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Ukraine's East-West regional division

Abstract

There is a common narrative of "two Ukraines". From one side there is a pro-European Western Ukraine, which shares liberal democracy values, wants to join the European Union, seeks to "return to Europe" and speaks Ukrainian. The Eastern Ukraine is described often not just different but worse, nostalgic about the Soviet Union, speaks Russian, has close relations with Russia, is hostile towards the West and does not share "western" values. This East-West division is strengthened by the existing regional poles, which are opposed to each other – the Western Galicia, a Ukrainian cultural "Piedmont", a beacon of Western civiliazation with its main city Lviv and from another side highly Sovietinized Donbas region in the East with its main city Donetsk, which image is getting even more negative in course of the current war. The myth "two Ukraines" was turned into differences between two civilizations in the Huntingtonian sense. The Ukrainian East-West division constitutes a part of the European East-West dichotomy. This dichotomy was retranslated in Ukrainian settings. Focusing on various discourses about Ukraine's East-West division, the paper aims to analyze Ukraine's East-West division and the construction of regions as peculiar political and cultural spaces in Ukraine. The paper aims to deconstruct the myth of the infamous „two Ukraines" and focuses especially on spatial images of Galicia and Donbas, two poles in regional system of Ukraine, which function in discourses about the divided Ukraine. Apart from that, taken into the account the current developments, it is important for the author to show how Eastern Ukraine with its region Donbas have been trapped to the stereotypical Orientalism in the political and intelectual discourses and how the notion of Eastern Ukraine have been shifted eastwards in the course of war and reduced to the Donbas region.

Keywords: *division, East, West, Galicia, Donbas.*

The myth about "two Ukraines".

There are some similarities in any kind of discourses concerning Ukraine´s regional divisions. Most of them are about the East-West division. The West is commonly presented as Ukrainian-speaking and oriented to Europe, the East is rather Russian-speaking with strong represantation of ethnic Russians and is oriented to Russia. This division is strengthened by the regional poles, which are opposed to each other: Galicia in the West and Donbas in the East.

The Ukrainian East-West division constitutes a part of the global and European East-West dichotomy. This dichotomy was retranslated in Ukrainian settings and misused by both internal and external actors. Unfortunately, Ukraine's regional diversity was exploited by different political elites for their gain. They strengthened the existing differences between Ukrainian East and West to divide the country. This happened especially before and during the so called Orange Revolution, when one of the candidates was oriented on the electorate in the East and the other one was oriented to the electorate in the West. Researches show, that after 2004 the notion of a region was more connected with the political struggle, with the support of different political forces. The regional system of Ukraine is seen by its citizens after the Orange revolution, first of all, as a dual structure.[i] The Orange revolution of 2004 -2005 was a crucial point in dividing Ukraine, but the most tragic period appeared to be 2013-2014, when after the potests called Maidan, Crimea was annexed by Russia and the war in easternmost part of Ukraine has started.

One of the strategies, which was applied by various actors, and which adds to the division of Ukrainian society is the strategic essentialism. This term describes a major concept in postcolonial theory, was introduced in the 1980s by the Indian literary critic and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. It refered to a strategy that nationalities, ethnic groups or minority groups can use to present themselves, to bring forward their group identity in a simplified way ("essentialize" themselves) to achieve certain goals. Though this term was used by Spivak concerning the self-representation of a group, I think that it is as well applicable to use it with regard to the external actors which define a group and seek to achieve some goals by essentializing others. In this article I use the term strategic essentialism with the reference to regions. Such usage was already elaborated in some previous works. For instance, they were concerned with the regional identity and strategic essentialism in the EU.[ii] Strategic essentialism can be defined as a justificatory strategy in which territorial identities are manufactured *ex novo* or emphasised in order to argue for the exceptionalism of specific areas. Regions are constructed and reconstructed through social practices and in discourse.

In this article some examples both from Ukraine and Russia are given concerning the representations of regions and regional division of Ukraine. These examples include statements about regions in Ukraine by different politicians

and intelectuals taken from their speeches, articles, books. The perceptions by common Ukrainian citizens, which were taken from the previous studies, are also presented here. The time span of this brief analysis includes the whole period of the independent Ukraine. Apart from that, history is a key starting point to understand how the notions of Eastern and Western Ukraine were coined.

Ukraine has almost never existed as a state. The eastern parts on the left bank of Dnipro River have belonged to the Russian Empire since the 17th century and afterwards to the Soviet Union. The central regions on the right bank became Russian only after the Polish partitions in the second half of 18th century. Ukraine´s Southern regions became Russian after the Russian-Turkish wars at the end of the 18th century. Western regions belonged to Poland from the fourteenth century, then those territories belonged to Russia except the westernmost regions Eastern Galicia, Zakarpattia and Nothern Bukovina, which belonged to the Habsburg Empire from 1772 to 1918. Most part of Western Ukraine became Polish again after the WWI and what is now usually called Western Ukraine came under Soviet influence after the WWII. As a consequence, Western Ukraine is much less influenced by Russian culture and Soviet legacies.

If to take only the last 150 years, different regions of contemporary Ukraine were, in changing constellations, part of Russia, the Habsburg Empire, the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary. Though the history of Ukraine seems a real patchwork of different regions belonging to different political units, more than 20 years of peaceful coexistence in the independent Ukraine rather confirms the "divide and rule" strategies of the political elites and doesn´t give much reasons for blaming the complicated history and caused by its current ethno-linguistic and cultural differences for the division of Ukrainian society.

As Liudmyla Pavliuk noted, modern regional discourses, in particular those of the mass media, often express the "phantom pain" of interrupted belonging to larger cultural entities lying to the east or west. The cultural profile of the eastern part of Ukraine is determined by its high degree of integration into the institutional and mental space of the Russian empire in both its tsarist and Soviet forms. In contrast to it, the western part of the country served as a moving frontier between different civilizations for many centuries. For Galicia in particular, being the most concentrated embodiment of the "western" Ukrainian mythologies, this meant being part of the Galician-Volynian Slavic principality, of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, of the interwar Polish Second Republic, and of the former Soviet Union.[iii] The public discourse in Ukraine employs a number of terms that explain differences between the "two parts of Ukraine", for example: "Ukrainian-speaking and "Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine"; Right-bank and Left-bank Ukraine; "Soviet" and "Polish" or "Austrian" Ukraine; "nationally conscious" (or "nationalist") and "denationalized" Ukraine; "rural" and "industrial" areas etc. Imagined or/and real images of polarization and/or differences remained instruments for shaping the minds of millions in the country.[iv]

The existing notions of Ukraine divided in two parts can be called a myth. Ukraine´s history gave enough "evidences" for talking about Ukraine as a divided country. Apart from that the question of how the newly established Ukrainian state has to develop played an important role. In 1991 the overwhelming majority of Eastern Ukrainians voted for state independence, together with the rest of the country. It proves that already at that time not just an ethnic nation, but a civic Ukrainian nation was in the making, voting against the failed communist project and for the "national" alternative. At the same time the idea of the need for Ukraine's "de-Russification" and "de-Sovietization" dominated Ukrainian intellectual circles. It was hoped that this would open the eyes and cleanse the minds of those eastern Ukrainians, who were more nostalgic about the Soviet times and saw Ukraine's future in strong ties with Russia. There was a wave of Ukrainization, but at the same time it became clear that there would be no straightway "de-Russification". The authorities remained those same post-communist elites, a lot of whom were representatives of the urbanized and industrialized eastern regions of Ukraine.Apart from that, Ukraine's socio-economic development left much to be desired. There were also no real chances of full integration into the European Union and NATO.

The narrative of "two Ukraines", if to take intelectual circles, was articulated in 1992 by Mykola Riabchuk.[v] He developed this concept ever since in his essays and books.[vi] Created at the very beginning of Ukraine´s independence, it continued to be expressed later on.[vii] It has become the common narrative among many Ukrainian and international analysts and commentators. By analyzing the narrative of "two Ukraines" Zhurzhenko notices: "Like other myths, it is not just an invention, but rather a re-construction of the political and cultural realities of Ukraine, based on a certain vision of history, on opinion polls and elections results, on Western theoretical constructs, cultural stereotypes and ideological prejudices".[viii]

Western and Easten parts of Ukraine are often presented as two geographically defined and internally homogeneous entities. One part of Ukraine is pro-European, shares liberal democracy values, wants to join the European Union, "return to Europe" and speaks Ukrainian. The symbolic center of this Ukraine is Lviv. The other is nostalgic about the Soviet Union, has close relations with contemporary Russia, is hostile towards the West and does not share "western" values. The language of this other Ukraine is Russian and its center is Donetsk. Ukraine is usually presented as a country divided by language (Russian versus Ukrainian), history (European/Polish/Austrian versus Russo-Soviet), values and geopolitical orientations. Eastern Ukraine described often as not just different but worse.

If one would look at those represenations of Eastern or Western Ukraine, it is not so easy to determine what is exactly Eastern and Western Ukraine. Eastern Ukraine can mean all the regions which belonged before the WWII to Soviet Union, or it can mean the South-Eastern Ukraine, excluding part of the Central Ukraine. Western Ukraine is perceived mostly as the territories, which belonged between the World Wars to Poland, Czechoslovakia and

Romania. These include Galicia, Bukovina, Transcarpathia and part of Volyn region. But exactly the region "Galicia" and "Western Ukraine" are often used as interchangeable synonyms, which is not correct. At the same time, the term Western Ukraine can define the territories till the center of the country.

The discussions of "two Ukraines" were helped along by a localization of academic writing on post-colonialism. By taking postcolonial perspective on Ukraine, which was applied among others by Mykola Riabchuk, the Ukrainian citizens in the east are described as some kind of "creoles". This produced, in effect, a narrative that Portnov, by refering to Edward Said[ix], calls "internal Orientalism".[x]

Apart from that, Samuel Huntington's hypothesis about the clash of civilizations gave support to the myth of "two Ukraines". Already in 1993 Huntington wrote in his essay[xi] the idea that the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. And one of these divisions goes through Ukraine. This idea became well known after his book "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order"[xii] written in 1996. According to Huntington, "Ukraine is divided between the Uniate nationalist Ukrainian-speaking west and the Orthodox Russian-speaking east"[xiii] and that the civilizational fault line goes in Ukraine through Ukraine separating the Uniate west from the Orthodox east. In his book Huntington stated that, Ukraine, is a cleft country with two distinct cultures. Though where does exactly this fault line go through, is not that clear in his book. For instance, he sought confirmation in his hypothesis in the elections in 1994, but the outcome of those elections do not coincide in geographical terms nor with the very approximate division in Russian and Ukrainian speaking parts, nor with the parts where Uniate and Orthodox churches are mostly situated. At that time,

Leonid Kuchma won the presidential elections with the support of the communists against the allegedly "nationalistic" opponent Leonid Kravchuk. By the same token, Kuchma (already in Western Ukraine) beat his communist rival with the support of the national democrats in 1999. During each election in Ukraine the politicians has been selling themselves to the electorate as the "lesser of two evils" depending on the region, where the targerted electorate resided. And every time the territories, which were "gained" in each elections differed. There was no clearly defined pattern of elections till 2000s.
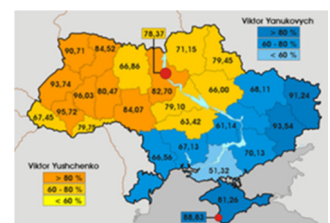
In 2002 Mykola Riabchuk, that is two years before the so called Orange revolution, described once again the easternmost and westernmost parts of Ukraine, which are pretty different, whether this differences concerns language, political affiliations, traditions, history, architecture etc. He added that this perspective leads many observers to conclude that the split between the two halves is inevitable. However, Riabchuk noted that nobody can say where one half ends and another begins.[xiv] In a sense, "two Ukraines" have overlapped and fused.

As a response to the discourse about "two Ukraines", Tatiana Zhurzhenko wrote that the concept of "two Ukraines" which Riabchuk developed, does not reflect only his personal view but contributes to a widespread discourse which has accompanied the young Ukrainian state and has in a way become paradigmatic.[xv] A lot of other intelectuals wrote about the differences of the Eastern and Western parts of Ukraine. Among of them Yuriy Andrukhovich, Oleksandr Boychenko etc. Discussions of intelectuals about two identities within one country, despite they are to some extent valid, had their negative sides. First of all, the simplified metaphor of "two Ukraines" was a base for not so symbolic political speculations in media. Moreover, the discussions went around the unsolved opposition of the West and the East and didn't look for ways of combining the two parts, with their peculiar identities, different visions of history and Ukraine's future.

Beyond, one of the negative effects of the story about "two Ukraines" is that this myth has its twin. It consists more or less of the same elements, but with opposite connotation. Some people represent the vision that Ukraine originally belongs to the "Slavic–Orthodox civilization" and has a natural commitment to Russian cultural values. The mutual voluntary incorporation of Ukrainians in Russian society (and vice versa) was a process which went on for centuries and was interrupted, mainly by external factors. Today, there are again forces which want to destroy the East Slavic Orthodox unity and to split its common cultural and linguistic space for the sake of the new world order which will emerge, as Huntington wrote, from the "clash of civilizations". Ukrainian nationalism, especially its most radical and traditionally anti-Russian Galician version, serves as a tool in this "war of civilizations". Therefore, it is not the East but the West which is an alien part of the Ukrainian nation. In this vision Galicia is a periphery of Western civilization and not a "Ukrainian Piedmont". Its function lays in the destruction of Ukraine: Galician nationalists want to "uproot" the Ukrainians as a nation, to change their "cultural code" and to make them just raw material for the alien Western civilization.[xvi] This vision of Ukraine is popular by some Russian journalists, political analysts and some pro-Russian forces in Ukraine and has gained its popularity again during the crisis of 2013-2014.
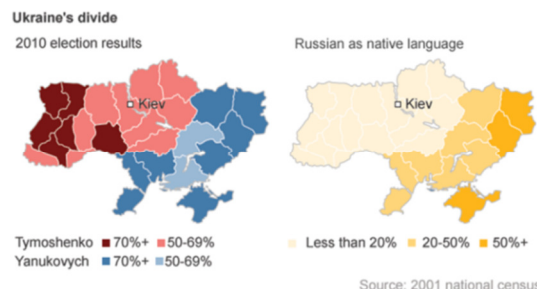
The regional differences of "two Ukraines" were turned into differences between two civilizations in the Huntingtonian sense (what Zhurzhenko calls "Huntingtonization" of the Ukrainian political discourse).[xvii] She believes that the main factor of this "Huntingtonization" was the external one: the position of Ukraine between the West and Russia, in which Ukraine appeared to be after it has become independent.

The uncertain position of Ukraine has been interpreted ideologically as a conflict of two cultural orientations and two mutually exclusive identities: European culture embodied by Western Ukraine and pan–Slavic or Eurasian culture embodied by Eastern Ukraine.[xviii] The regional elites had their own political and economic interests and have turned the conflict into a "war of identities".

During each election in Ukraine the politicians has been selling themselves to the electorate as the "lesser of two evils". The same happened during the elections in 2004-2005. Two presidential candidates, Viktor Yushchenko from the "orange" party "Our Ukraine", and Viktor Yanukovich from the "blue" "Party of Regions" were using the regional differences between the east and west to win the elections, directing their campaigns either westwards treating their electorate as pro-western or easterwards, treating it as pro-Russian. Other regional differences as history and language were as well misused by two political blocks. At that time, after the second round of elections, Viktor Yanukovich won the election. It was claimed that the election was marred by massive corruption, voter intimidation and direct electoral fraud.The so called "orange" protests started. Eventually, after the protests and the re-election Viktor Yushchenko became the new president. After the Orange revolution the issue of the divided country became more heated and only was confirmed by each new election, both parliamental or presidental, where different political forces used similar strategies.

The myth of "two Ukraines" misleads to equating one´s region of residence, national identity, political views and orientations in foreign policy, and preffered language. The data demonstrate that there are indeed some correlations between the preferred language, region of residence, and political views, the perceptions of the neighbouring states as well as preferences as to the future of their country. But the situation is far more complex. Though political views of the citizens in the easternmost and westernmost parts differ, it does not imply that the preferred language or ethnic belonging defines the civic identity or geopolitical choices.

The majority of Ukrainians are at least passively bilingual. It happens often that while having a conversation, one person speaks Ukrainian and the other – Russian. It is also important to differentiate between language practice and language identification. For example, a lot of people who use more Russian language at home, often identify as their mother tongue Ukrainian. Apart from that, there is mixture of Ukrainian and Russian called surzhyk, which is widely used in Ukraine. Preffered language is in most of cases not equivalent to ethnic identity. Poll results regarding language and ethnic identity demonstrate that a considerable share of people who prefer to use Russian in everyday life consider themselves Ukrainian. There is also no clear cut between ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, as it is rather, for example, a case in another post-Soviet country Estonia, where the division between Russian and Estonian population is more visible. A lot of ethnic Russians in Ukraine identify themselves as well as Ukrainians and supported the independence of Ukraine or also many of them agree that Ukrainian language should be the single official language of the country. This opinion about Ukrainian as the single official language is actually supported by the majority of Ukrainian citizens. But there are, of course, also other attitudes among ethnic Russians or Russian-speaking Ukrainians in Ukraine. The adherence to one or another ethnicity is often politicized in Ukraine, as it is also the case with the language issue. The politization of language and ethnicity was noticable especially before and during the Orange Revolution, when one candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, tried to mobilize Ukrainian speaking electorate and the other one, Viktor Yanukovich, sought support among ethnic Russians and Russian speakers.

The concept of "two Ukraines" is not only a tool in dividing Ukrainian society, but often it is used to explain the development of Ukraine: the failure to consolidate the Ukrainian society and who (inside and outside the country) is responsible for this failure. The tale of "two Ukraines" ist still popular and saw its revival during the Maidan protests and afterwards.[xix] Many commentators presented Maidan protests as a conflict between the Russian-speaking East and Ukrainian-speaking West. The narrative of "two Ukraines" was again exploited in political games. It was often employed to justify the proposals for the political division of Ukraine, either federalisation or a split into two separate political entities, or uniting parts of Ukraine with another state.

Donbas and Galicia as regional poles of the East-West division.

The myth of "two Ukraines" is strengthened by the existance of two peculiar regional poles. From one side there is Galicia in Western Ukraine with its symbolic capital and biggest city Lviv. The antipole to it is industrial Donbas in Eastern Ukraine, a region with higher numbers of ethnic Russians and a mainly Russian-speaking region. Its history is connected mostly with Soviet times. Its symbolic capital is Donetsk. The second biggest city is Luhansk.

Donbas was named so after Donets Basin. It has been an important coal mining area since the late 19th century, when it became a heavily industrialised territory. The mythologization of Donbas has started with its development as the important industrial region of the Soviet Union in 20-30. It was then a major coal mining region of the Soviet Union. In this sense a famous Soviet poster named "The Heart of Russia" is an eloquent example of Donbas special status. Another example, of the special status of Donbas is the popular assertion that "Donbas feeds the entire country" which originated among miners and was also popular in the independent Ukraine.

Donbas has always attracted a lot of historians and other academicians. One of the books about the history of Donbas is written by a Western historian is Hiroaki Kuromiya's "Freedom and terror in the Donbas. A Ukrainian-Russian borderland, 1870s – 1990s".[xx] Apart from presenting the history of Donbas, Kuromiya's main contention is that Donbas, if to take Benedict Anderson´s concept of imagined community[xxi], is defined by the "characteristics of the wild field-freedom, militancy, violence, terror, independence".[xxii] The symbolic importance of the Donbas as a place of freedom and refuge, which comes from its history, could be compared to Siberia or the American "Wild West". Those seeking freedom in Donbas included workers, migrant peasant laborers, escaped criminals, and later, during Stalin's time, dekulakized peasants, more migrant workers, fleeing Ukrainian nationalists, and other so called "enemies of the people". Though this "freedom from" was especially valued by those who sought refuge in the Donbas, the complicated history of this region (and as the word "terror" in the tittle of Kuromiya's book) showed that they have found little escape from oppression. In many respects the modern political history of the Donbas did embody the imagined wildness of the region. State officials possessed this mental image of the region, which encouraged them to rely on physical repression to govern and control.

One of the main focuses of the academic researches about regions in Ukraine became also the topics of the economic development of Donbas after the collapse of the Soviet Union[xxiii] and regional elites (which are often called Donbas mafia), many of whom took power in the region in the 90s as the previous economic system was in transition to the market economy. Other research interests for academicians are peculiar regional identity of Donbas[xxiv] and political behavior of Donbas´ population.[xxv] Donbas is a quite special region in Ukraine due to its history, industralized character and distinct culture.

Galicia, in contrast to Donbas, could be called a phantom region in Ukraine. It was created in 1772 at the time of the partitions of Poland, and then abolished at the end of World War I in 1918, disappearing forever from the official map of Europe. This historical region is still alive in the minds of people. Nowadys Galicia is situated in Poland and Ukraine. The so called Eastern Galicia, except from a little part on Poland, is situated in Ukraine and comprises three administrative regions called oblasts: Lviv oblast, Ivano-Frankivsk and most part of Ternopil oblasts.

Larry Wolff wrote in his book "The idea of Galicia. History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Cullture"[xxvi] that at the beginning of twenty-first century, Galicia was still culturally invented and reinvented, constructed and reconstructed. In his book he gave various example of how the meaning of this region began to reemerge in various spheres. Apart from that, Ukrainian writers has often referred to the region Galicia and the Habsburg heritage. The referrences to Galicia are noticeable in the branding strategies in Lviv.

Galicia became an antipole space to Donbas loaded with myths and symbolism. There are two main images of Galicia depending on the perspective. If to take a typically Russian propagandistic vision, this region is the heart of the destructive Ukrainian nationalism. The Volyn region is often added to the space of Galicia. This image is stressed by the demonized myth of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which was present not only in Galicia, but also in Volyn, and which activities are connected in regard to this region with the so called Volyn massacre, a Polish-Ukrainian conflict during the Second World War. Apart from that, the image of the region of Galicia as a nationalist region also often expands on the whole Western Ukraine, the region, which didn´t belong to the USSR before the Second World War. If to take another perspective, so to say the other side of the myth of "two Ukraines", Galicia is presented as cultural center of Ukraine, its cultural Piedmont. The symbolic power of two regions, Donbas and Galicia, are often used to present two different projects of Ukraine´s development.

The comparison of Donbas and Galicia became also classical in the academic sphere. For instance, a Ukrainian sociologists from Donbas Illia Kononov explored the topics concerning perceptions of these regions. Various stereorypes exist among citizen of one regional pole about the other one. That is not surprising, because respondents, who were interviewed in Donbas and Galicia in 2007, in over 50% answered that they never had a chance to visit the opposite pole of Ukraine. [xxvii] This situation has not changed in the last years and this only strengthens the existing stereotypes. The research carried out in 2009 showed that the overhelming majority didn't want and didn't believe in disintegration of the country. Though, there were as well answers that everything is possible. By seeking to answer the question about what or who could lead to the disintegration of the country, he has found the main form of organization of discourse about the unity of Ukraine in both regions. He assumes, that this form of thinking the social reality unites not only Donbas or Galicia, but the whole Ukraine. It lays in the opposition of those in power and the common people. The latter do not take the responsibility for the ongoing processes in the country but instead put the responsibility to the authorities. The rulers of the country are perceived by people as immoral power, which is oriented on their interests. And this power creates in Ukraine the situation in which everything is possible, even the division of the country.[xxviii]

The East and the West in 2013-2016.

Before the crisis of 2013-2014 various polls showed that majority of Ukrainians believed that close cooperation with both the European Union and Russia is in the interest of their state.Yet, when they need to make a single geopolitical choice, the majority prefer the European vector of integration and the regional differences in this case emerge.[xxix] If to take two regional poles, one can say generalized that Galicians in their majority tend to the pro-European and pro-NATO course of development, and the people in Donbas are oriented on the development of cooperation with Russia. This situation didn't change much after the events of 2013-2014.[xxx]

Apart from that, the poll conducted in 2013 showed that the majority of Ukrainians, irrespective of the language they speak or the region they live in, do not share separatist sentiments. They do not support either the idea of creating two states or separating their region or oblast from Ukraine and making it independent or joining Russia. The majority of the Crimean population supported the status quo – autonomy within Ukraine, whereas the annexation by Russia was supported by less than one-fourth of the population. The overwhelming majority of Ukrainians, irrespective of language or region of residence, consider themselves patriots of Ukraine and see Ukraine as their motherland.[xxxi]

The events of 2013-2014 changed the situation in Ukraine and the world order in many ways. The infamous East-West division of Ukraine continues to play an important role in the on-going crisis and was misused by different forces. There is much to be said about how the events have developed and what were regional responses to them, but it is not the aim of this paper to describe the events and explain the causes and the consequences of what has happened. At the same time I am aware that the generalized picture can lead to the misunderstanding of the events.

The Maidan revolution was not supported so much in Donbas and Crimea as in the rest of the country. The annexation of Crimea went relatively smoothly without almost any resistance from the Ukrainian government and not so much resistance from the local population. Donbas saw a wave of some kind of "pro-Russian" unrest, which though can't be solely understood as pro-Russian, as this wording doesn't fully reflect the moods of the society of that period. What is clear, is that pro-Russian unrest was to a great extend organized by Ukraine's Eastern neighbor. The polarization of the society grew in course of events, though it is questionable to what extend the society became polarized as there were not so much possibilities to carry out interviews in the territories, which later on became uncontrolled for the Ukrainian state. Ukrainian citizens who took up arms and fight on the side of so called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics are just a little part of the society of those territories.

The events of 2013-2014 brought again to the discussion the referrences to Huntington´s hypothesis. Some regarded the events of 2014 as his "prediction". The references to Huntington could be observed also in the academic sphere, though at the same time those academic contributions didn´t confirm Huntignton´s hypothesis.[xxxii] Meanwhile, Huntington´s hypothesis was pretty much used to explain the events of 2013-2014 by various authors also in non-academic texts.

The East of Ukraine was often presented during the crisis as something different and alien to the rest of Ukraine. The following quotation is just one of the examples from the existing opinions about the alterity of the East, which is expressed by a famous writer Taras Prochasko in April 2014:

> "An entirely different people live in our far eastern regions; people whom we western Ukrainians can neither understand nor accept, nor, in particular, consider our own. All the nice chatter about unity falls apart when one meets these people face to face. Because they know their own. And they're nothing like us".[xxxiii]

This kind of statements Andriy Portnov calls "Galician [Western Ukrainian] reductionism."[xxxiv] It represents people in Donbas as backward and "hopelessly Sovietized" and argues that Ukraine will succeed only if it gets rid of them or changes them beyond recognition. This kind of discourse is popular not only among intelectual circles.

One of the aspects which contributes to the East-West division is the instrumentalization of history and regional identity of Western and Eastern Ukraine and Donbas in particular. This instrumentalization was used to alienate the East from the rest of Ukraine, to justify the pro-Russian unrest, the war and also the annexation of Crimea. For example, it is the case with so called Novorossiya project. Novorossiya was historically a governorate of the Russian Empire, that existed for very short period in 18th century. The name received renewed emphasis when Vladimir Putin stated in an interview in April 2014 that the Eastern territories of Ukraine were part of Novorossiya. In May 2014 the so called Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic proclaimed the confederation of Novorossiya. The following quotation is taken from the book "Galicia against Novorossiya: the future of the Russian world", which is an example of Russian propaganda:

> "Because the Russian self-identification in Ukraine had the biggest support in the region, which was joined by Catherine the Great to the Russian empire in the second half of 18th century and called Novorossia, logically, that about this name recalled the insurgents against the Kyiv regime. Therefore, the civil war in Ukraine became a war between Galicia and Novorossia".[xxxv]

Galicia was constantly presented as something totally different from the East. One could see during the crisis a lot of following titles of the articles in various Russian media or written by some pro-Russian Ukrainian authors, who present very same views about the special identity of Galicians: "Are Galicians Ukrainians?", "Why Galicians do not like Ukrainians?", "What is "the dignity" of Galicians?" etc. Galicians are presented in these articles as people who have distinctive values, another religion, another history, who hate Russians. They were even presented as a special separate ethnic group.

The regional identity and history of Donbas were also intrumentalized. The legislature of the unrecognized separatist Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) adopted a memorandum declaring the DPR to be the legal successor to the Donetsk–Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic, a self-declared Soviet republic founded in February 1918. Just a minority of

the local population in Donbas and Eastern Ukraine knew before the conflict about the existence of such previous entities as Novorossiya or the Donetsk–Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic. Now it became known to probably every citizen of Ukraine. These few examples of presentations of regions by pro-Russian forces can be called strategic essentialism.

The perceptions of Western and Eastern Ukraine are changing. This concerns perceptions of what regions are enough Ukrainian and which are not. The arguments about the language and other markers being Ukrainian are fading, the loyalty to Ukrainian state and the readiness to protect it are crucial in defining Ukrainianness. The East of Ukraine has been in many ways reduced to the notion of the easternmost part of Ukraine. The above mentioned "western Ukrainian reductionism" shifts chief responsibility for the tragedy in Donbas away from local elites and external intervention onto the region's population and also plays into Russian hands of Russian government which presents the conflict as a "civil war". The essentialism of the region is being often reinforced with the media (both Russian and Ukrainian) representation of the war. The media usually present the current war as "the war in the East" or "the war in Donbas", whereas actually it is a war in part of the East and, in particular, in part of Donbas. I agree with the above mentioned Hiroyaki Kuromiya, who in his recent book "To understand Donbas"[xxxvi], already in the introduction stresses that Donbas have gained the reputation of the center of pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian moods in the East of Ukraine and that this understanding of Donbas is incorrect, and moreover, such understanding is dangerous as it leads to false conclusions about the reasons of the war.

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