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Thinking Europe on the edge: a Ukrainian vision of ‘Europeanness’

Dr. Valeria Korablyova, IWM, Visiting Fellow

Abstract

The “EU project of Europe” has been facing multiple crises nowadays, the crucial issues would be: 1) the limits of its *expansion* (the extent of acceptable diversity); 2) *penetration* by the cultural others, not sharing its “social contract” (migrants’ and refugees’ issue); 3) internal *resistance* (Euro-scepticism); 4) complicated relations with its own *frontier* of hybrid nature (the USA and Russia as semi-European peripheries of different status). All the mentioned concerns are mirrored in the Ukrainian case that stands not only as a challenge but also as a way out. Within the Ukrainian revolution the idea of Europe and “Europeanness” worked in a twofold manner: *synchronically*, by unifying society thus reestablishing it on the basis of some new agreements (dignity as a core value, solidarity as the main policy); *diachronically*, by setting the trajectory of further development and hereby forcing required changes (towards the EU as the institutional embodiment of the imaginary “Europe”). However, it did not regard existing European institutions as a template but rather appealed to the origins of “Europeanness”, thus opposing itself to the distorted versions of “Europe” as well. The paper is aimed at revealing the set of senses attached to the concept of Europe within the recent Ukrainian events, as well as at placing it in the broader context of the current crisis of the “Western civilization”.

Key words: the idea of Europe, modernization, Enlightenment, EuroMaidan, the dichotomy “Europe – Russia”, solidarity.

“There are times in which utopia is the only realism.”

G. Steiner

Introduction: the EU crisis in the context of the global uncertainty

It’s become a common place to acknowledge the deep crisis of the EU and therefore the vague prospects of the latter. Multiple challenges coming from various spheres and regions changed the previous euphoria of the enlargement. The crucial issues to be mentioned here would be: 1) the limits of its *expansion* (the extent of acceptable diversity); 2) *penetration* by the cultural others, not sharing its “social contract” (migrants’ and refugees’ issue); 3) internal *resistance* (Euro-scepticism); 4) complicated relations with its own *frontier* of hybrid nature (the USA and Russia as semi-European peripheries of a different status).

It’s also important to distinguish between different types of crises in terms of their character, first and foremost between challenges to the EU as an *institutional structure* (supposedly leading to the improvement of the latter) and questioning the very *project*, the embodied idea (thus dismantling the construction in general). Through this lens the solution to the economic or legal challenges (the Greece case or even the Crimea annexation) lies in the practical dimension, whereas “general” defiance stands as an existential test that requires broader discussions (the Brexit case, for instance). It provides a fitting framework for the recent refugees crisis. A big paradox concerning it lies in the fact that it’s not such an issue procedure-wise, whereas by its public resonance and potential consequences it is probably the biggest challenge since the post-WWII times. Indeed, numbers of coming people are not too high compared to the general population of the EU (now roughly close to 1%), and many of the required structures of help and support do exist (way better than in countries neighboring Syria). So, practically speaking, it’s just the matter of good management and logistics to cope with the situation by using present resources effectively. As Sara Silverstein justly writes:

“The structures have existed in Europe before, on a far larger scale than the EU requires now.”¹

However, the situation clearly poses a threat to the very EU project, having already produced *cracks* in the European space – physical with barbed-wire fences and symbolic with the lack of trust between the member states. Ivan Krastev notices:

“The compassion deficit highlights the much deeper crisis at the heart of the European project.”²

That leads us to the claim that nowadays we observe the crisis of the *idea* of Europe rather than proofs of its *institutional* inefficiency. The most dangerous problems lie in the realm of ideas rather than in political “reality”. The core questions here would be: what’s the use of sticking to the project of the united Europe nowadays? If any, what are the valid grounds for that? Should we strive to preserve a relative homogeneity or follow the declared values and principles? Or, in other words, are the European values for internal use only or they must be treated universally at any cost? Is Europe a closed club or an inclusive entity? And, finally, what are the ultimate outcomes of Europe’s colonial past?

The European idea in its various configurations and implications should become a focal point in finding a roadmap out of the present situation. What was taken for granted for many years, now is questioned heavily, that is Europe as a value community based on shared policies and common strategies. Rephrasing Hanna Arendt who once aptly formulated

“The Rights of Man, supposedly inalienable, proved to be *unenforceable*”³,

we can state that the European values and all the legacy of the Enlightenment suddenly turned out to be *unenforceable*. The EU project was grounded on the underlying assumption that all the abovementioned is a value-in-itself, appealing and desired by default. Therefore the united Europe was long perceived as an inclusive project for the countries of the continent, willing to join the space of prosperity and bright future prospects. Looks like it’s no longer the case. Now the pattern of the “Europe-as-a-burden” comes to the surface, which implies a *supposed controversy between national and European interests*, the disputed value of the EU project with its set of values, such as liberal democracy, free market, human rights, tolerance, and solidarity. As Ivan Krastev writes wittily about the Central-Eastern Europe:

“Just three decades ago, “Solidarity” was its symbol. Today, a more appropriate symbol would be a bumper sticker reading ‘Eastern Europe: Where Donald Trump comes off looking good.’”⁴

Yet, the Western, or “Old”, Europe hardly looks any better revealing constantly growing support to the right-wing parties and weighting the use of the EU project for themselves. The lack of trust creates a strange situation when any party considers itself to be a donor while others benefitting from it (Germany would be a talkative example here).

Zooming out the scale, one might witness the general decline of the ideals of modernity and Enlightenment worldwide, which means a historical loss of “Europe” and a menace to its future. Above all it concerns the decline of democracy, both in terms of its corruption in developed countries (the de-democratization of democracy, in Wendy Brown’s words) and of its rejection as a model in non-democratic states. A huge economic success of China convincingly proved that capitalism should not necessarily be coupled with democracy. Moreover, it might be not the most effective combination. That triggered a global trend of revisionism and de-modernization, profoundly supported with anti-American sentiments. Larry Diamond admits:

“Though the total number of democracies has not sharply declined, space for civil society is shrinking. Freedom and democracy are in recession.”⁵

The new “Millenium age” after 1989 turned out to be anti-Fukuyamian (at least so far). The American thinker writes:

“What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold war, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government”.⁶

And 25 years later sticks to the position:

“In the realm of ideas, moreover, liberal democracy still doesn’t have any real competitors <...> neither Islamist theocracy nor Chinese capitalism cuts it. Once societies get on the up escalator of industrialization, their social structure begins to change in ways that increase demands for political participation. If political elites accommodate these demands, we arrive at some version of democracy.”⁷

On the one hand, this famous claim still makes a lot of sense, as no *new* ideologies or political orders appear, just the former being *recycled* and reconfigured. Yet, on the other hand, it led to the decay of liberal democracy and to discarding strong beliefs in scientific and moral progress. Illiberal and non-democratic states no longer shy out to disclose themselves as such, whereas pushing forward the interest-oriented geopolitics instead of the value-oriented one. Probably for the first time in the modern history of the humankind, the so-called “West”, or the “Euroatlantic civilization”, loses its prevalence (in ideas including). And what is tricky about the situation that the “West” cannot overtly impose and forcibly support its values and concepts, as it would undermine its own cornerstones.

Against this backdrop, the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity in 2013-2014, also labeled as *EuroMaidan*, looks especially striking. It stands as a counter-mainstream event, solely affirming the ever-lasting value of the united Europe and of its modern legacies, democracy, human dignity and rule of law being the core. Given the location of Ukraine (on the European continent) and the power of Maidan’s visual representations (people dying under the EU flags), it seems fruitful to analyze the Ukrainian revolution through the lens of the idea of Europe it explicitly declared and supported.

So the *rationale* for the paper is to investigate the Ukrainian vision of Europe packed into the EuroMaidan movement and to reveal its potential against the current EU crisis – whether it might be regarded as the Ukrainian contribution to the idea of Europe worthwhile beyond the country’s borders. For doing so, I’ll start with a brief consideration of the genealogy and content of the concept of “Europe”. Then I’ll proceed with the Ukrainian perception of “Europe” and “Europeanness” throughout its modern history. And, finally, I’ll reveal the “European” content of the recent Ukrainian events (with Maidan as its quintessence) and its conceivable significance for non-Ukrainian Europeans. The core question I’m attempting to answer is whether the Maidanian experience of Ukraine might be rewarding in finding a solution to the current EU crisis.

The idea of Europe, or Going beyond geography

There are numerous books, researches, conferences, and institutions working on deciphering a special code of Europe, revealing its specificity and a set of meanings forming its core. What is obvious (and essential!) however, it’s the *difference between Europe as a geographical marker and Europe as a cultural and geopolitical notion*. Whereas one might play a trick of the “instant historicization” (J. Lacan’s notion), or retrospective reification, when the history of the continent is presented as the history of the entity thus providing an imaginary “historical depth” and continuity.

In my opinion, it makes sense to regard Europe as a cultural entity starting with the epoch of modernity albeit recognizing some legacies of the previous periods. Here the famous Paul Valéry’s formula seems to be at place: the civilizational underpinning of Europe is often perceived through Christianity, ancient democracy and Roman law.

What is remarkable in different books and essays concerning the cultural essence of Europe, it’s their poetic character with apparently chaotic lists of features and impressions that look descriptive and rather deliberate. Thus, George Steiner writes:

“Europe is made of coffee houses, of *cafés*. <...> Draw the coffee-house map and you have one of the essential markers of the ‘idea of Europe’. <...> Europe has been, is *walked*... The cartography of Europe arises from the capacities, the perceived horizons of human feet... <...> Metaphorically, but materially also, that landscape has been moulded, humanized by feet and hands.”⁸

It looks surprisingly consonant to the symbols of Europe sampled by the iconic Ukrainian writer and political activist Ivan Franko in the XIXth century who claims that Europe is represented in electric lighting, intensive traffic, large audience in theatres, numerous cafes, bars, open restaurants, omnibuses, carriages, and also

“neat and wealthy villages, excellent highways, rationally cultivated fields, bridges and houses made of bricks, and all this is new, fresh, trees along the roads are young, and of the same size.”⁹

Contemporary French philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy in a private talk confessed that for him Europe is about towns centered with a square and about chatting without any “time-management”, and also a special spirit which is easy to define by longing for it in a far-away trip outside Europe. It gives a good impression of the eschatological mood of some musings on vanishing Europe due to the globalization oppression. It usually involves mentioning

standardization and practisization as the sign of a new era, whereas Europe grounds on *diversity* and a sort of *productive leisure*, free time to spend on thoughts and talks.

More consistent interpretations usually consider: 1) *openness*, both in terms of innovation and communication; 2) acentric *Eurocentrism*, implying the world prevalence of European cultural patterns while keeping some balance of hegemony within; 3) *variety* and *diversity*, as opposed to unification; 4) *urbanization* stressing the importance of towns as cultural topoi; 5) *self-reflection* aimed at self-improvement; 6) the value of *non-utilitarian* activities (metaphysics, poetry, music, conversations); 7) the legacy of “Athens and Jerusalem”; 8) numerous *lieux de mémoire*, or past-in-the-present as a burden. A focal point would be the *anthropocentric worldview*, caused by the secularization processes as well as by the European intellectual development. Man as a symbolic center of the universe co-exists with other people on the grounds of autonomy, responsibility and respect to human dignity.

Attaching “Europeanness” (whatever meaning is implied to it) to the modernity, by the same token, we set two landmarks framing it from both sides: the beginning, usually associated with Reformation, the French Revolution, and the Enlightenment; and the crisis (the end?), triggered by the World War II and subsequent globalization. It explains two different moves and theoretic strategies here: first, comparison with traditional cultures in the beginning, marked with the European “*hegemony on modernity*”; and nowadays, distancing from the American culture as “*another modern*”, presently more successful and disseminated worldwide. In the former case European culture stands as progressive and future-oriented, whereas in the latter it looks more conservative, cautious, and longing-for-the-past. Accordingly, the strategy of cultural expansion (modernization) was replaced with the strategy of preservation.

The origin of modernity concerns de-traditionalization, *emancipation* from religion, prescribed social position and imposed worldview.¹⁰ Therefore it is fruitful to expose the peculiarity of Europe via comparison with non-European, mostly traditional countries on the *axis of modernization*, as was done by the French anthropologist Louis Dumont, for instance. Dumont stresses that the perception of Europe as an entity makes sense mostly from the outside, on the global scale while neglecting internal differences between the European cultures. And among the decisive features he selects the cornerstone anthropological model of *homo aequalis* as opposed to *homo hierarchicus* in non-European countries.

Other symbolical landmarks for Europe here would be the industrial and scientific revolutions providing modernization with material accomplishments and creating a *middle class* and a *working class* as important actors on the political arena. Two other crucial events cannot be omitted in the context. The emergence of the market economy and the colonial practices of European countries provided means for modernization and growth yet led to controversial consequences, also in terms of the European identity.

The replacement of politics with economy, as Pierre Rosanvallon formulates it, led to the claim of the “decay of Europe” by Oswald Spengler (Europe as a culture having degraded into a soulless “civilization”) and to the emergence of alternative European ideologies with anti-modern sentiments. Ultimately, during the World War II, in George Steiner’s words,

“Europe committed suicide by killing its Jews”.¹¹

And an uneasy question rising here is the following: was there a distinct continuity between “Europe-1” (of the classic modernity, rooted into the Enlightenment with all its progressivism and optimism) and “Europe-2” (of the late modernity after the World War II when, in Theodor Adorno’s words, “After Auschwitz, to write a poem is barbaric”)? Therefore, is it plausible to reckon the ideals of the French Revolution and of the Enlightenment as valid grounds for the contemporary Europe? And, on the other hand, was the tragedy of Nazism and Holocaust a by-product of modernity, a fall-out of its ideals or its natural consequence, a dark side of Europe, so to speak? My answer would be yes for the first two questions. Moreover, the potential of the modern Europe is not exhausted still yet it requires a new push, probably from its outskirts, still believing into the “European Dream”.

Europe’s relationship with its frontiers play a special role, the USA and Russia framing and challenging it from different sides. What is striking here, it’s a special one-side tension *on the Euroatlantic axis*. Whereas the USA tend to regard “Europe” as a dependent and loyal ally (which was the case in the post-WWII times), Europe cherishes anti-American moods under the flags of anti-globalism and anti-neoliberalism. It is definitely a separate big issue, yet has to be mentioned in the context, as nowadays it largely defines the negative content of the European identity.

George Steiner names “the fascism of vulgarity” and “the censorship of the market” the main danger of our time thus drawing clear language parallels between the totalitarian ideologies of the XXth century and contemporary American ideology. And he continues with quoting Max Weber’s lecture in Munich in 1918-1919:

“Europe lay in ruins. Its civilization, its intellectual eminence of which German higher education had been the emblematic insurance, had proved impotent in the face of political madness. <...> Weber foresaw the Americanization, the reduction to *managerial bureaucracy of the life and of the mind* in Europe. <...> Nothing threatens Europe more radically – ‘at the roots’ – than the detergent, exponential ride of Anglo-American, and of the *uniform* values and world-image.”¹²

Herewith, by making and supporting anti-American claims, Europe delegates to the USA responsibility for the negative outcomes of modernization. A special irony concerns the fact that the list of claims coincides with the features distinguished by Oswald Spengler as inherent into Europe itself. So, is America a foe or an ally in improving the realization of the program of modernity? And what mutual lessons can be drawn from each other?

Jeremy Rifkin calls America “to wake up to the European Dream”, a bit idealistically opposing the two cultures:

“While I remain viscerally attached to the American Dream, especially to its unswerving belief in the pre-eminence of the individual and personal responsibility and accountability, my hope for the future pulls me to the European Dream, with its emphasis on *collective responsibility* and *global consciousness* <...> What becomes important in the new European vision of the future is personal transformation rather than individual material accumulation. The new dream is focused not on amassing wealth but, rather, on *elevating the human spirit*. The European Dream seeks to expand human empathy, not territory.”¹³

However, there is something Europe needs to learn from America as well beside the market economy. No matter how catchy Rifkin’s notion is, it misses a crucial point: unlike the American culture, the European one is not future-oriented indeed, being too self-determined to lieux de memoire.

“Even a child in Europe bends under the weight of the past.”¹⁴

At any turning point historical memory creates divisions and breaks within the European continent thus making any reconciliation provisional and temporary: British vs French, French vs Germans, Germans vs Poles, and so on and so forth. Every European nation keeps a trunk in the closet with a list of claims, always at hand if necessary. So, probably, to create a dream for future indeed, Europe has to elaborate a better *balance between remembrance and oblivion* as cultural mechanisms, to take on the American strategy of “*creative amnesia*” (Henry Ford), at some point making a firm decision to move forward.

So nowadays the European project needs a new impulse to be revived. And many options seem likely enough.

There is a *conservative* proposal focused on preserving the so-called “traditional” values, which ultimately implies dismantling the supranational structures in favor of nation states (only the strongest having the authority though). It’s been recently fueled by the fear of refugees as well as by Russian money. The irony lies in the paradox between the claims to preserve the authentic “Europeanness” and the “real” consequence of destroying the European unity.

There is a *modernization* proposal to continue the “teamwork” with the USA and with the highly developed “West” while keeping basic strategies and policies the same, just some details being refurbished and adjusted to the circumstances. The success of this option concerns the extent and the content of undertaken changes.

There is a *neoliberal* proposal to diversify the financial sources, which implies money-oriented instead of value-oriented collaboration with non-Western actors (China first and foremost). It explores both anti-American sentiments and the pursuit of a prosperous life without supposedly abundant sacrifice. Sticking to this option will ultimately mean the EU refusal to have any foreign policy or geopolitical strategy.

Finally, there is a *solidarity* proposal embodied in the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, which is not recognized as an option for the EU yet surprisingly coincide with numerous theoretical claims of the Western authors about the ways to improve the Western civilization. This way is yet to be examined, and so far resembles more a utopia to flame the people not incline to “Realpolitik”.

To sum up, the EU is at a next turning point that obviously challenges the effectiveness of its institutional structure in terms of numerous member-states not sharing some visions and priorities, and that stands as a threat to the project in general. However, the union will mostly likely survive albeit the cost is vague so far. Yet the vision of Europe it will deliver is not exposed. The Europe of the past can be described with the metaphor of a *museum*. The present Europe looks like a *shopping mall*. And the image of the future Europe is yet to be discovered. I hope it won’t be a barbed-wired fence.

The Ukrainian perception of Europe: how Europe got framed geopolitically

There is a set of notions that might be regarded as interchangeable in the context, that is “Europe”, “West”, and “Euroatlantic civilization”. However they have important divergences. My claim here would be that “**Europe**” as one of the key geopolitical notions became essential after 1989. It factually *replaced the dichotomy of “West vs. East”*, dismantled by the historical loss of the “East”. The very disappearance of the latter marker is symptomatic: the former “East” reestablished itself as “*Central Europe*” or “*post-Communist countries*”. Thus, in early 1990-s “Europe” for the second time proved to be a fitting word for the project of union and reconciliation in post-war times. Yet, first, from 1950-s on it stood as a general arch containing a reference to common cultural grounds of Western states (six at the moment of the Treaty of Rome signing). The underlying assumption was a mutual benefit from shifting a paradigm: *from military rivalry to trade cooperation*, thus replacing politics with economy (the “win – win” game instead of the “win – lose” one, tending to be the “lose – lose” one). However, at the moment it was a regional cooperation inscribed into the then-hegemonic pattern of the Cold War division. Timothy Snyder stresses another aspect of the project, that is of the mutual strengthening of the former colonial states that had lost their colonies and therefore their geopolitical weight. A drastic shift after 1989 concerned the inclusion of the former colonies into the European project on arguably equal grounds. Thus the EU reestablished itself as a new type of international unity standing as an umbrella for these small countries, thus enabling their economic growth and protecting their sovereignty without significant oppression. The “EU project of Europe” (Andrew Wilson’s notion) provided the hegemonic language of description for the region with mainly positive connotations. The rhetoric of opposition, competition, and bordering / othering was changed with the rhetoric of reconciliation, inclusion, and development.

1990-s seem to be the times of the “Euroatlantic civilization” triumph. The USA heavily supported the countries of the “New” Europe in their convergence to democracy and market economy, yet it was done under the EU flags and articulated as a “comeback to the European home”. For the Post-Soviet countries the “end of history” worldview package was undifferentiated: no clear line was drawn between the European and the American civilizations. For the moment the notion of the “**Euroatlantic** civilization” became a synonym of the *non-hostile “West”*, or West-as-a-template. The “East” temporarily disappeared from the mental map, as China did not yet become the hot point of the geopolitical agenda (neither the global South did).

However, the euphoria of the “end of history” as the ultimate victory of the Western liberal democracy did not last long. 2000-s started with conflicts and turmoil, marked with the rise of anti-Americanism and reinforcement of non-Western actors. Russia made its contribution by rehabilitating the dichotomy on the continent. “Europe” was *reinterpreted* in terms of hostility and counteraction, having been *coupled with the notion of “Eurasia”* (the European Union vs the Eurasian Union). It put the Borderlands countries between Europe and Russia in the situation of a *geopolitical choice by the logic “either – or”* (not for the first time though).

Not surprisingly, the dichotomy “Europe – Russia” has always been the cornerstone for the national identification of Ukraine. Given the geographic location and cultural essence of the country, there have not been many alternative options for its self-perception, except probably for the claims for “authenticity”, or “the third way” (which have existed all the way yet were mostly marginal). From the very beginning of the movement for the self-determination of Ukraine the claims for its essential “Europeanness” served as a symbolic tool for emancipation from Russia. In other words, *the nationalist discourse throughout the modern history of Ukraine has been mostly pro-European*.

Panteleymon Kulish, a prominent figure in the Ukrainian history, who created one of the first Ukrainian alphabets, named after him “kulishivka”, also translated the Bible into the modern Ukrainian for the first time, and wrote modern novels in the literary Ukrainian, exposed this in the following way:

“Ukrainians, as I heard repeatedly from ethnographers and I still believe this, *lie with their head to Europe and their feet to Asia*, being quite able to rise from the primordial darkness to various sophistications of the enlightenment”.¹⁵

Another prominent writer and public intellectual of the XIXth century Ivan Nechuy-Levytsky warned against the “Muscovite conservative press” with its “hatred to everything European”:

"Old Moscow, with its churches, monasteries, large bells, with its disgust to the enlightenment and with its love for clergy and church literature, since ancient times looked endlong at Europe, shunned Europeans and proudly repelled the European civilization".¹⁶

Whereas the only *rescue for the Ukrainian culture*, according to the thinker, was to cherish the Ukrainian national idea and the Ukrainian language, which were the supposed prerequisites for "keeping into the European civilization".¹⁷ This sort of intertwining of Ukrainian and European gives a good impression of the general way of thinking through the issue. Europe and Russia were never perceived in the context as equal counterparts. Whereas Russia was felt and framed as an empire, oppressing and destroying Ukrainian per se, Europe was imagined as an umbrella protecting nations and providing their development. It's worth noticing that all the mentioned persons lived quite a while abroad, mostly in Central-Eastern Europe, therefore their conclusions were based on some participating observations. Another stereotype to dismantle here concerns the origin of the thinkers. They were mostly from the central part of Ukraine, not from Galizia.

Another iconic figure of the Ukrainian nationalist discourse I imply to mention here is Mykhailo Drahomanov, a prominent historian and a social activist who was a professor in Kyiv University, later in Sofia University. He claimed that the Ukrainian people had lived a common life with (and as) Europeans since the 17th century. However, unlike some other European peoples, Ukrainians were not lucky enough to gain their independence, which led to tragic consequences for them:

"...our Ukraine in the XIX century, having become a "province", lagged more from advanced Europe than it would if it went its way since the XVII century without being interrupted, and also broke off with" <...> "no other way is possible than to look more closely and directly at the European thought and work, and to build our work on a maximally broader basis, going beyond the edges and boundaries of Russia, to get out of the old and narrow ground of the Ukraine-Russia to stand on a new and broad one, that is Slavic-European".¹⁸

This is the core of the Ukrainian nationalist discourse of the pre-Soviet period, which was revived and re-actualized after 1991. Its main framework is binary – Europe vs Russia: both cultural sources are being recognized in Ukraine yet with opposite evaluation. The "Asian", "Muscovite" influence is perceived as an obstacle to get civilized and to establish itself. However, the "Europeanness" is mostly perceived as an inherent feature of the Ukrainian culture. As Yury Lypa formulates it:

"Europeanism, westernism stands as a method for searching our Self, yet becoming oneself is the goal".¹⁹

Along the same lines develops his thoughts a famous literary critic Yury Sheveliov, stressing that within this set of ideas "Europe exists for Ukraine's sake". All the discourse is guided with the idea *to build Europe at home*, to reveal the initial "Europeanness" of the Ukrainian culture. Whereas Mykola Khvylovy warns against blind copying of the contemporary European culture, suggesting to go to its bases instead. One of the most prominent Ukrainians Ivan Franko sets a twofold task: first, to fill the national framework using the accomplishments of the European civilization (science and culture, first and foremost); secondly, to reveal the peculiarity of the Ukrainian culture and its fruitfulness for the contemporary European culture, to make the Ukrainian culture appealing beyond its borders. This set of ideas provides an illustrative background for the later EuroMaidan movement in terms of the national idea of Ukraine it articulated. Here nationalism implies not discrimination (as it is often fallaciously perceived) but emancipation and self-establishment. And Russia stands as a negative reference point. Thus, Mykola Zerov notices that there has never been any dead wall between Ukraine and Europe to cut a window into it (making obvious parallels to Peter the Great's reforms in Russia). On the contrary,

"In Ukraine... the sprouts of the European culture made their way everywhere through a thousand of imperceptible chinks and cracks, being accepted slowly, imperceptibly, but with all the pores of the social organism".²⁰

Whereas in Russia, as Ivan Franko writes in a sarcastic manner, commenting on the same reforms:

"At the beginning of the XVIIIth century, having been torn out of centuries of hibernation and forcibly pushed to Europe by the mighty hand of Peter the Great, that privileged part of the Russian society started to grasp feverishly from the Western culture everything shining and striking, unusual and new. Without bothering itself to chew and digest what was gained by Europe due to hard work throughout centuries, the Russian intelligentsia civilizes itself only superficially: under the fashionable haircuts and trendy coats ancient barbarians are hidden, with culture stuck to their surface without coming into their bone and blood; bought for money, picked up in passing, having become their trophy not their property, not daily bread... and they're rushing to be fed with the bread of European culture, but afterwards cannot digest it."²¹

This distinction remains paradigmatic for the Ukrainian national idea after 1991. For discovering convergences and divergences with the described discourse, let's take a look at the contemporary vision of Europe and "Europeanness" by Ukrainians, as it is represented in polls.

A fresh research conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs and Bertelsmann Stiftung in Ukraine in 2015²², shows that half of Ukrainians (51%) are in favour of accession to the EU, whereas "the proportion of people who are more favourably inclined towards the model of integration proposed by Russia has decreased by half" – to the 17% of respondents. There are three main groups of "Euro-enthusiasts" distinguished: not surprisingly, inhabitants of Western Ukraine (82%), but also young people (aged 18-29 - 60%), and well-educated people (the direct correlation exists between the level of education and the level of support to the EU prospects of Ukraine).

The data clearly correlate with the demographic structure of the EuroMaidan, as it was discovered by the survey, conducted on December 7-8, 2013 by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS)²³. Thus, the average age of the Maidanian was 36 years, which is lower than the average age throughout the country. The absolute majority (87%) of the respondents was aged under 54 years. 77% of the participants either had a higher education or were currently undergraduates (around 16%). 40% Maidanians were young professionals. What is striking, however, is that 92% of the respondents claimed not to belong to any political party or social movement; and 92% admitted that they had came on their own. So, as Oleksii Shestakovskiy writes:

"The Euromaidan, as we have shown, consisted largely of members of the *urban middle strata*—educated, enterprising, young, and socially active. It is no exaggeration to call them the engine of the winter protests."²⁴

Going back to the 2015 poll, it's worth reckoning the data concerning the European and Russian integration processes in the Ukrainians' perception. Commenting on the deepening the relations between the EU and Ukraine, 57% of Ukrainian respondents claimed it to be in Ukraine's interests whereas 53% agreed it to be in the EU's interests. What is remarkable, however, that answering on the similar question about Russia – Ukraine relations, 59% of respondents reckon it to be in Russia's interests, and only 30% admit the Ukraine's interest there. Moreover, 40% of respondents (against 53% in 2013) think that the EU understands Ukraine's needs, and only 28% claim the same concerning Russia. Going into details provides even more counter-intuitive information: only 36% of Ukrainians believe that deeper relations with Russia are beneficial for the Ukrainian economy (despite the wide-spread belief in the Western world), whereas precisely the same number of people claim that they will *destroy* the Ukrainian economy. These data show that albeit the EuroMaidan did not represent the social demographical structure of the Ukrainian society, there is no significant gap between Maidanians and average Ukrainians in terms of moods and aspirations that are still pro-European.

EuroMaidan as a version of a "New Europe"

Just to refresh the general line, I'll give some key moments. It all started on November 21st, 2013 with people going out the streets to express an ultimate disapproval of the then-government intention to suspend signing the Association agreement with the EU. Authorities' policies were widely perceived not just as an alternative vision of Ukraine's further development but also as a negation of the country's prosperous future, herewith implied the future within the European civilization. It was inscribed into the pattern 'development vs. stagnation' rather than 'the EU vs. the Customs Union'.

Ukrainian political situation in 2000-s had resembled a swing, rocking between people striving for radical changes in terms of modernization and integration into the Western world, and people sticking to the Post-Soviet inertia. The former being the creative class, students, intellectuals and entrepreneurs, actually, or eager to be, globalized. The latter were represented by beneficiaries of post-Soviet nepotism and by the 'electorate', sensitive to media propaganda and looking for paternal guidance rather than democratic representation and civil activism. Throughout the post-Soviet period Ukrainian politicians had been trying to pull the strings to meet the expectations of people by changing slogans and ideological masks, while actually longing for personal enrichment and 'career opportunities'. Such configuration of the so called 'façade democracy' *disabled any legal leverages*; no viable 'counter-democracy' (the term of Pierre Rosanvallon) had existed. Big expectations after the victory of the Orange Revolution in 2004 superseded with a huge disappointment, caused by the absence of desired changes and reforms. After the revanchist comeback of Victor Yanukovich as a result of the presidential elections in 2010, most of his non-supporters cherished the hope that persons existed within the system, thus they would not be able to change the vector of Ukraine's development drastically. By the end of 2013 those hopes had vanished, as the economic and political situation had worsened largely, revealing the dreadful kleptocratic nature of current authorities. Regarding no power within the country able to improve the situation, many *Ukrainians childishly relied on Europe* and the 'civilized world' that would not stand all this and would not leave the Ukrainian people all alone with the situation. Within this context, the decision of Mykola Azarov's government not to sign the Association agreement was regarded as a goodbye to the last hope. It worked as a switch trigger to more dire measures.

At first, the uprising was not mostly crowded, being represented to a large extent by students and civil activists. Meanwhile, the authorities seemed to ignore the movement on the surface, yet attempting to suppress it underneath, partially by pushing severely universities' presidents ('rectors') with the bureaucratic apparatus. The culmination point in Vilnius was dramatic in itself, when then-President Yanukovich resigned to sign the agreement, but the consequences were even more catastrophic. By that time, there was an improvised camp of protesters on the central square of Kyiv, inhabited by the youth mostly. And early in the morning, at 5 am, November 30th, it was severely broken up by the riot police, protesters brutally beaten. For peaceful Ukraine that even gained sovereignty with no bloodshed, it was surrealistic in its unprecedented character, illegitimacy, and intolerance. It stood as a clear threat and a sign of further changes in terms of people – authorities relationships. The day after, some several hundred to one million people (according to different estimates) went out the streets to express their disagreement with such policies. They were of different social status and cultural background, having come from different regions to Kyiv, aside Kiev inhabitants. Here the **Revolution of Dignity** started, albeit this marker was not widely disseminated outside Ukraine. From now on it was not just about the possibility to join the EU but also about basic human rights and European values. Ukrainian people declared *the prevalence of human dignity over safety and of common good over personal acquisitiveness*. The Ukrainian modus of communitarianism appeared as the ideology of the movement: a popular slogan "I'm a drop in the ocean that will change the country" framed subsequent network activities.

The data I've already appealed to, show that around 92% of Maidanians did not belong to any organized movement, moreover, 20% of them came out *alone*²⁵. These people were exposed to unknown others with whom they engaged in temporary associations. The *presumption of trust*, unknown in pre-Maidanian Ukraine, emerged. Looking at a different angle, it also implied associations based on the *professional* not personal criteria. Andrew Wilson called it a "start-up activism" that makes a lot of sense in the context.

Maidan was built as a *network structure* without clear vertical hierarchy. The Council of Maidan was eventually organized as a result of push from politicians willing a spokesperson on behalf of Maidan. Yet the credentials of this institution remained vague till the very end. I'm confident that was one of the prerequisites of Maidan's victory.

The Maidan movement can also be regarded as an illustration of the "*economy of gift*" widely theorized nowadays. Indeed, the main policy was to give what you could without any expectation of mutuality or benefitting from it in another way (which perfectly fits into the exchange type D, distinguished by Kojin Karatani²⁶).

What is yet to be marked within the context is the *parallel society* that eventually emerged from the Maidan movement. And right now it coexists with the post-Soviet patrimonial state with its inertial ineffective institutions. It's widely recognized that this "*parallel Ukraine*" (a bit misleadingly called a "civil society") played a crucial role in solving at least two big issues: of supporting the Ukrainian army and of coping with the internally displaced people. Except for brand new grounds for this "new Ukraine", it also *overcomes the state boundaries*: probably for the first time in the Ukrainian history "global Ukrainians" were included in the national project.

So, within the Ukrainian revolution the idea of Europe and 'Europeanness' worked in a twofold manner: *synchronously*, by unifying society thus reestablishing it on the basis of some new agreements (dignity as a core value, solidarity as the main policy); *diachronically*, by setting the trajectory of further development and hereby forcing required changes (towards the EU as the institutional embodiment of the imaginary 'Europe'). However, it did not regard existing European institutions as a template but rather appealed to the origins of 'Europeanness', thus opposing itself to the distorted versions of 'Europe' as well. Therefore it makes a lot of sense in studying the Maidanian experience of Ukraine to go beyond the European claims and to examine what it actually implied in terms of both ideas and activities. As Andrew Wilson aptly notices:

"The EU also needed renewed vigour and sense of purpose; countries like Ukraine could save Europe both from itself and from Putin's 'conservative values' assault. After the *patronising West-East lecturing* of the 1990s, it was time to recognise that *Ukraine knew more about Europe than vice versa*. The 'Ukraine crisis' was also a *mirror* of the crisis that has engulfed Europe since 2008. Oligarchs and bad bankers exist in both East and West. EU states do not always uphold the values that they seek to impose on new members at home."²⁷

¹ Silverstein, Sara. The Refugees Crisis that Europe Solved. In: *Transit Online*. October 19, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.iwm.at/read-listen-watch/transit-online/refugee-crisis-europe-solved/>

² Krastev, Ivan. Eastern Europe's Compassion Deficit. In: *New York Times*, 8 September 2015. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.iwm.at/read-listen-watch/transit-online/eastern-europes-compassion-deficit/>

³ Arendt, Hannah. The Origins of Totalitarianism.

⁴ Krastev, Eastern Europe's Compassion Deficit.

⁵ Diamond, Larry. Timeline: Democracy in Recession. In: New York Times. September 15, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/09/13/opinion/larry-diamond-democracy-in-recession-timeline.html?_r=1

⁶ Fukuyama, Francis. End of History? In: *The National Interest*. Summer 1989.

⁷ Fukuyama, Francis. At the 'End of History' Still Stands Democracy. In: *The Wall Street Journal*. June 6, 2014. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/at-the-end-of-history-still-stands-democracy-1402080661>

⁸ Steiner, George. *The Idea of Europe: An Essay*. The Overlook Press, 2015. P. 17, 18, 19.

⁹ Franko, Ivan. Z gostiuvannja v Prazi. In: Franko, Ivan. *Tvory*. Vol. 46, Book 2. P. 228-241. P. 228-229.

¹⁰ Ulrich von Hutten wrote in a letter to his friend Williband Pirckheimer:

“Nobility by birth is purely accidental, and therefore meaningless to me. I seek the wellsprings of nobility elsewhere, and I drink from that source”.

¹¹ Steiner. P. 8.

¹² Steiner. P. 29.

¹³ Rifkin, Jeremy. *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*. London, New York: Penguin Books, 2004. P. 8.

¹⁴ Steiner. P. 23.

¹⁵ Kulish, Panteleymon. *Shukachi shchastja*. Kyiv, Rukh, 1930.

¹⁶ Nechuy-Levytsky, Ivan. Organy rossijskykh partij. In: Nechuy-Levytsky, Ivan. *Ukrayinstvo na literaturnykh posvakh z Moskovshchynuju*. Lviv, Kamenjar, 1998, pp. 27-63. P. 39.

¹⁷ Nechuy-Levytsky, Organy rossijskykh partij. P. 48.

¹⁸ Drahomanov, Mykhailo. *Vybrane*. Kyiv, Lybid, 1996. P. 403-404.

¹⁹ Lypa, Yury. *Pryznachennja Ukrayini*. Lviv, Prosvita, 1999. P. 10.

²⁰ Zerov, Mykola. *Tvory*. Kyiv, Dnipro, 1995. Vol. 2. P. 585.

²¹ Franko, Ivan. Ivan Serhijovych Turgenev. In: Franko, Ivan. *Tvory*, Vol. 26. P. 293-294

²² Kucharczyk, Jacek. Lada, Agnieszka. Wenerski, Lukasz. *Ukrainians Look To The West – Policy Assessment And Expectations*. Institute of Public Affairs; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

²³ Vid Maidanu-taboru do Maidanu-sichi: shcho zminilosia? Fond “Demokratichni initsiatiivi imeni Il'ka Kucheriva,” February 6, 2014. Accessed November 10, 2015. <http://dif.org.ua/ua/events/vid-ma-zminilosj.htm>, accessed April 22, 2014.

²⁴ Shestakovskii, Aleksei. Radicalized Europeans? The Values of Euromaidan Participants and Prospects for the Development of Society. In: *Russian Politics and Law*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 37-67. P. 57.

²⁵ Vid Maidanu-taboru do Maidanu-sichi: shcho zminilosia?

²⁶ Karatani, Kojin. *The Structure of World History. From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.

²⁷ Wilson, Andrew. *Ukraine Crisis. What It Means for the West*. Yale University Press, 2014.

Philosophy from the Kharkiv University (2006), she has recently obtained the Dr. habil. degree from the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (2015). In Fall-Winter 2014 she was a Carnegie Visiting Fellow at Stanford University with the research project “*Ideology in contemporary Ukraine: social topography*”. Dr. Korablyova’s research interests include on-going shifts in Ukraine through the lens of social theory, political philosophy, and ideology studies, which were embodied in her recent book *Social Senses of Ideology* (Kyiv University, 2014 (in Ukr.)) and in a number of papers and presentations. A member of the International Political Science Association. Co-editor of the international peer-reviewed *Topos* journal (the European Humanities University, Vilnius).