citizens were often not aware of the difference between Europe as a geographical reality and the European Union as a certain political and economic entity. For a long time, the banal lack of accurate information on that subject has not allowed the Ukrainian people to comprehend the existence of the large number of EU requirements to be followed in order to approach this organisation, in contrast with the complete absence of such requirements on the part of the Customs Union headed by the Russian Federation.

The Russian promotion of the idea of the so-called “Russian world”³³ really created the impression of the existence of a unified “Slavic civilisation” through which different peoples could be united on the basis of a common history, culture, and similar mentality founded on their single historical fate, as well as through which existing economic and commercial ties could be strengthened. However, the principles of the economic integration, which initially formed the basis of the

³² Закон України “Про засади внутрішньої і зовнішньої політики” від 1 липня 2010 р. [“The law of Ukraine “On foundations of domestic and foreign policy”, 1 July 2010’], <<http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2411-17>>, 05 10 2013.

³³ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации, утверждена Указом Президента РФ от 12 июля 2008 г. [“The concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, adopted with the Decree of the President of the RF, 12 July 2008’], <<http://kremlin.ru/acts/785>>, 05 10 2013

Customs Union, have absolutely nothing in common with the above-mentioned factors. Moreover, the latter factors are primarily used to establish the image of Russia as a separate, self-sufficient civilisation that is capable, on the one hand, of resisting the influences of other cultures – both Eastern (including the Islamic culture) and Western (mainly, the European secular culture) – and, on the other hand, to restore the desired imperial project that could help Russia to revive its status as a great power. This is why the economic factor is only a tool to return the spiritual centre of the Slavs (who are considered to be the direct ancestors of modern Russians by Moscow officials) to the area of the Russian Federation’s influence because, being located in the neighbouring state, this spiritual centre deprives Russia of the opportunity to promote the idea of the leading Russian civilisation, even if only within the post-Soviet area. Existing as a country with “casual boundaries”, the Russian Federation is not integral without the consolidation of its neighbouring countries inhabited by “fraternal Slavic peoples”. In this sense, the Slavic identity is proposed to Ukrainians as a substitute for their national identity.

Considering the issue of Ukraine’s European identity one can argue that the latter, by contrast, sooner complements the national identity of the state than enters into competition with it. The Europeanness is an identifier based on values that do not affect traditional foundations or national feelings. Accordingly, the idea of rapprochement with the EU is determined not only by the common historical heritage of its Member States and Ukraine, but also by the values and standards now to be applied in Europe to social security, business, public administration, elections, and the legal system.

As a result, the most important advantages of the EU to be picked out by the citizens of Ukraine are the high level of social security, the rule of law, the advanced democracy, the availability of financial resources, the quality of health-care, the scientific and technological development, and the low level of corruption. Due to these factors 49% of Ukrainian citizens support the idea of concluding the Association Agreement with the EU.³⁴ Thirty-one per cent of Ukrainians, who continue to be inclined towards the idea of Ukraine’s joining the Customs Union,³⁵ are guided, in fact, solely by social, cultural and economic factors, taking into account Russia’s natural and energy resources as well as the existence of strong ties between the key national industrial sectors and the same spheres in the countries of the former USSR.

³⁴ Европейский выбор Украины в контексте украинско-российских отношений [“The European choice of Ukraine in the context of Ukrainian–Russian relations”], *Report of the Research & Branding Group*, 4 September 2013, <<http://rb.com.ua/rus/projects/omnibus/8813/>>, 05 10 2013

³⁵ *Ibid.*

However, the nature of integration projects with unequal actors (and in the case of the Customs Union the dominance, of course, would belong to the Russian Federation) is, in fact, characterised by the economic and political absorption of the “satellite states” and therefore does not mean “mutually beneficial economic cooperation”. Today the newly-created Free Trade Area of the Community of Independent States (CIS FTA), established according to the treaty of 18 October 2011,³⁶ may serve as a striking example of such relations because, despite the promised benefits, Ukraine did not experience the declared advantages after the document was concluded, and the implementation of the treaty contributed to:

- the asymmetry (in the first place, in Russia’s favour) of processes, establishing export duties on a large amount of goods; and
- the discriminatory situation in relation to important Ukrainian interests, such as “transit freedom”, because the provisions of the above-mentioned treaty on similar freedoms “do not apply to pipelines”.³⁷

Moreover, the economic drawbacks of deepening cooperation with the Russian Federation were clearly displayed during the so-called “chocolate war” between states, which flared up in August 2013 and continued in the form of a complete blockade of Ukrainian exports: due to the Russia’s position, even the representatives of the industrially-oriented eastern regions of Ukraine (who are the most desperate, while supporting Ukraine’s accession to the Customs Union (CU) understood that in trying to increase its political pressure on neighbouring countries, Russia would not even stop at depriving its citizens of quality and cheap products, not to mention the accordance of preferences to the importers.

Accordingly, currently the majority of business-people, even those who have close ties with entrepreneurs from the CU countries, are interested in the market of the 500 million people in the European Union, which, in addition, provides access to international exchanges, investment and credit resources; the possibility to use new technologies and production processes; as well as the opportunity for cooperation on the basis of liberal market principles based on the property rights, fair legal proceedings and regulatory mechanisms that protect independent businessmen and citizens.

In this vein, it is clear that focusing on Russia as an imperial centre of the development of civilisation puts Ukraine in a peripheral position and gives the

³⁶ Договір про зону вільної торгівлі від 18 жовтня 2011 р. [“The Treaty on the Free Trade Area, October 18, 2011”], <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/997_n25>, 05 10 2013

³⁷ Юрчишин В., “Окремі ризики залучення України до сфери економічних інтересів Росії” [“Some risks of Ukraine’s inclusion into the sphere of the economic interests of Russia”], *Національна безпека і оборона*, No 4-5, 2012, p. 89.

Ukrainian community a provincial status. This forms a system of psychological complexities in the public consciousness of this social community, eliminating its true identity. It would start to feel its inferiority, collaterality, and deficiency in comparison with the “great imperial Russian nation”.³⁸ As a result, today the issue of Ukrainian “usefulness” could be resolved only while defending the truly European Ukraine in which citizens are historically closer to Europe (but not to Eurasia or the idea of Pan-Slavism), and politically – to the EU.

The Ukrainians, of course, are direct descendants of the ancient Slavs but, at the same time, only Kiev has always been the centre of Slavic development – both as the “mother of the Russian cities” and as the cradle of Orthodoxy. That is why only Ukrainians have the right to choose their path, and do not follow the path selected for them by others. Although the choice between the European and Slavic identities of the Ukrainian population is still on the agenda, the final decision is now in the hands of the Ukrainian authorities. In fact, they are the ones to prove that Ukraine does not want to occupy a middle position supporting the idea of the “duality” of its foreign-policy aspirations. The Slavic identity promoted by Russia focuses solely on the ethnic and cultural affinity and relies only on the traditional elements of ways of life, while the European identity is rather a world view and is based on the results of conscious, rational choice of a certain value system.

However, the majority of European nations strengthened their identities during the 18th or 19th centuries or before, and now may limit themselves to certain changes of their identities’ categories. Ukraine has to form a new identity: perhaps not from scratch but in the much more difficult conditions of global integration and the infinite space of global challenges and imperatives. The national self-understanding should act as a compass on this journey because it is assured by political and cultural identities. The erasure of boundaries should be the key measure to constructing an identity since they still exist between different groups within the state but, in principle, are completely artificial. National self-determination, as a basic condition for national self-realisation at all, is to be complemented with outside support. That is, today, the formation of Ukraine’s separate Self should rely on its perception by the European powers and proper relations at the level of society and the state, which has to play the primary role in the formation of a common collective identity of the Ukrainian socium.

³⁸ Перепелиця Г., “Курс на стрімке зближення з Росією: чи можлива подвійна асиметрична інтеграція?” [“The policy for speedy rapprochement with Russia: Is double asymmetric integration possible?”] in Перепелиця Г., ed., *Зовнішня політика України – 2009/2010: стратегічні оцінки, прогнози та пріоритети*. ПДорічник, Київ: Видавничий дім “Стилос”, 2011, p. 179.

Conclusions

Accordingly, the European identity of Ukraine can be seamlessly combined with the concept of the identity of the whole of Europe, and becomes its integral element. The nature of modern European identity can be examined in the light of three models developed as a result of research into the problem of collective identity.³⁹

The first of these is the “cultural heritage” model, which is based on two pillars.

The first pillar is common social values and philosophical and legal heritage. The common values of European culture are democracy, human rights, social justice, Christian faith, humanism, personalism, etc. An important feature of this list of values is the specific European nature spreading widely around the world, particularly in North America. The identity built on these values and heritage often lays claim even to global status. Accordingly, supporting these values historically Ukraine can continue on its European path while developing and augmenting them in its territory.

The second pillar of the cultural heritage model is common traditions and history consisting of the actions of outstanding personalities, cultural artifacts, symbols, myths, and so on. Cultural identity is the criterion to define the limits of Europe. It exists as the spiritual community of its people despite the fact that social actors may belong to different national cultures. In this vein, the Ukrainian cultural heritage is also the part of Europe because its historical development is closely connected with European cultural heritage. In addition, the Ukrainian and many European peoples have much in common, not only spiritually but also culturally since they have even mutually contributed to the creation of cultures and left some cultural imprints on each other's lands.⁴⁰

The second model can be named the “universal supranationality” model.

This model presupposes that European identity is achieved through identification with European institutions, with generally accepted political and legal norms, particular political and territorial structures and a new cosmopolitan culture. For the most part, the basis of the identity and its generator is the institutionalised social and legal order presented in the regulations, codes, and documents of some EU institutions. In this respect, Ukraine is trying to find its

³⁹ Голошнич І., “Основні моделі сучасної європейської ідентичності” [‘Main models of modern European identity’], *Наукові записки. Серія «Філософія»*, Острого: Видавництво Національного університету «Острозька академія», No 5, 2009, pp. 80-81.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

European path while aspiring to fulfil all the prerequisites of the signature of the Association Agreement with the EU. It is important that the work done shows that its efforts are recognised to be in line with European requirements and, therefore, are consistent with this model of European identity.⁴¹

The third model is “collective pragmatism”.

According to this model, European collective identity emerges and operates due to the European way of living, which is represented by, for example, free movement of people and goods, the common currency and European institutions, and a free market. The basis of this model, in contrast to the previous ones, has no reference to moral or legal norms. It is only descriptive in nature. However, considering themselves to be Europeans, the Ukrainians are quite closely approaching the requirements of this identification model. This is because, in fact, mentally they are really closer to the “European spirit” of development based on a pragmatic awareness of their belonging to the European community, which is united by common traditions and modern moral standards.⁴²

As a result, trying to overcome a series of political defeats in the past, to fight the feeling of historical tragedy associated with the lack of statehood, and to overstep the limits of the former Soviet Union, Ukraine is currently proving the existence of its European identity. Under present conditions, a new community is being formed in its territory. The formula of the community’s identity fully reflects the traditional cultural and ideological trend of the Europeanness that has always existed at the level of social and political communication. However, only the result of competition for power and cultural priorities, which entered the rigid phase due to the transition to real nation-building and many attempts to overcome the post-Soviet inertia, would determine the role of the new community within the global political space and, accordingly, the validity of its European identity abroad. That is, whether it could be closer to the realisation of the idea of its European identity not only in civilisation, but also in social, cultural, political and legal fields.

⁴¹ Голошич І., (note 39), p. 81.

⁴² *Ibid.*

