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Does Ukrainian bilingualism mean Russification?

Does Ukrainian bilingualism mean Russification? In post-Soviet states like Ukraine, centuries-old Russian language influence persists as one of the most decisive identity and socio-political factor. In contemporary Ukraine there still exist lingual dualism and diffused cultural and political identity. Nonetheless, the stronger self-consciousness of the Russian speaking minority than that of Ukrainian speaking people, and more or less direct political, diplomatic, military, cultural, historical, economic and financial influence of a Russian state lead toward a new deprivation of the Ukrainian language, if not the Russian language domination under the label of lingual equality, regardless of the fact that Ukraine is a formally independent, internationally undoubtedly recognised and a relatively big state. Thereby, “language matters” in Ukraine is not only a cultural or linguistic issue. With no immediate Euro-Atlantic perspective for Kyiv, and deficient or failed democratic and economic transformation and stabilisation, bilingual reality with de facto dominance of the Russian language becomes important for the geo-cultural orientation of the whole Ukrainian society, and for the actual international position of the Ukrainian state with possible impact on its national security and integrity.

Keywords: contemporary bilingual Ukraine, Ukrainian language, Russian language, post-communist country.

Означает ли украинский билингвизм русификацию? В таких постсоветских государствах, как Украина, русский язык сохраняет позицию одного из самых важных идентификационных и социально-политических факторов. В современной Украине мы все еще имеем дело с языковым дуализмом и диффузностью культурной и политической идентичности. Тем не менее, сильное по сравнению с украиноязычным населением самосознание русскоязычного меньшинства, а также более или менее прямое политическое, дипломатическое, военное, культурное, историческое,

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экономическое и финансовое воздействие России приводят к ослаблению позиций украинского языка, то есть к доминированию русского языка под видом языкового равенства, независимо от того, что Украина является формально независимым, международно признанным и относительно большим государством. При отсутствии ближайших евроатлантических перспектив для Киева и в ситуации недостаточных или неудачных демократических и экономических преобразований двуязычная реальность с фактическим доминированием русского языка становится важным инструментом влияния на геокультурную ориентацию всего украинского общества, а также ввиду актуальной международной позиции украинского государства приобретает возможность влияния на его национальную целостность и безопасность в целом.

Ключевые слова: двуязычная современная Украина, украинский язык, русский язык, посткоммунистическая страна.

Introduction and theoretical frame of analysis

The paper analyses how vernacular Ukrainian-Russian bilingual structure in Ukraine correlates with the outcomes of identity and political affiliations of the Ukrainian citizens and society as a whole. Talking about state identity, the Polish scholar Tadeusz Olszański says: "Language is an important factor in determining people's national identity and an element of the »symbolic identity« of a modern state."² In this paper, it is necessary to take a to a certain degree limited approach towards the phenomenon which certainly has outstanding cumulative effects reaching far beyond the scope of this paper. But here it is assumed that the phenomenon should be described more closely because the official statistics and trends regarding who, where and why speaks one or another language ought to become more outlined by the variability of social affirmative, regardless of disparaging attitudes, not only to have relevant insight into the status of the languages in question, but also to notice politically motivated attitudes towards the use of Ukrainian or Russian languages in Ukraine. The "cultural" issue like this should be understood as a basic mental platform for political orientation, or disorientation, in Ukraine.

But, despite the limits of this paper, both main perspectives of analyses: individual-to-individual (or micro), and general societal (macro)³ are going to be used. Eventually, both are going to be integrated not only in holistic conclusions — describ-

² T.A. Olszański, "The language issue in Ukraine. An attempt at a new perspective", *OSW Studies* 2012, no. 40, p. 36, http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PRACE_40_en.pdf (accessed: 21.08.2013).

³ This inter-connected micro-macro perspective of analysis is methodologically affirmed and valid on the "path" of the methodological and theoretical "base" established by a famous German sociologist Max Weber. He was not the only advocate of the so-called *verstande Soziologie*, of analysing individuals' actions by analysing individuals' motives and own interpretations of their actions, he was an advocate of the macro level, at the same time. As a scholar who was the first to advocate historical and cultural background approach in studying of any kind of social phenomena, he established the modern, Weberian sociology.

ing some possibilities that need to be taken into consideration for deliberated future analyses — in the work but also with some other disciplines. At the micro level it has to be comprehended what the motives of the individuals, taken as social actors, are for their choice to use one or another language, and whether they always use the same language in each everyday situation. This has to be described having in mind the macro level, for example: how it correlates with their ethnic and other layers of personal identities. Moreover, there are other phenomena related to the topic issue as, for example, whether Ukrainian or Russian is used more at educational institutions, regardless of the legal obligation to use only Ukrainian language in all Ukrainian state institutions, across all the territory, except in autonomous Crimea.⁴ This paper also emphasises the pro-Russian Ukrainian financial sector, business praxis, and marketing.⁵

Since it is a social phenomena, the bilingualism is of interest for sociology, political science and other sciences, which permits to make a description of the status of the Ukrainian language in the conclusions, and give an indication of the possible directions for the evolution of its socio-political identity. As asserted conditions must have their additional deeper causes, they should be understood through the prism of specific geopolitical position of a relatively young Ukrainian state and nation. Well, indeed, geopolitics as a theory⁶ has been almost an outcast for nearly half a century, but in Russia the anti-liberal circles and the official policy have re-engaged a geopolitical project of Eurasianism, mainly based on the outdated geopolitical and geostrategic postulates of a hundred and more years ago.⁷ But, this is only partly

⁴ This kind of search for answers to indicated questions is firmly connected with the previous search done by a Polish scholar Olszański. Inter alia, he has found interesting correlations between several social spheres, for example educational sphere (pp. 24–26), as well as the media, publishing and journalism in Ukraine (pp. 29–35), etc.

⁵ Not only Russian, but even some international companies ignore the Ukrainian language (М. Заславська, “Ділова розмова. Міжнародні та вітчизняні компанії ігнорують україномовних споживачів”, *Тиждень* 24 березня 2013).

⁶ Nuclear arms and other MD weapons contributed to the criticism of geopolitics. They are largely responsible for the demise of its military-political offspring — geostrategy, which made war a far less handy and certainly a less morally acceptable instrument of geopolitics. But, after the collapse of bipolar system and new geo-economy tendencies (and energy security as a matter of control of hydrocarbon deposits and critical energy infrastructures), there emerged, after a while, a new need for geopolitical and geostrategic thinking again. It seems that geo-economic interdependence and moral values were not inspiring enough to wash away the importance of national state, and to abandon for example a balance-of-power approach, and it kept conflicts, including territorial ones, in a frozen state. Eventually, still there is no commonly accepted definition of geopolitics. In the most general sense, it is a field of social science that examines the relationships and dynamics among the foreign policies of states, international organizations, as well as international relations and the geographic, demographic and natural environment.

⁷ Russia has always held a pivotal position in classical geopolitics. On the other hand, the Russian classical Eurasianists saw Western Europe as a “Romano-Germanic” domain that does not belong to “Eurasia,” but sees Russia as unfriendly or even an enemy. The classical Eurasianists were aware of a contradiction between oceanic and continental civilisations and their affinities to parliamentarism and

true, because the so-called Karaganov doctrine is an example of not abandoning the imperial or reintegration's concept even immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992.⁸ To this day, many scholars consider his doctrine pivotal for policy making in the Russian Federation, and within it the important irredentist role determined for Russian language speakers in Russia's "near abroad" (Russian: *ближне зарубежье*) was stressed. Karaganov launched the idea which became crucial in the post-Soviet space, that a Russian speaker "is not only passive, but a great active of Russia."⁹ In fact, the strategy of Karaganov doctrine has been based on the idea of "soft power" as a conception of gaining victories not only by arms, but by culture, sports and investments in Russian geopolitical "near abroad." Also, Russia today is not the same weak state that it was at the beginning of 1992. For example, over the last few years, Russia along with other Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) members has sought to increase its own influence and — via their regional international organisations — in the post-Soviet arena, and even globally. And today's Kremlin ambition and struggle with Brussels in the Ukrainian arena is manifested as a contested option for Kyiv, officially the European Union aspirant, of joining the Kremlin's led integration called Custom Union, with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan as members. Furthermore, the comeback of geopolitics is also the result of the just-started re-nationalization of world politics. Because of reasons like this, it seems adequate here, in this paper, to make one more attempt to reach the optimal answers through geopolitical lenses, and to recognize some long-range indications for a post-Soviet Ukraine as a pro-Russian state, for example. This does not mean, however, that it is not necessary here to search for the appropriate answers by means of a sociolinguistic analytical approach either, and to apply comparative political science within geopolitics perspective. Additionally, a recent historical development will be taken into account because the present is always historically conditioned. There is only hope that this paper is not yet another search which indulges us in endless debates over world affairs. Nevertheless, everything mentioned here means an endeavour of a minimum of interdisciplinary or at least interlinked analysis. In accordance with the title of the paper, the comparison should be made between genesis of the impact of the role of national language and identity within other post-Communist European countries. In conclusion, induction should be applied, and conclusive assessment of

authoritarianism. It is not clear, but it seems that there is no essential incongruence between classical Eurasianism and "neo-Eurasianism" today, when this unfriendly image is reserved for the United States and NATO as their "tool."

⁸ A.C. Караганов, Проблемы защиты интересов российско ориентированного населения в 'ближнем' зарубежье, *Дипломатический вестник*, No. 21–22, 15–30.11.1992, p. 44.

⁹ The "Karaganov doctrine" (named after Sergei Karaganov, an early advisor to Yeltsin, and lately Putin) could justify the Russian intervention in internal affairs of other countries. The Karaganov thesis looked like a descendant of the 1968 Brezhnev doctrine, which claimed the interests of the communist "lager" outweighed those of national sovereignty, thereby entitling the Soviet Union and its vassals to invade Czechoslovakia. See article and its thesis known as Karaganov doctrine: A.C., Караганов, op. cit., pp. 43–45.

interdisciplinary possibilities of Ukraine's ongoing political stability and its prospects in the contemporary world in terms of international relations.

A brief comparison of the European post-communist and post-Soviet transition countries and the issue of language

To understand interconnected issues like language identity and political orientation, a broader assumption should be made here, based on contemporary insight: today's linguistic and cultural identities in the Eastern Europe should be understood and analysed in the realm of the post-communist socio-political legacy, as well as in the realm of contemporary post-modern relativism. This relativism could be expressed as a kind of nihilism in all post-communist societies in which all the credibility of old communist ideology and high moral ideals, which had once occupied a central place in these societies have been initially rejected, in order to be re-interpreted in the spirit of the retro trend lately. This evaluation of the post-communist value system could be associated — and in certain circumstances identified — with the absence or deficiency of most of individual mental anchors or social strongholds for their own identification, including the language. Having that context in mind, the place and role of the Ukrainian language in actual Ukrainian post-Soviet as post-colonial socio-political reality is going to be briefly compared with the role of national languages in similar post-communist societies.

It is worth noting that within this ex-communist block's framework,¹⁰ and especially within narrower Soviet state frame, some previously deprived and underdeveloped national languages, as well as their ethnical and national identities, were generally officially permitted, and sometimes encouraged to evolve, but mostly in the first years of the Soviet communist period.¹¹ During the 1930s, this attitude started to vanish due to the beginning of a new Communist Party policy of cultural and political unification.¹² Eventually, the Soviet state used the Russian language exclusively in all official and interstate affairs. As a *lingua franca* it was used for

¹⁰ Two and a half decades ago almost all communist countries occupied a similar position in the seemingly antagonistic bipolar world system. Internally, they were totalitarian, with socio-political and specific command-planned economic system, and led by the Soviet Union. They were not considered democratic or free at all.

¹¹ Simultaneously, they were all subordinate to the interests and goals of the Soviet Communist Party's ideology and interests. For example, after the first decade of the Soviet Union's existence, in the 1920s, ethnic and national indigenization (Russian: *коренизация*) — as de facto "Ukrainisation" of the earlier deprived tsarist Ukraine — emerged as the implementation of the communist leadership strictly controlled policy of the affirmation of all deprived nations against Great-Russian nationalism identified as the pro-tsarists ideology.

¹² It was aimed to serve as an additional tool for homogenization of heterogeneous new Soviet society, into the only one socialist nation. It was done by — among other effective policies of the Soviet state bureaucracy — the policy of the homogenization through language unification.

internal assimilation through Russification (Russian: *русификация*), with a great impact on a periphery, which Soviet Ukraine was at that time.¹³ It was not fully official formally but it was almost an official policy, while other languages were treated merely as an element of folklore, but not as “serious” national languages. Thereby, under those undemocratic and centralised social conditions, Ukrainian language was significantly degraded, reduced to the level of benign “small-Russian” dialect, an ancient and pre-modern vernacular expression, and connected to the pre-socialist (read: pre-modern) parochialism, provincialism or separatism of Ukraine, to the level of simple, maybe even likeable, but primarily rural vernaculars in that times.¹⁴ Also, Ukrainian language was a strange vernacular for the intra-Soviet migrants, for the members of *nomenklatura*, to most of the better-educated people, to the inhabitants of the cities, for the intellectuals and the all-loyal Soviets (*homo Sovieticus*) in Ukraine. And it seems today, the Kremlin influence points that Russian should become a *lingua franca* again, as well as the tool of the Kremlin’s soft power policy within post-Soviet space of renewed Kremlin’s hegemony. As a result, this tongue is actually coming back again to the position of the anchor for many people, and is associated with old ideas, the ones developed in the time of imperial Russia and never truly abandoned.

Here follows a brief comparison of Ukraine with other post-communist countries. Certainly, common to all these countries together — regardless of whether they had been culturally heterogeneous societies — is previous hegemony of the Communist Party, same ideology and the strictly hierarchical *nomenklatura* system. That is important to emphasise because that regime significantly derogated national sovereignty and independent political will of all vassal or subordinate countries within the block, and according to this, the possibility of true and free affirmation of its own pre-communist cultural identity, which was under scrutiny. But, even under these circumstances, the local language identity, no matter how controlled during several decades, remained unchallenged as particular national collective identity in formally independent communist countries with predominance of one single nation within their borders. Thus they had formal statehood, recognized and acknowledged but filtered pre-communist’s history of language and national identity, and created a separate part of the formally independent national system within the communist *lager*¹⁵. So, they were only partially in a somewhat similar position to Ukraine, in which, as it has been described, during

¹³ Indeed, primal Stalin’s terror and brutal anti-national policy were later developed into regular Soviet policies. They distorted previous achievements of civil engineering, for example, the deliberate policy of amalgamation (Russian: *слияние*) of the Soviet nations (developed at the time of Khrushchev) and the creation of a new and unique “Soviet people” (Russian: *советский народ*).

¹⁴ C. Seals, “From Russification to Ukrainisation: A Survey of Language Politics in Ukraine”, *UCLA Journal of Slavic and EastCentral European Studies* 2, 2009 pp. 2–3, http://georgetown.academia.edu/CorinneSeals/Papers/138711/From_Russification_to_Ukrainisation_A_Survey_of_Language_Politics_in_Ukraine (access: 21.08.2013).

¹⁵ Among these countries, perhaps only in the case of present-day Slovakia within the framework of the former Czechoslovakia it was possible to talk about the true prevalence of the Czech language, as

the tsarist and the Soviet state times colonial language was used — Russian. But both examples within the communist world for the solutions of identity problems — the non-Soviet and the Soviet ones, in principle, were politically “inconsistent” with an imaginary and idealized virtual world of communist “cosmopolitanism.”¹⁶

Later, it was disclosed more clearly what the differences are among “transitional” and “post-communist” countries, as different bases for the recognition of their full linguistic, cultural and political identity, and the completion of the transformation. In fact, in the reality of a newly found freedom significantly more leeway for the reaffirmation and development of cultural features and national symbols was achieved, now in the service of the new requirements, including the reaffirmation of linguistic identity. Some of these transformations were easier to achieve, and contained a foothold in the religious structures that survived the communist system, and in the renewed national symbols and myths. It turned out that the sphere of post-communist transformation of society and the state are hardly separable because they are correlated with one another. The cultural conditions were equally important as economic and other ones, as cultural patterns retain certain inertia and a greater synthesis of historicity. That mutual correlation became additionally reinforced in the conditions of post-Cold War emerging globalization and post-modernism, moreover implying cultural phenomena such as language, which serve as the backbone of maintaining their own identity. This statement requires further clarification. After the collapse of communism, national and linguistic question in some post-communist countries (e.g. Poland, Hungary), and even the Czech and Slovak Federation were resolved through well-established institutions preserved even under totalitarian and party scrutiny. After the collapse of communist led étatism and having received consensus of support of the elites and the *demos*, they were capable to resolve identity issue in a relatively short time.¹⁷ Hence, with significant help from the West, in the end, most of the European non ex-Soviet

a majority, in relation to the political and economic environment where subordinates spanned Slovak national and linguistic identity.

¹⁶ Ф. Грюнер, “Антизападные идеологические течения в постсоветской России и их истоки. Борьба России против «чуждого элемента»: парадигма анти-космополитизма в российской и советской идеологии”, *Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры* 2011, no. 1, <http://www1.ku-eichstaett.de/ZIMOS/forum/inhaltruss15.html> (access: 21.08.2013).

¹⁷ Western post-communist countries (Poland, Czech Republic), and even some southern countries (Bulgaria, Romania) had been able to implement elegantly a full revaluation of their own identity with the help of their language as a guiding force. Elsewhere in the post-communist Europe identity revaluation was dismissed as difficult, and sometimes parallel to the imposed war, associated with the exit from the communist federation of the countries which in reality were centralized (Slovenia, Croatia, and other ex-Yugoslav countries). Some were at war for a short time (Slovenia), some longer (Croatia) for perennial Serbian aggression and internal rebellions of the Serbian minority, but again it all relatively quickly and permanently ended with a clear crystallization of the identity which was the underlying linguistic evaluation (S. Babić, “Jezik, etnija i politika”, *Etničnost, nacija, identitet — Hrvatska i Europa*, Zagreb 1998, pp. 191–195), although the relative physical proximity and the interest of the West, with the distancing from the imperial centres (Moscow and Belgrade) in 1990 facilitated these countries overcoming of the alignment transition times.

post-communist countries completed their transition time in a relatively short time. It happened despite, or even because of, the challenge of globalization. And, sticking to the West meant a virtual “shift” from the gloomy East to the space where it was easier to continue to regulate and maintain the status of a national tongue. It meant the liberal-based concept of preservation of national identity, while respecting diversity.

On the other hand, claims on other people’s identities on the basis of linguistic expression were reduced, which for the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, could also be an acceptable solution.¹⁸ Otherwise, it was evident that the Bosnian example of the revaluation of the post-communist national identity, and the completion of post-communist transition was essentially helped by the lack of presence of imperial centres and gravitational forces, as well as a lack of a more positive impact of Brussels, and maybe by a deeper involvement in the promotion of democracy. But this is a question of the identity issue within an ex-communist federation.

Hence, there are some special structural deficits of post-communist re-identification within ex-federations, again, especially on the basis of linguistic identity. Within the Soviet federation, in all non-Russian Soviet Republics on the European continent there existed a considerable important linguist minority, but with de facto superior status to the more autochthonous people in Ukraine, Belarus or Moldova. In Ukraine, ethnic Russian (and ethnic Ukrainians who are also Russo-phone — around 29% of them even in 2012¹⁹) minority found it fairly difficult to accept new and unprivileged status, especially when the enthusiasm of the majority for supporting its own state’s independence began to fade due to an unexpectedly difficult transition, and when that independence no longer seemed the best solution.²⁰ In

¹⁸ This discussion should still omit identity of a completely vitiated state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which fell after the collapse of Yugoslavia in the identity crisis of the aggressive approach of the former imperial power centre, only to later lead to an armed intervention of the West introduced to impose peace, but to no success in true revaluation of Bosnian identity, thus being a questionable durable solution. A strong influence of all three key ethnic communities in terms of language, identity as well as national and religious influence through policy can be seen in the country. Regardless of one’s opinion, all Bosnian nationals have hitherto used an almost identical language and although they are otherwise similar to the Serbs and Croats, the people persistently insist on maintaining the artificial language diversity in the post-war circumstances, fearing post-Yugoslav wars or for their own survival.

¹⁹ «Рейтинг» Соціологічна група, *Питання мови: результати останніх досліджень 2012 року*, травень 2012, http://ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG_mova_dynamika_052012.pdf (access: 19.02.2013).

²⁰ For example, students in Southern, Eastern and Western Ukraine feature psycho-ideological stubbornness as a factor that has the most impact. Russian-speaking students particularly in the regions where the Russian language prevails, are more reluctant to switch when spoken to in Ukrainian, while 90,6% of young Ukrainian-speakers are ready to answer in Russian. And, despite the declared tolerant attitude toward the Ukrainian language, Russian-speakers are ready to protect their right to speak their own language more aggressively, while the tolerance of Ukrainian-speakers, especially in Central Ukraine, is coupled with the readiness to give ground in choosing a language because of “uncool” and “unattractive” status of Ukrainian and “no necessity” to speak this language in an environment where everyone understands Russian (O. Kramar, “Russification Via Bilingualism”, *The Ukrainian Week* 2012, No. 6 (29), pp. 28–29).

fact, they today reject a complete revaluation of a former superior position status, especially if it is in the interest of the state that is homeland to the minority, and that has its own political invasive conceptions and interests on the territory of a neighbouring country.²¹ Such an impact on the Ukrainian society is reinforced by other tools of the Russian soft power: media stations from Russia are typically very popular in pro-Russian Eastern and Southern parts of Ukraine, as well as the Russian pop culture.²² Meanwhile, in the Western and Central European regions, ex-communist countries consolidated their clear national identity and cultural particularities, and as such, they had been accepted and eventually integrated into the EU as in a democratic and prosperous inter-state and above-state global organization, and joined the NATO, among other reasons surely because it could be comprehended as an anti Russo-imperial security guarantee.²³ On the other hand, there is the post-Soviet world, except the Baltic countries, which were able to execute their revaluation of identity based on their language and national characteristics, and the fact of being internationally recognized states before Stalin's forced involvement in the Soviet national frameworks. While other European post-Soviet countries have failed to implement its re-affirmation of the identity, and if started, it could be said that it is an unfinished work.²⁴ In that sense, in a multi-ethnic but predominantly Russian

²¹ Moreover, that Russian speaking minority responded to the disappearance of totalitarianism and federal state in a specific way. They used to be a privileged category of people during pre-Soviet and Soviet times. But even today they have no reason not to rely on their corresponding old statutory language solutions on the basis of the earlier relatively privileged position of a loyal pro-regime minority, which vouched for centralized policy of the so-called federation, and latently manipulated by imperial centre. Under the new circumstances, the Russian speaking minority defended their traditionally better status from any disparaging attempts of revaluation of domestic vernaculars and re-identification of domicile nation. Before the fall of communism, none of the Russo-phone individuals in the USSR were obliged anywhere within that state to try to master the native language of the particular Soviet Republic, and were able to live in the belief that such a state of things are everlasting and quite normal. Indeed, linguistic minorities in Ukraine took a role of an irredentist factor, at the beginning of the 1990s. Albeit relatively weak, they always have relatively significant if not decisive support from the old imperial centre (Crimea example). However, Moscow was an imperial centre even in the exceedingly "busy" 1990s because of its own internal problems (of transitional nature, economic depression, strong separatism in Chechnya), while Ukraine did not seem distanced and away from the common ex-Soviet political, economic, mental and cultural space etc.

²² T.A. Olszański, op. cit., p. 41.

²³ And, as the EU is made as an anti-nationalist and a supranational project, also compared to Russia — very wealthy, therefore worth of a slogan "unity in diversity" which implies that linguistic and other cultural heritage are well recognised and even protected, in better material conditions. It is no surprise that into this form of political integration flocking or entered willingly the Baltic nations, Slovakia, Slovenia and today Croatia, although the experience of communist federations was sometimes very traumatic, despite the fact that they were compiling the principles of ethnic and linguistic similarities, therefore the geopolitical space inhabited by distinct, usually language-related mutual understanding and close people (Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia).

²⁴ For example, in Eastern Slavic Belarus there are serious doubts about the individuality of Belarusian national and linguistic identity in relation to the Russian one. But Moldova is not a Slavic country that remained in the area outside the Eastern European key for European integration flows. There the

Federation, apparently, there is no dilemma about linguistic identity due to the absolute preponderance of Russian linguistic expression. Even more, the language is used in the post-Soviet circumstances in the Kremlin's foreign policy strategic concept, as such an invasive means of foreign policy in the post-Soviet space.²⁵ This has been the reason why Russia failed to fully and successfully divide the traditional (great-Russian openly imperial, and the all-Russian disguised imperial, therefore) crypto-imperial component from the heart of the Russian national and linguistic identity. The widespread Russophonia serves not only as a political tool, it constitutes there a base for uncritical glorification of common history as a famous Russian-Soviet history.²⁶ And, in all post-Soviet countries, tendency to become more familiar with the Russian model is in fact rising. So, while officially condoning certain liberal economic policies, Putin has pursued the opposite course, a mixture of state and crony capitalism, as well as return to imperial and authoritarian manners. And it is becoming a model for Ukraine, as well.

Insight into some empirical data on bilingual Ukraine

Until the recent developments it seemed that the majority of Ukraine's citizens do not see the language issue as important: in 2011 70% of the citizens did not see this as a problem at all.²⁷ But in 2012, because of open attempts of the ruling Ukrainian Party of Regions and a Russian speaking President of Ukraine Yanukovich, to officially introduce bilingualism in Ukraine, the political atmosphere around the language issue became more confrontational.²⁸ The so-called bilingual Ukrainians

language issue essentially generates the load in its own post-Soviet re-evaluation in search of its own identity. It is striking that the Moldovan internal divisiveness just keeps using the Russian language, which connects the opposite Moldovans recently privileged Russian and Ukrainian ethnic groups in Transnistria. And, military forces of the Russian Federation "protect" their status and obvious separatism. As such it remains in a state to a certain extent similar to other post-Soviet republics, as "weak" or "under-managed countries," such as some in the Balkans and the Caucasus (S. Kuko, "Proširena Europska unija: regionalna ili globalna sila?", *Europski pokret Split* 2006).

²⁵ www.from-ua.com/adds/print.phpvoice/ea41a956b72cf (access: 14.01.2013).

²⁶ This is inertia from the past, from the Byzantine-Orthodox and Messianic components of the imperialism where Moscow considered itself the Third Rome. An extension is a project such as (Neo) Eurasianism, where Russia needs to position itself as "Europe for Asia, Slavic to Europe, and the All-Russian for Slavs" (О. Пахлёвска, Неоевразизм, кризис русской идентичности и Украина (Часть первая), *Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры* 2011, no. 1, pp. 51, <http://www1.kueichstaett.de/ZIMOS/forum/docs/forumruss15/3Pachlovska.pdf> [access: 10.03.2012], bringing in an objective way what actually is a subordinate position towards other Slavs. See A. Miller, *The Politics of the Past*, reprint A. Miller, *Rossiya:vlast' i istoriya iz Pro et Contra*, Carnegie Moscow Center, vol. 13, 34, 2009, "History Writing and National Myth-Making in Russia", *Russian Analytical Digest* 2010, No. 72, pp. 2–4.

²⁷ www.from-ua.com/adds/print.phpvoice/ea41a956b72cf (access: 14.01.2013).

²⁸ A. Miller, *The Politics of the Past*, reprint A. Miller, *Rossiya:vlast' i istoriya iz Pro et Contra*, Carnegie Moscow Center, vol. 13, 34, 2009, "History Writing and National Myth-Making in Russia", *Russian Analytical Digest* 2010, No. 72, pp. 2–4. A long term sociological monitoring shows that the idea

constitute quite a large and stable part of the population. Surveys that allow to determine that, such as the 2012 survey by the *Рейтинг*, show that around 20% of those polled cannot decide whether Ukrainian or Russian is their native language.²⁹ This figure is significantly high in Ukrainian South (Crimea, Odessa, Herson, Mykolaev, Sevastopol) where it amounts to 18% and in the East (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhye, Kharkiv) — 34%, and Donbas (Donetsk, Luhansk) — 28%. The number of bilinguals in these regions equals or exceeds that of people who list Ukrainian as their native language.³⁰ But, according to the Institute of Sociology at the National Academy of Sciences, the share of Ukrainians at home has grown from 36.8 % to 42.8% in 2011, while the number of those who speak Russian at home increased from 29% to 38.7% over the same period. The main contributors to this are people who spoke both languages at home: their share has shrunk from 32% to 17.1%.³¹

Between 1992 and 2010 the blending of Ukrainian language only could not be seen only in the Ukrainian West (particularly Galicia), where the share of bilingual people shrank almost threefold to 2%, due to an increase of Ukrainian speakers. Meanwhile, other regions undergo directly or via bilingualism (as an interim step) Russification.³² In fact, it seems that Ukrainian speaking people have been an obvious source for making up the bilingual community. An April 2002 survey by the SOCIS Centre (its results are in line with those of the All Ukrainian Census held a few months earlier) makes it clear that the group speaking both languages at home is largely made up of people who list Ukrainian as their native language — 65% compared to 34% of those who said that Russian was their native language.³³ And, the

of Ukraine being a bilingual country has been popular in some political power circles, especially from Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk. Over the past two decades, Ukraine has been experiencing a continuous blending of bilingual environments.

²⁹ Рейтинг, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

³¹ The research conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and Socis, after 12.11.2002.

³² Only 1% of the 5% of the bilinguals eventually switched to Ukrainian in central parts of the country, compared to 4% who opted for Russian. In the South, 1% of bilinguals became Ukrainian speakers, while 9% switched to Russian. As a result, the share of those who speak Russian at home has grown from 43% to 54% in the South, and from 56% to 64% in Eastern Ukraine (O. Kramar, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–29).

³³ The same 34% spoke Russian at home compared to 44% of those who only spoke Ukrainian at home, while 21% spoke both languages “depending on circumstances.” In Sumy, where 24% of the population considers Russian to be their native language, 25% spoke Russian at home, while only 29% of the 75% of those who considered Ukrainian to be their native language spoke exclusively Ukrainian at home, while 46% spoke both. In Kharkiv, 4% of the 28% who said their native language was Ukrainian spoke it with their family, while 19% switched between the two languages, “depending on circumstances.” In Kherson, only 4% of the 59% who listed Ukrainian as their native language spoke it at home, compared to 43% who spoke both. In Mykolayv 60% listed Ukrainian as their native language with 10% speaking only Ukrainian at home and 40% switched to Russian. 10% of those polled in Donetsk said Ukrainian is their native language, 39% of the population being ethnic Ukrainians. Less than 1% of them speaking Ukrainian, while as many as 87% spoke only Russian and 12% spoke both

share of bilinguals among young and middle aged people has shrunk several times in favour of Russian.³⁴

Furthermore, the research on factors discouraging people to speak Ukrainian, conducted by the Institute of Sociology and Political Psychology at the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and the National Institute for Strategic Studies in 2006, revealed four groups of disincentives: 1) reluctance to be seen as a maverick, not knowing the Ukrainian language and thinking of Ukrainian as “uncool,” 2) psycho-ideological stubbornness which includes ideological preferences, reluctance to yield to “pressure,” fear of personal change, 3) derogatory attitude towards Ukrainian and the “unattractiveness” of the language, 4) treating communication in Ukrainian as something second-rate coupled with the lack of a Ukrainian-speaking environment or need to speak Ukrainian.³⁵

Eventually, it seems that the extent of the use of standard Russian language or of the sociolect *surzhyk*³⁶ leads us to the assumption that possible interaction between individual and collective identities results in that they merge to some degree. This leads us to the formation of psychological self-alignment of the Ukrainian citizens in different parts of Ukraine. Well, modern Ukraine as a society and state is composed of several different territorial and ethnic parts, sometimes with very different historical past, or with completely opposite attitudes and interpretations of recent Ukrainian history.

Ukraine still feels significantly touched by what is happening in Russia, staying in deep shadow of the Kremlin, treated lightly by Europe, separated and under-European, as well as part of the undeniable “Russian world” (Russian: *русский мир*). In Ukraine, at last we could talk about the split, rather layered identity, mainly on the basis of language. The homogeneous linguistic identity of Ukrainian society exists mostly in the western parts of the country only, with great tradition of independent Ukrainian national thoughts the same way as it was in Poland, for example. At the same time, mostly in the South and the East of Ukraine pro-Russian attitude of the Ukrainian citizens is present. Today, this identity is spilling out of the space in the shadows of Russia from the South (Russo-ponic Crimea) and by Russian language

languages “depending on circumstances.” According to the Razumkov Centre, 39.9% of Kyivites spoke Russian at home in 2005 compared to 18.1% who spoke Ukrainian and 41.2% who were circumstantially bilingual. The latter group is largely comprised of Ukrainian-speakers, who have been Russified to a greater or lesser extent (O. Kramar, op. cit., pp. 28–29).

³⁴ According to the Institute of Sociology at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the share of middle-aged Ukrainian speakers grew from 36% to 39% in 1992–2010, while the number of Russian speakers increased from 29% to 37% in the same period. The change among young people was 33% to 36% and 34% to 39%, respectively. In other words, the share of Russian speakers under the age of 30 is not simply higher than that of Ukrainian speakers, it is also outpacing the latter. Mass culture and the media have a determinant influence on the language preferences of young Ukrainians, since they are much more effective than such factors as the language in schools and government institutions (O. Kramar, op. cit., pp. 28–29).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ According to sociologists, *surzhyk* is used by about 16–18% of the Ukrainian population (T.A. Olszański, op. cit., pp. 12–13).

or *surzhyk* in the East and South to the Ukrainian North, Central and West. Not only does this overflow largely coincide with the geographical layout of the internal political preferences, but it also connects foreign policy preferences, as well as religious affiliations and ethnic sensitivity.³⁷ In fact, on the Ukrainian-Russian eastern borders without much difficulty internal and foreign policy of Russia towards Ukraine is already visible. However, the influence of Russia on Ukraine extends regardless of geographical distribution, the revaluation of the Soviet (Russian and Ukrainian) joint success in the Homeland war 1941–1945 in school activities and through the use of the Russian language in Ukrainian schools, and in general in the Ukrainian society.³⁸

Conclusion

In consideration of the Ukrainian language question there was confirmed a striking and unavoidable crucial importance of the Russian influence in Ukraine, which stands out as an imperial influence on the periphery, and in particular correlated

³⁷ In Ukraine the specific territorial distribution vernaculars must be taken into account (В.Є. Хмелько, „Лингво-етнічна структура України: регіональні особливості та тенденції змін за роки незалежності”, *Наукові записки НаУКМА* 2004, Серія Соціологічні науки 32, pp. 3–12), because it seems they reflect to a significant extent on the language preferences, on self-identification, and on policy and partisan options in Ukraine («Рейтинг», pp. 3, 6, 8, 12). Although it should be noted that at least some of the political and social tendencies emphasize the importance of strengthening Ukraine's Ukrainian language identity, while others ignore it, or even insist on the recognition of bilingualism in Ukraine on the official, *de jure* level. Given the vernacular connotation related to the ethnic origin of Ukrainian citizens, it appears that there exist two main “kinds” of the socio-political attitude: one is represented by Ukrainian Russians or other people of non-Ukrainian ethnic origin, and it includes even the numerous ethnic Ukrainian but Russian speaking citizens, and the other is represented by a group of Ukrainian speaking ethnic Ukrainians. It seems that it needs to be correlated to the general pro-Russian political identity, associated with the actual politics of the Kremlin's championed re-integration of the post-Soviet space, while, on the other hand, there exists the attitude of the people of Ukrainian ethnic origin, and particularly, of the Ukrainian speaking people who are mostly anti-Russian oriented, with some preferences for Ukraine entering the Western associations, even in American-led NATO, like Poland did in the 1990s.

³⁸ Н. Блицер, “Російський фактор як чинник внутрішньої політики в Україні”, *Сприйняття Росії в Україні, Румунії та Республіці Молдова* 2011, pp. 29–50; В. Бурлакова, ‘Партія сказала: нада...’ Як русифікують українські школи, “Тиждень” 16 вересня 2012, <http://tyzhden.ua/Society/59942> (access: 16.09.2012). So, four European ex-Soviet countries are those that are left out, in terms of the European integration, and are significantly away from the democratic European mainstream, deliberately (Russia and Belarus) or less deliberately (Moldova and Ukraine), and there is a danger they would stay out of the area permanently, then again under the umbrella of Moscow. They are all connected to disorderly language and an identity re-evaluation and reaffirmation within international environment. As they are still transitional, post-communist, post-Soviet and post-imperial countries, not only their ability to end the internal transformation is undermined, but also their internal stability, which makes their secure future uncertain in a lot of ways. The Kremlin still manipulates with Russophobia which produces Russophilia within the post-Soviet space, while it also increases renewed fears of the West (Грюнер, op. cit.).

with the status of the Ukrainian language in the post-Soviet space towards Russian, which retained certain inertia in Ukraine. Post-Soviet space still remains a terrain of structural and cultural contestation, not simply of political and moral struggle. While western post-communist countries' identity has largely been defined by their Latin heritage in spite of the communist rule in the second half of the 20th century, the Russian interlude in the former Soviet state still attracts Ukraine to the East, among other tools, through the Russian language. Hence, personal cosmologies, emotional and symbolic ties transcend the rigid contemporary state boundaries. This reality serves as a possible common denominator of most problems or gateways of the language "question" and that is the basis for questionable identity issues in Ukraine. Such a domestic situation, among other reasons, minimizes the possibility of Ukraine in the future to connect with the European democratic world, in which, among other things, the successful way to build and protect the identity and uniqueness of tolerance and respect for diversity is crucial.

Comparing the linguistic status of national languages of other post-communist countries we could see similarities in the evolution of language issues after leaving the frame in which totalitarian communist type prevails. These similarities are most strongly pronounced with the European post-Soviet countries, where the problem persists of a linguistic revaluation of the national language and re-identification of own cultural and social characteristics. There are certain causes of this condition, which is the common denominator of the continuity of imperial or colonial policy towards Ukraine, which has traditionally been reduced to an inferior status, and affected by previously created stereotypes about the inferiority of all national languages to Russian. In Ukraine, despite its independence and previous governments' modest attempt to affirm the Ukrainian language in Ukraine, we are witnessing the perpetuation of complexity of identity and a social status stalemate. The Ukraine's further socio-political division cannot be excluded, as a current situation indicates a reasonable possibility of continuing fluctuations in Ukraine's internal domain, in the gap between authoritarianism and democracy. Lasting disagreement, complexity and questionable Ukrainian language and culture, thus national identity in Ukraine contribute to the form of creeping and latent crisis.

Therefore, it can be expected that imperial geopolitics of Russophonia were in service of manipulations aimed to lead to eternal geo-cultural orientation of the Ukrainian society and to the preservation of the Russia-centric foreign policy course of Kyiv. Thus, shared pan-Ukrainian self-identification or the stabilization of Ukrainian society cannot be expected. These facts are not stimulant for finding good solutions in the economic sense, for example, and they are in direct contrast with the least rhetorical ambitions of democracy, prosperity and independence of European Ukraine. Because of the diffusion of Ukrainian cultural identity this European state still remains situated in a gap between the West and the East.