



The Territorial-Political Situation in Southern and Eastern Macro-Districts of Ukraine in the Context of Problems of National Security

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The territorial-political differentiation of Ukraine should be studied in the context of the country's macro-districts, which differ by historical-geographical and socio-economic development, ethnic and religious composition of the population, as these factors are crucial in differentiating political and geographical sentiments in Ukraine [2, P. 20]. While the territorial-political situation in each of the 12 macro-districts, which manifests itself first of all in regional peculiarities of geopolitical consciousness and electoral and political activity of the population, due to internal instability and external destructive influences, is quite complicated, in southern and eastern macro-districts (Odesa (Odesa region), Central Black Sea (Mykolaiv and Kherson regions), Dnieper-Kharkiv (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia and Kharkiv regions), Donetsk (Donetsk and Luhansk regions), Crimean (the Crimea) tendencies of its development are extremely threatening and directly are one of the main problems of national security.

So, from the point of view of the priority of historical-geographical and ethnogeographical preconditions for the formation of geopolitical consciousness, and therefore of the political activity of the population of different parts of Ukraine, in the methodology of determining the main features of the territorial and political situation in each of the aforementioned macro-districts, we will focus on the following: a) the degree of historical ties with the national political movement; b) the main ethnic and cultural prerequisites of the political situation; c) politically significant socio-economic specifics; d) characteristics of geopolitical awareness and electoral-political activity in the context of problems of the country's territorial and political integrity.

Very important for balancing the political situation in Ukraine is **Dnieper-Kharkiv macro-district (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhya, Kharkiv regions)**, which is one of the leaders of economic development and a “donor” to the state budget. Its significant historical and geographical features are the later, as compared with the central districts, mass settlement (since the seventeenth century). This macro-district in many aspects is tightly connected to the all-Ukraine cultural and political movement, most of all – in the history of the Cossacks (Zaporizhzhya and Sloboda ones). It is also important that the city of Kharkiv and Kharkiv region were one of the epicenters of Ukrainian cultural development in the first half of

Dnieper-Kharkiv Macro-District

(Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhya, Kharkiv regions)



One of the leaders of economic development and a "donor" to the state budget

The main features:

- It is tightly connected to the history of **Cossacks**;
- **the epicenters of Ukrainian cultural development** in the first half of the 19th century and in 1920s of the 20th century;
- Kharkiv was **the first capital** of the Ukrainian SSR;
- a big role of **industrialization**;
- the level of **urbanization** (about 80 %) is among the highest;
- a large **financial-industrial groups**, whose owners are alienated from the Ukrainian culture;
- powerful political and economic groups are **openly anti-Ukrainian**;
- ethnic **Ukrainians** — 73 %;
- the native **Ukrainian language** — about 56 %;
- ethnic **Russians** — over 21 %;
- the population with **Russian as their native language** — almost 40 %
- a large **Russian-speaking city** — a **Ukrainian-speaking rural area**;
- most of the population belongs to the **UOC (MP)**

Taking into consideration the complicated political and geographical position of this macro-district, Russia can inspire conflict situations, especially in Kharkiv.



the nineteenth century and in 1920s of twenty century, when this city was the first capital of the Ukrainian SSR. At the same time, during the Ukrainian revolution of 1917-1920, Kharkiv and Kryvorizhzhya turned into the epicenters of the alternative to Ukrainian state-building competition, puppet Russian-Bolshevik geopolitical projects (in the form of so-called Soviet republics) which fact can be used today by separatist propaganda.

Characteristic feature of a macro-district is a big role of industrialization in processes of socio-economic development, and accordingly — of migrations in the formation of the urban population. The level of urbanization (about 80 %) is among the highest in Ukraine. A controversial feature of the economic and political development of a macro-district is the formation of large financial-industrial groups, whose owners are alienated from the Ukrainian culture, although the pro-Ukrainian vector is still predominant in their geopolitical orientations. At the same time,

first of all in Kharkiv, are concentrated openly anti-Ukrainian powerful political and economic groups.

Despite the significant ethnic Ukrainians' predominance (73 %), the proportion of the population with the native Ukrainian language is considerably lower (about 56 %). Given the significant influx of migrants in the process of the industrial development of the district, ethnic Russians make over 21 % of the population, and even higher is the proportion of the population with Russian as their native language (almost 40 %) (The State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2003). The language and geographical situation is characterized by a bipolar model: a large Russian-speaking city — a Ukrainian-speaking rural area. Ukrainian cultural and political identification does not contribute to the fact that most of the population belongs to the UOC (MP) (Dnistriansky 2006).

The citizens are not too active in the elections. The electorate is potentially ready to vote for influential Ukrainian liberal-democratic and centrist forces,

especially if supported by the local business elite (over 40 %) and the administrative factor. Ukrainian national-democratic parties today can be supported by no more than 20 % of voters. The potential voters for communist and pro-Russian political forces make no less than 20 %.

Geopolitically, the population is mainly for the development of Ukraine as an independent state, but often in the form of the Soviet vision of the Ukrainian statehood. Quite common are autonomist and pro-Russian sentiments, combined with the ideas of restoration of the USSR. Quite notable are Soviet mentality and political nihilism. State-territorial patriotism is based on the priority of the economic component of the vision of the state interests. Taking into consideration the complicated political and geographical position of this macro-district, Russia can inspire conflict situations, especially in Kharkiv.


Among the southern and eastern macro-districts, the least politically problematic is the situation in **the**


Central Black Sea macro-district (Mykolaiv and Kherson regions). The mass settlement of the area, which began in the late 18th century, had been preceded by a long period of dominance of nomadic and semi-nomadic cultures, and from the 15th century — of the Crimean Khanate. The district used to be influenced by Zaporizhzhya Cossacks, was involved in the political movement for independence of Ukraine in 1917-1920.

Although this macro-district has long established itself as an important part of the indigenous ethnic Ukrainian massif (ethnic Ukrainians make over 81 %), the proportion of the population with the native Ukrainian language is much lower (less than 70 %). Ethnic Russians form the largest ethnic group (about 17 %) and are concentrated mainly in urban areas (The State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2003). In religious and confessional structure of the population — the UOC (MP) prevails. Relatively higher than in central and western macro-districts, is the number of Protestants.

The Central Black Sea Macro-District

(Mykolaiv and Kherson regions)






It is the least politically problematic

Unlike the Dnieper-Kharkiv macro-district, the concentrations of pro-Russian political forces is lower here. The likelihood of serious internal territorial and political conflicts in the macro-district is low.


The main features:

- the mass settlement of the area, dominance of **nomadic and semi-nomadic** cultures, and from the 15th century — of **the Crimean Khanate**;
- ethnic **Ukrainians** — over 81 %, ethnic **Russians** — about 17 %;
- in religious and confessional structure of the population prevails **the UOC (MP)**;
- an average level of economic development, the great potential of **agricultural business and water transport**;
- significant **influence of administrative resources and local business elites** on the political mentality and citizens' activity;
- the level of support for Ukrainian national-democratic parties — up to 25 %, the Communist and pro-Russian ones — up to 15 %;




Odesa Macro-District

(Odesa region)



Political and geographical situation of the district was difficult because of its being near the Trans-Dniester conflict and border conflicts with Romania and Moldova



The main features:

- the territory of the region was in the **epicenter of the struggle for Ukrainian statehood** in 1917-1920;
- however, Ukrainian cultural and political components are represented **inadequately**;
- the population with **Russian** as the native language prevails in Odesa and Southern Bessarabia;
- a multi-religious composition of the population, the **UOCs (MP)** make majority and a significant number of Protestants;
- its **transport and transit potential** is strategically important;
- a **broad range of ideological sympathies**: from liberal democratic to communist-pro-Russian

There are a foundation for promoting large-scale Russian geopolitical projects ("Novorossia", "Russian World") and local ones ("Southern Bessarabia" and "Gagauzia"), which can cause various conflicts

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Today the Central Black Sea macro-district has an average level of economic development, while the economic and geographical situation in general has no reason to become a catalyst for any political-geographic processes. It is especially important today to use the great potential of agricultural business and water transport in order to strengthen the national and regional interests.

As for the political mentality and activity, the Central Black Sea macro-district has much in common with the Dnieper-Kharkiv one. This is also true about electoral activity of citizens, which is slightly lower than the average in Ukraine and about significant influence of administrative resources and local business elites, with whose support the electorate is ready in its majority to vote for centrist political forces, and about manifestations of Soviet mentality. But the level of support for Ukrainian national-democratic parties can be slightly higher (25 %) while for the Communist and pro-Russian ones – it is lower (15 %). Unlike the

Dnieper-Kharkiv macro-district, the concentrations of pro-Russian political forces is lower here. The likelihood of serious internal territorial and political conflicts in the macro-district is low, even taking into consideration the fact that the Russian occupation of the Crimea has dramatically worsened its political and geographical position.

From historical and geographical point of view, **Odesa macro-district (Odesa region)** has much in common with the Central Black Sea one (both, in the ethno-political situation in ancient times and in the Middle Ages, and in mass settlement since the end of the 18th century). But there is also different. In particular, the formation of the ethnic composition of the population was significantly affected by the policy of encouraging foreign immigration led by the government of the Russian Empire, and which largely defined the greater ethnic diversity of the region. In the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, in Odesa, various branches of the Ukrainian

political and cultural organizations conducted their active cultural and political activities. A number of well-known Ukrainian historical figures conducted an active cultural and political activity here. The territory of the region was in the epicenter of the struggle for Ukrainian statehood in 1917-1920. However, in general, in the created by media historical and cultural image of Odesa, Ukrainian cultural and political components are represented inadequately, and this adversely affects the geopolitical consciousness of the population of the city and the region.


Separating the politically significant ethno-cultural and economic background, we should remember that the most ethnically poly-areal historic district of Ukraine – South Bessarabia is situated in Odesa region. The share of ethnic Ukrainians in the region is 62.8 %, of ethnic Russians – 20.7 %, of Bulgarians – 6.1 %, of Moldovans – 5.0 %. The population with Ukrainian as the native language is only a relative majority (46.3 %). In Odesa and Southern Bessarabia the population with

Russian as the native language prevails (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2003). The macro-district is also characterized by a multi-religious composition of the population, where the UOCs (MP) make majority and there is a significant number of Protestants and atheists. Under the auspices of the local episcopate of the UOC (MP), the region has a number of openly anti-Ukrainian religious and political centers. Today, Odesa macro-district's transport and transit potential is strategically important for the whole country. But in the socio-economic aspect it develops unevenly, first of all, its central and peripheral agglomeration areas, and this is not contributing to the all-Ukraine political identity.

Political and geographical situation of the district from the very beginning of independence Ukraine was difficult because of its being near the Trans-Dniester conflict and border conflicts with Romania and Moldova. Russia's occupation of the Crimea further worsened the situation. The citizens' participation in the elections is also relatively low. The city of Odesa shows

Donetsk Macro-District

(Donetsk and Luhansk regions)





It is quite vulnerable region in the context of various possible manifestations of territorial and political destabilization

The main features:

- crucial for the development of this area was the development of **industry** (the Donbas in the early 20th century turned into Russia's main fuel and metallurgical base);
- **relatively low** is the level of Donetsk region's participation in the process of building up a Ukrainian State;
- in early 1918 was created the so-called **Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic** as a counterweight to Ukrainian statehood aspirations;
- as of 2011 a relatively small predominance of ethnic Ukrainians - about 57 %, ethnic Russian – over 38 %;
- the large numerical domination of the **UOC (MP)** communities;
- a growing number of **unprofitable** (subsidized) enterprises and **depressed cities** and as a result – **the socially disgruntled population**;
- the prevailing seeing Ukraine as a part of the Soviet empire, the level of Ukrainian patriotism is **relatively low**

Due to the Donetsk macro-district's weak ties with the Ukrainian statehood idea, in the spring of 2014, Russia comparatively easily (based on the pro-Russian and separatist slogans (projects of "Novorossia", "DPR", "LPR")) inspired a territorial and political conflict





a broad range of ideological sympathies: from liberal democratic to communist-pro-Russian ones and their share greatly depends on the influence of local leaders and administrative resources. Ukrainian national-democratic forces in the region have been supported by not more than 20 % of voters. There are ideological and ethnic and political foundation for promoting large-scale Russian geopolitical projects (“Novorossia”, “Russian World”) and local ones (“Southern Bessarabia” and “Gagauzia”), which can cause various conflicts.

Donetsk (Donetsk and Luhansk regions) macro-district from the very beginning had been quite vulnerable in the context of various possible manifestations of territorial and political destabilization. This is due to its historical and geographical as well cultural and geographical prerequisites. Despite the fact that the territory of Donetsk region in the 17th and 18th centuries entered the area of prevailing Ukrainian settlement, and the beginnings of its mass settlement are related to the history of the Ukrainian Cossacks, unlike other areas, crucial for the development of this area was the development of industry (the Donbas in the early 20th century turned into Russia's main fuel and metallurgical base), which largely leveled the Ukrainian cultural face not only of the cities of Donetsk region, but also of workers' towns and the surrounding rural territories. Similarly relatively low was the level of Donetsk region's participation in the process of building up a Ukrainian State in the first half of the 20th century. Russian Bolsheviks even managed to inspire the creation here in early 1918 of the so-called Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic as a counterweight to Ukrainian statehood aspirations. Being a part of the USSR helped little to the formation of Ukrainian identity, although the area was home to a number of prominent figures of the Ukrainian literature and culture.

All-Ukrainian population census of 2001 recorded a relatively small predominance of ethnic Ukrainians (about 57 %), mainly thanks to the northern part of the region, but the vast majority of the population spoke Russian as their native language (over 72 %). At that time, the share of ethnic Russians in the district was quite high (over 38 %) (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2003). In some districts and cities of the southeastern part, ethnic Russians made majority at the moment of the census. The large numerical domination of the UOC (MP) communities does not add to the macro-district's Ukrainian cultural identification either (Dnistriansky 2006).

Significant influence on the formation of the political situation and geopolitical consciousness had and has the specifics of the economic situation of the macro-district. In particular, because of the relatively high level of development of heavy industry, Donetsk region has the highest in Ukraine degree of urbanization of the population (90 %) and a high rate of its depopulation. Having some strategically important for the whole Ukraine industries, Donetsk region has had a growing number of unprofitable (subsidized) enterprises and depressed cities and as a result – the socially disgruntled population. As a result of non-transparent economic relations in 1990s, large financial and industrial groups were formed in the region, which almost completely took control of political life of Donetsk region and claimed their leading position in Ukraine. Because of this, the strong regional identity kept growing against the background of the Soviet political mentality. Also crucial was the prevailing political support to local projects, as well as to communist and marginally-pro-Russian political forces, if they positioned themselves as “our-local”. The electorate of Ukrainian national democratic forces did not exceed 12 %. Another important feature of the geopolitical conscience of the population is the prevailing seeing Ukraine as a part of the Soviet empire. The level of Ukrainian patriotism is relatively low, and loyalty to the state is determined by economic and administrative-status interests.

Due to the Donetsk macro-district's weak ties with the Ukrainian statehood idea, in the spring of 2014, Russia comparatively easily (based on the pro-Russian and separatist slogans (projects of “Novorossia”, “DPR”, “LPR”)) inspired a territorial and political conflict whose victims, according to the UN, have become more than 8000 people, and about 1 million residents left the region. As of the end of 2015, Ukraine has not been controlling the situation in more than a third of the territory of the macro-district, including in regional centers and some major urban complexes (Donetsk-Makiyivka, Horlivka, Yenakiyev, Luhansk). As a result of the Minsk Agreements (February, 2015), we succeeded in de-escalation of the conflict, but integration of the occupied territories into Ukraine is very problematic both because of Russia's aggressive position, and due to the antagonistic sentiment towards Ukraine generated by media. Therefore, the most predictable option for the development of the political situation in the nearest future is its transformation into a frozen conflict.

The Crimean Macro-District (the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea)



Annexed by Russia.
It is the only region in Ukraine where ethnic Ukrainians were a minority (24.3 %), while ethnic Russians — a majority (58.3 %)

The majority of Crimea's population supports the region's current status of a Russian province. The chances for its geopolitical reorientation in favor of Ukraine are little. Possible constitutional definition of this region by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as a national Crimean Tatar autonomy

The main features:

- a **weak support** for an independent state-political development of Ukraine;
- **dependence** on the infrastructure of the mainland Ukraine (transport, water, electricity);
- the historical and cultural connectedness with Ukraine **never reached mass consciousness**;
- the significant stratum of **former military and party pension**, the wide environment of the **Black Sea Fleet**;
- pro-Ukrainian political attitudes are most pronounced among **Crimean Tatars**;
- the ethnic Ukrainian population in general is very **much assimilated and poorly organized**

Infographics  BINTEL

The Crimean macro-district (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) today is annexed by Russia, despite the international condemnation of such actions. The formal reason of the annexation allegedly was protection of the ethnic Russian population (the Crimea is the only region in Ukraine where ethnic Ukrainians according to the census in 2001 were a minority (24.3%), while ethnic Russians are a majority (58.3 %) (The State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2003), although there was no real threat for them in Ukraine. Despite the fact that the majority of the Crimean macro-district in 1991 voted for Ukraine's independence, the region has always shown a weak support for an independent state-political development of Ukraine, even though the Peninsula greatly depends on the infrastructure of the mainland Ukraine (transport, water, electricity). The established in the Soviet consciousness stereotypes about the alleged special heroic deeds of the residents of the Crimea in the Russian and Soviet history, became one of the important pillars of Soviet and Russian patriotism

and the Russian-imperial geopolitical consciousness. At the same time, the Peninsula's historical and cultural connectedness with Ukraine in general, having found no information and political support, never reached mass consciousness. The demographic support for pro-Russian sentiments was the significant stratum of former military and party pensioners and the wide environment of the Black Sea Fleet. Since the very beginning of Ukraine's independence, a well-organized and funded network of anti-Ukrainian political organizations has been working in the Peninsula.

The central Ukrainian government did not even try to expand the historical and cultural reasons for the Crimea's closer ties with the mainland, relying only on economic and career interests of various influential groups of the Crimea. Ethno-culturally, pro-Ukrainian political attitudes were most pronounced among the Crimean Tatars deported from the Peninsula in 1944. Since independence of Ukraine, which supported the Crimean Tatars' returning to their homeland, their

number has increased more than six times and has reached 12 % of the population. In the North of the Crimea, the relative majority of the population is Ukrainians, but the ethnic Ukrainian population in general is very much assimilated and poorly organized. Therefore, the Ukrainian national-democratic forces supported inter alia by the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar people, at the parliamentary elections received 15 % votes.

Obviously, today, despite various frustrations, the majority of the Crimea's population, mobilized by Russia's great-power propaganda, supports the region's current status of a Russian province. The chances for its geopolitical reorientation in favor of Ukraine are little. Only a sharp deterioration in the socio-economic situation of the region could change the political moods. Given the fact that among the most organized groups of the population, the most pro-Ukrainian-minded are the Crimean Tatars, their position could strengthen the constitutional definition of this region by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as a national the Crimean Tatar autonomy.

Finally, let's point out that the specific features of political relations in southern and eastern macro-districts of Ukraine, and their complications at the beginning of the 19th century were caused by both,

some objective historical and cultural conditions and by the absence of effective internal Ukrainian geopolitics in the 1990s, as well as by Russia's targeted large-scale geopolitical pressure. Along with external factors, no less a threat of further political developments in these macro-districts is insufficient establishment of national political identity against the background of the preserved Soviet identity, wide spread of Russian geopolitical projects and the extensive network of anti-Ukrainian political centers. The reintegration of the occupied territories into Ukraine is possible only through peaceful means as a result of consolidation of the Ukrainian society, international pressure, changes in the socio-political and economic situation in Russia.

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