

## **FEATURES OF THEORIZATION, VERIFICATION AND STRUCTURING OF REGIONALISM AS A POSSIBLE BASIS FOR THE POLITICIZATION OF ETHNICITY IN UKRAINE IN 1991-2013 AND BEFORE THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR**

The article analyzes the features of theorization, verification and structuring of regionalism and regionalization as a possible basis for politicization of ethnicity in Ukraine in 1991-2013, i.e. before the Russian-Ukrainian war, in particular in its local phase since 2014 and in large-scale phase since 2022. This is done at the background of the statement that aggressive Russia has always proceeded from the ideological and propagandistic (including instilled in Ukraine) assumption that Ukraine is not a united and consolidated country, because it has historically been characterized by regionalism and regionalization, which Russia expects should were the basis for the politicization of ethnicity and the ethnolinguistic issue in Ukraine in 1991-2013. However, as the political and military practice of 2014-2022 showed, this calculation turned out to be largely erroneous and incomparable with the electoral, religious, linguistic, ethnic and other socio-political cleavages that historically characterized (and significantly were overestimated by Russia) post-Soviet Ukraine. To demonstrate this, various approaches to understanding and organizing regionalism in Ukraine were proposed, including two-component, four-component, eight-component, etc., each of which was structured and characterized. The author argued that any attempt to use the idea of regionalization of Ukraine – especially in its twofold logic (divided into “West” and “East” or the Right Bank and the Left Bank relative to the Dnipro River) – in the real socio-political process in this country, but especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 and intensified on a large scale in 2022, failed. However, this does not mean that the issue of regionalism and regionalization in Ukraine should not be continued and developed, but in a completely different way and direction, especially in the context of European integration of this country.

*Keywords: region, regionalism, regionalization, West, East, language, ethnicity, war, Russia, Ukraine.*

### **Cechy teoretyzacji, weryfikacji i strukturyzacji regionalizmu jako możliwa podstawa polityki etniczności na Ukrainie w latach 1991-2013 i przed wojną rosyjsko-ukraińską**

Artykuł analizuje cechy teoretyzowania, weryfikacji jako możliwej podstawy upolitycznienia etniczności na Ukrainie w latach 1991-2013, czyli przed wojną rosyjsko-ukraińską,

w szczególności w jej fazie lokalnej z 2014 roku oraz na dużą skalę od 2022 roku. Czyniono to na tle stwierdzenia, że agresywna Rosja zawsze wychodziła z ideologicznego i propagandowego (w tym zasadzonego na Ukrainie) założenia, że państwo to nie jest zjednoczone i skonsolidowane, bo było historycznie charakteryzujące się regionalizmem i regionalizacją, które według oczekiwań Rosji powinny być podstawą upolitycznienia etniczności i etnolingwistycznej kwestii Ukrainy w latach 1991-2013. Jednak, jak pokazuje praktyka polityczna i wojskowa lat 2014-2022, kalkulacja ta okazała się w większości błędna i nie do pogodzenia z wyborczymi, religijnymi, językowymi, etnicznymi i innymi podziałami sociopolitycznymi które byli właściwi historycznie postsowiecką Ukrainie (w Rosji znacznie przeszacowane). Aby to pokazać, proponuje się różne podejścia do rozumienia i porządkowania regionalizmu na Ukrainie, w tym dwusylabowe, czterosylabowe, ośmiosylabowe itd., z których każde jest ustrukturyzowane i scharakteryzowane. Twierdzi się, że wszelkie próby wykorzystania idei regionalizacji Ukrainy – przede wszystkim w jej dwusylabowej logice (z podziałem na „Zachód” i „Wschód” lub na prawy i lewy brzeg względem Dniepru) – w realnym procesie społeczno-politycznym w tym państwie, ale zwłaszcza w kontekście wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej, która rozpoczęła się w 2014 roku i na dużą skalę nasiliła się w 2022 roku, nie powiodła się. Co prawda wcale nie oznacza to, że problemy regionalizmu i regionalizacji na Ukrainie nie muszą być kontynuowane i rozwijane, ale w zupełnie innym kierunku i kontekście, zwłaszcza w planie integracji europejskiej tego kraju.

*Słowa kluczowe: region, regionalizm, regionalizacja, Zachód, Wschód, język, etniczność, wojna, Rosja, Ukraina.*

## **ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ТЕОРЕТИЗАЦІЇ, ВЕРИФІКАЦІЇ ТА СТРУКТУРИЗАЦІЇ РЕГІОНАЛІЗМУ ЯК МОЖЛИВОЇ ПІДСТАВИ ПОЛІТИЗАЦІЇ ЕТНІЧНОСТІ В УКРАЇНІ В 1991-2013 РОКАХ І ПЕРЕД РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ ВІЙНОЮ**

У статті проаналізовано особливості теоретизації, верифікації і структуризації регіоналізму та регіоналізації як можливої підстави політизації етнічності в Україні в 1991-2013 роках, тобто перед російсько-українською війною, зокрема її локальною фазою з 2014 р. і широкомасштабною фазою з 2022 р. Це зроблено на тлі констатації, що агресивна Росія завжди виходила з ідеологізованого та пропагандистського (в тому числі насадженого в Україні) припущення, що ця держава не є єдиною і консолідованою, адже вона історично характеризувалась регіоналізмом і регіоналізацією, які, згідно із очікуваннями Росії, повинні були виступати підставою політизації етнічності та етнотомного питання України в 1991-2013 рр. Однак, як продемонструвала політична і військова практика 2014-2022 рр., цей розрахунок виявився переважною мірою хибним та

не зіставимим з електоральними, релігійними, мовними, етнічними й іншими суспільно-політичними поділами, які історично характеризували (й відчутно переоцінювались у Росії) пострадянську Україну. Для демонстрування цього запропоновано різні підходи до розуміння і впорядкування регіоналізму в Україні, зокрема двоскладовий, чотирикладовий, восьмикладовий тощо, кожний із яких структурізовано та охарактеризовано. Аргументовано, що будь-які спроби використати ідею регіоналізації України – передусім в її двоскладовій логіці (із поділом на «Захід» та «Схід» або на Правобережжя і лівобережжя відносно Дніпра) – у реальному суспільно-політичному процесі в цій державі, однак особливо в контексті російсько-української війни, що почалась в 2014 р., а широкомасштабно інтенсифікувалась у 2022 р., провалились. Хоча це зовсім не означає, що проблематику регіоналізму та регіоналізації в Україні не потрібно продовжувати та розвивати, однак зовсім в іншому ключі і напрямі, особливо у контексті євроінтеграції цієї держави.

***Ключові слова:** регіон, регіоналізм, регіоналізація, Захід, Схід, мова, етнічність, війна, Росія, Україна.*

In February 2014, the local Russian-Ukrainian war began, which was marked by the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the occupation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine (with the subsequent creation of pseudo-republics of the same name) by terrorist groups and Russian armed forces. During 2014-2022, this war continued to be local and hybrid. However, the situation changed dramatically in February 2022, when after the illegal and illegal (in terms of international law) recognition of the sovereignty of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and the declared Russian aggression against Ukraine, the local war in eastern Ukraine was transformed into a large-scale war, in which to varying degrees the entire territory of sovereign Ukraine was involved. It is noteworthy that in terms of strategic planning of expected steps and ideas about the course of this war – in any stage and form, i.e. before and after 2022 – aggressive Russia has always proceeded from ideological and propagandistic (including decades planted in Ukraine) assumption, that Ukraine is not united and consolidated neither politically, nor ethnically, nor linguistically, nor religiously, nor culturally, etc., since historically, at least in the period from independence to the pre-war period, it was characterized by regionalism and regionalization, which, according to the same plans and expectations of Russia, should have been the basis for politicization of ethnicity and ethno linguistic issues in Ukraine in 1991-2013. However, as the political and military practice of 2014-2022 showed, this calculation turned out to be largely erroneous and incomparable with the electoral, religious, linguistic, ethnic and other socio-political divisions that historically characterized (and significantly overestimated in Russia) post-Soviet Ukraine. After all, only in a small part of Ukraine, and quite conditionally and artificially – in particular in the Crimea

and Donbas – the expected regionalization and multifaceted regionalism, despite their partial relevance and validity, worked in the context of politicization of ethnicity and ethno linguistics as factors expected by Russia's military policy success in Ukraine. Accordingly, this issue is the focus of this scientific article, but primarily in retrospect, in particular on clarifying and streamlining the features of theorization, verification and structuring of regionalism as an expected or hypothetical basis for politicization of ethnicity and ethno linguistic issues in Ukraine in 1991-2013, that is, in the period before the Russian-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 and became large-scale and geopolitical in 2022.

In general, it should be noted that the region as a certain formed territorial or even territorial-administrative unit with natural, economic, cultural and other features, with the existing (but not necessarily developed) regional identity of the population may have internal national or transnational borders, to play a certain role of integration or disintegration and to be the embodiment of the principles of subsidiarity and decentralization of governance, and thus on this basis to be used by separatists and irredentists to split a country. Accordingly, regionalism and regionalization as a justification and implementation of these contradictory functions of the region must be considered as ambivalent phenomena, the content of which varies depending on place and time<sup>1</sup>.

Due to this, various domestic regional differences have long been a central topic of research in European and world politics, including politics in countries such as Ukraine<sup>2</sup>. However, recognizing the fact that Ukraine at various times has needed and still needs to develop and apply European and global concepts of the region, regionalism and regionalization as a means of decentralization and deconcentration of power, as well as increasing the efficiency of government, in the presented scientific article the object of study is a different type and meaning of regionalism – as such a division of the state into parts, which under certain specific conditions is an obstacle to forming a single political community within the state borders and carries a certain threat of socio-political unity and possible disintegration. The fact is that in Ukraine in the pre-war period, i.e. during 1991-2013, various regional differences revealed powerful predictors of mass socio-political relations and political, in particular, electoral behavior. It follows that this country has historically developed a specific – not always the same as in European and world politics – delineation of the regional factor in the political or socio-political process, including in the context of hypothetical politicization of ethnicity as a factor of political disintegration. Although, in contrast, in the case of Ukraine, the interpretation of the region has never been and still is not consolidated, as its various theorists and practitioners have explained and explain either simply as a result of compositional effects or as regional differences in a broader form than the sum of demographic factors related to geographical divisions, etc. Accordingly, in the

<sup>1</sup> Kolodii A., *Ukrainskyi rehionalizm yak stan kulturno-politychnoi poliaryzovanosti*, "AHORA" 2006, vol 3 (Ukraine – rehionalnyi vymir), s. 69-91.

<sup>2</sup> Barrington L., Herron E., *One Ukraine or Many? Regionalism in Ukraine and Its Political Consequences*, "Nationalities Papers" 2004, vol 32, nr. 1, s. 53-86.

case of Ukraine, region, regionalism and regionalization have always, at least until 2014, but mainly until 2022, had the meaning of dividing categories as a kind of explanatory variables of political or socio-political process using different regional structures and markers, on which our article will be focused in the format of retrospective analysis.

This means that in the case of regionalism and regionalization in Ukraine, the emphasis will be on the sense of the region used in that country, in particular on how the existing geographical divisions can be and have historically been controlled, managed and applied, although provided that they were inevitably supplemented by other factors, including ethno linguistic, including ethnic or national affiliation and use of language. To this end, the study will focus on the fact that in the case of Ukraine in 1991-2013, various regional positioning and mapping of regions was used, but first in the format of three basic and competing structures of regional development and regionalization in Ukraine: one with two regions, the second with four regions, and the third with eight regions (as well as certain modifications).

All of them, of course, have geographical regionalization at their core, but they impose or have previously imposed on it factors of ethno linguistic, socio-political and electoral content, etc.<sup>3</sup>, which, as a result, many theorists and practitioners have really started to take into account as probabilistic indicators of the subjectivity of ethnicity and possible political disintegration of Ukraine (which, as noted above, only partially became relevant and true against the military-political events of 2014-2022). Although, in contrast, all attempts at regionalization in Ukraine differ in that they were based on quite different preconditions for the separation of regions, including historical, socio-economic, electoral, linguistic, ethnic, demographic, etc. As a result, there was no, and still is, not single conceptual logic for interpreting regionalism in Ukraine, and the region itself has been modeled and interpreted as a “label” and an “intermediate geographical community.” This was quite profitable, both theoretically and methodologically, and practically, because in the conditions that were characteristic of Ukraine, the geographical basis of the region was justifiably explained as the basic, as geographical (but not territorial) interests have always intersected with electoral positions and even political behavior in Ukraine, although they have not been able to become fixed, and therefore prognostic. Even more, because some researchers have strongly denied the expediency of regionalization of Ukraine, in particular due to the fact that regional differences in this country have never been static, but instead, were so dynamic that they were difficult to capture<sup>4</sup>. That is why quite artificial regionalism in Ukraine blurred regional divisions in this country.

<sup>3</sup> Barrington L., Examining Rival Theories of Demographic Influences on Political Support: The Power of Regional, Ethnic, and Linguistic Divisions in Ukraine, *European Journal of Political Research* 2002, vol 41, nr. 4, s. 455-491.; Barrington L., The Geographic Component of Mass Attitudes in Ukraine, *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 1997, vol 38, nr. 10, s. 601-614.; Birch S., *Elections and Democratization in Ukraine*, Wyd. St. Martin's Press 2000.; Craumer P., Clem J., Ukraine's Emerging Electoral Geography: A Regional Analysis of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections, *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 1999, vol 40, s. 1-26.; Holdar S., Torn between East and West: The Regional Factor in Ukrainian Politics, *Post-Soviet Geography* 1995. – Vol. 36. – No. 2. – P. 112-132.; Kubiczek P., Regional Polarization in Ukraine: Public Opinion, Voting and Legislative Behavior, *Europe-Asia Studies* 2000, vol 52, s. 295-317.

<sup>4</sup> O'Loughlin J., The Regional Factor in Contemporary Ukrainian Politics: Scale, Place, Space, or Bogus Effect?, *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 2001, vol 42, nr. 1, s. 1-33.

At the same time, it is worth noting the theoretical and methodological remark that despite the basis of regions in the format of geographical understanding, they in Ukraine have always been formed on the basis of very important differences in population context, i.e. among the population. This has certainly shown theorizing that any visible regional impacts are variable if the situation among the population and in settlements and other lower levels on a geographical scale indicates variations within a broader geographical unit.

In the case of Ukraine, this has always been reflected in the fact that the patterns of local and regional levels of self-government have often demonstrated different tendencies and hypotheses to support or non-support the contradictory importance of geographical influence and regionalism in Ukraine<sup>5</sup>. In other words, the opinion that prevailed in the center of a particular isolated region and formed the conditional basis of regionalization may not coincide with the opinion in its middle or on the periphery, although this center and periphery may be population larger than the core of the conditional region. In addition, at least in 1991-2013, the situation was typical for Ukraine, when the existing political and administrative borders, on the basis of which the definition of conditional regions of the state was based, did not adequately determine the differences between the regions and their territories and population. Accordingly, regionalization in this context remained largely geographical rather than political one – except for the electoral context – and therefore could not be determined by prognostic potential in the context of other factors of regionalism and regionalization, including ethnic, linguistic, ethno linguistic, socioeconomic, religious, population / demographic and even contextual and temporal, etc<sup>6</sup>.

On the other hand, the correction of this situation served as a basis for isolating and postulating several approaches to regionalism and regionalization in Ukraine in 1991-2013, including two-component (often electoral and in the format of division into two regions of Ukraine – western and eastern, with the regions of Ukraine in a particular region in relation to the Dnieper, etc.), four-component one (in the format of mainly geographical division into four regions of Ukraine – western, central, southern and eastern), eight-component approach (primarily in terms of economic model of state development, disputes of historical experience and demographic characteristics with the division into eight regions of Ukraine), etc. Each of the proposed approaches in its manifestations had its own interpretations and forms of expression, and hence different prognostic effects, and therefore they should be considered separately and sequentially (for a summary, see Table 1).

<sup>5</sup> O'Loughlin J., The Regional Factor in Contemporary Ukrainian Politics: Scale, Place, Space, or Bogus Effect?, *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 2001, vol.42, nr. 1, s. 5.

<sup>6</sup> O'Loughlin J., The Regional Factor in Contemporary Ukrainian Politics: Scale, Place, Space, or Bogus Effect?, *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 2001, vol.42, nr. 1, s. 8; Huckfeldt R., Sprague J., *Citizens, Contexts, and Politics*, [w:] Finifter A. (ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, Wyd. American Political Science Association 1993, s. 281-304.

**Table 1.** Options for approaches to regionalization of Ukraine in relation to its regions and cities with special constitutional status (as of 1991-2013)

Regions and cities of Ukraine	Two-component approach to regionalization ( 2 regions)	Four-component approach to regionalization (four regions)	Eight-component approach to regionalization (eight regions)
Donetsk region	East	East	East
Lugansk region	East	East	East
Kharkiv region	East	East	Eastern center
Zaporizhzhya region	East	East	Eastern center
Dnipropetrovsk region	East	East	Eastern center
Crimea	East	South	Crimea
Sevastopol city	East	South	Crimea
Kherson region	East	South	South
Mykolaiv region	West	South	South
Odessa region	West	South	South
Chernihiv region	East	Center	North center
Sumt region	East	Center	North center
Poltava region	East	Center	North center
Chercasy region	West	Center	North center
Kirovograd region	West	Center	North center
Kyiv region	West	Center	North center
Kyiv city	West	Center	North center
Khmelnyski region	West	Center	West center
Zhytomyr region	West	Center	West center
Vinnysya region	West	Center	West center
Rivne region	West	West	West center
Volyn region	West	West	West center
Ivano-Frankivsk region	West	West	West
Lviv region	West	West	West
Ternopil region	West	West	West
Chernivtsi region	West	West	Southwest
Trans-Carpathian region	West	West	Southwest

Zródło: Barrington L., Herron E., *One Ukraine or Many? Regionalism in Ukraine and Its Political Consequences*, "Nationalities Papers" 2004, vol. 32, nr. 1, s. 53-86.

First of all, we need to turn to the two-pronged approach to the regionalization of Ukraine, which in the situation of the Ukrainian socio-political reality of 1991-2013 has found perhaps the greatest reflection and reflection. It is obvious that Ukraine is a large country, whose territorial parts have different historical heritage, ethnic and ethnographic attributes, as well as cultural and socio-political preferences.

At the same time, when it comes to a kind of domestic culture, then the so-called cultural regionalism (in any of its reflections – whether Ukrainian or Russian as the most common in Ukraine) during the analyzed period was perceived as the wealth of the country traditionally proud. However, when it came to differences in societal culture (social or political values, norms and forms of behavior, the language used in public activities, the content of education, mass culture, etc.), then certainly arose – both naturally and artificially, and often fueled (especially from neighboring Russia, which is quite obvious geographically and historically) fears, warnings, or even wishes about the possible separation or disintegration of Ukraine<sup>7</sup>.

At the same time, the fact that the purely theoretical commitment of certain groups of the population to different ideologies, different political forces and opposing foreign policy orientations may be the norm of democratic development, instead, externally determined – by Russian politicians and even political thought<sup>8</sup> – and often internally structured – among some political forces in Ukraine the emphasis was on their (these differences) overlap on the region's factor. It is in this context that in 1991-2013 the idea that bilateral differences in Ukraine – within two conditional regions of this country, i.e. the West and the East were often designed, disseminated and tested under certain conditions (both internal and external) capable of segmenting society as a socio-political process with possible irreconcilability in relations between the political elites of Ukraine, in particular, as representing different regions, and thus leading or capable of leading to socio-political confrontations in the future (which was largely expected by the Russian side). Moreover, visually, such fears in the case of Ukraine during 1991-2013 were by no means unfounded and possible, especially in the electoral context, although they were often exaggerated. However, in the domestic and social context, they have been significantly minimized since 2014, what was not taken into account and realized by Russia.

The socio-political significance and danger of a two-pronged approach to the regionalization of Ukraine during 1991-2013 was that scholars, publicists and politicians often insisted that among all the lines of socio-political divisions in Ukraine, the role of the “region” in such a dichotomous perception of it was decisive one. After all, both Russian and often some Ukrainian politicians and even theorists have stated that, for example, Ukrainians and Russians in Donetsk had much more in common (in views, behavior, attitudes to socially important issues and problems) than Ukrainians of Donetsk and Ukrainians of Lviv, etc. The same applied to the Russians. However, in ethno linguistic or linguistic contexts it did not work similarly, since Russian-speaking Ukrainians in Donetsk, Kyiv or Uzhhorod differed from each other in different ways in relation to different geography – in one way linguistically, in another way ethnically, and in another one electorally. Therefore, a holistic view of the consequences of such a two-component regionalization was very hard to predict and even harder to systematize, since

<sup>7</sup> Kolodii A., *Ukrainskyi rehionalizm yak stan kulturno-politychnoi poliaryzovanosti*, “AHORA” 2006, vol 3 (Ukraina – rehionalnyi vymir), s. 69-91.

<sup>8</sup> Beleckij M., Tolpygo A., *Nacional'no-kul'turnye i ideologicheskie orientacii naseleniya Ukrainy. Po dannym sociologicheskikh oprosov*, „Polis” 1998, nr. 4, s. 75.



various researchers and practitioners were divided in their assessments of the nature and depth of interregional differences along the “West-East” axis.

In particular, the biggest controversies have traditionally been over the simplest but erroneous dichotomous division of Ukraine into “East” in the format of Donbas (as a personification of the pro-Russian vector of Ukraine’s development) and “West” in the format of Galicia (as a personification of Euro-Atlantic or pro-Western vector of Ukraine), as well as their supposedly natural opposition to each other as contradistinctions and irreconcilability. Even though the rest of Ukraine fell out of such a dichotomous division into “two regions” and was in a kind of “vacuum” and “in the middle”, the idea of opposing Donbas and Galicia with a view to positioning it as a logic of disputes and irreconcilability between Western / Western. Euro-Atlantic and Eastern / pro-Russian options for Ukraine’s progress have often been “rented out” and politicized as both some politicians in Ukraine, and in general most politicians in Russia. Moreover, in order to substantiate their ideas and intentions, they almost always resorted to the creation and dissemination of various abstract constructs and identities that allegedly characterized the “West” and “East” of Ukraine in the past, currently and in the future.

It is in this context and with this intention, as some Ukrainian researchers point out<sup>9</sup>, that the logic of artificial two-component regionalization of Ukraine, especially the authorship of some Ukrainian and Russian scholars and politicians, was to distinguish “pure types” of Western or Eastern ethnic, ethno linguistic, cultural, and thus political identity in Ukraine, which should, as expected, become alternatively hostile patterns or conflict-generating components and options for the future development of this country.

This was relied on in 2014-2022, etc., but this idea was being prepared and practiced throughout the period of Ukraine’s independence. Thus, a number of efforts have been made to present the so-called “Eastern Ukrainian identity” as a kind of creoles in culture and social life, in particular with the predominance of the Russian language, inclusion primarily in the information and mass cultural and socio-political space of Russia, in Russian capital and oligarchic clans in the economy, including on the basis of the internalization of the former communist regime and the promotion of former historical myths about “Rus as the cradle of the three nations” and about “the reunification of Ukraine with Russia as an act of historical justice.” In contrast, pro-Russian politicians and ideologues have sought to portray the so-called “Western Ukrainian identity” as radical right-wing, nationalist, and ingrained in the Soviet myth of “Banderaism,” hostile to Russia, and “Eastern Ukrainian identity,” in particular because it is “shadow”, “separate”, “hostile”, “unnatural” and completely “not capitalized” socially and culturally. Accordingly,

<sup>9</sup> Kolodii A., Ukrainskiy rehionalizm yak stan kulturno-politychnoi poliaryzovanosti, „*AHORA*” 2006, vol 3 (Ukraina – rehionalnyi vymir), s. 69-91.; Kolodii A., *Radianska identychnist ta yii nosii v nezalezhnii Ukraini*, Konferentsiia dlia ukraïnskyykh vypusknyykh prohran naukovoho stazhuvannia u SSHA “Ukraina v suchasnomu sviiti. Sotsialni, etnichni i kulturni aspekty hlobalizatsii ta Ukraina” (Yalta, 12-15 veresnia 2002 r.), s. 36-37.; Riabchuk M., *Dvi Ukraïny: Realni mezbi, virtualni viiny*, Wyd. Krytyka 2003.; Hrytsak Y., *National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of Lviv and Donetsk*, [w:] Gitelman Z., Hajda L., Himka J.-P., Solchanyk R. (eds.), *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk*, Wyd. Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute 2000, s. 263-281.

due to the artificial opposition of these two “identities”, the emphasis was on the fact that they are incompatible, and therefore should be postulated and postulated as divergent actors of regionalization and regional behavior, even within a formally united and sovereign Ukraine.

On the other hand, Ukrainian theorists and practitioners have also often discussed the logic of Ukraine’s dichotomous regional division into West and East, but have done so for a completely different purpose and often denied Russian / anti-Ukrainian narratives, after all, they almost never resorted to the construct of “two Ukraines”, despite the existing ethno-national, ethno linguistic, linguistic and regional differences between different parts of sovereign Ukraine. Instead, they assumed that the opposition of the conditional East and West is mostly purely linguistic, not ethno linguistic or ideological, and insisted that the ethno linguistic and socio-political basis of dichotomous regionalization of Ukraine is harmful and dangerous in the context of expediency and need for Ukrainian civil nation in this country<sup>10</sup>.

At the same time, Ukrainian researchers have never denied binary, at least virtual, linguistic and electoral, regionalism in Ukraine, but in a much broader format than the opposition of Galicia and Donbas. Instead, they strongly suggested politicizing the subject and avoiding any political speculation on the subject as having the potential (successfully used by Russia and pro-Russian thought in Ukraine) to the ideologization of “disunity”.

Nevertheless, most Ukrainian and Western researchers in one way or another turned to the very figurative regionalization of Ukraine in two parts, although they based such regionalization on completely different reasons, including political-electoral and linguistic, although they did not deny that such a situation led to the polarization and strengthening of potential conditions of confrontation, although almost primarily of a national or interethnic nature. Particularly influential in this context was the scientific position expressed by S. Huntington<sup>11</sup> on the passage of the line of civilization division between Western (Catholic-Protestant) and Eastern (Byzantine-Orthodox) cultures on the territory of Ukraine, which was also adopted by Russian and pro-Russian forces and intellectuals. Although, as confirmed by the political history of Ukraine, mainly after 2014, it also turned out to be not entirely true, after all, the so-called Eastern (Byzantine-Orthodox) culture in Ukraine is also heterogeneous in the context of its involvement or commitment to one or another vector of socio-political development and regionalization in this country, which became apparent after the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

In contrast, since the end of the 20th century, many Ukrainian and Western researchers have sought to theoretically and methodologically and empirically overcome the narratives and stereotypes of a two-pronged approach to the regionalization of Ukraine as politicized and not very relevant. Instead, they resorted to developing other options for understanding regional

<sup>10</sup> Pohorila N., *Rehionalni podily v Ukraini: kilka zaperechen proty dykhotomii „Skhid-Zakhid“*, »Nezaleznyi internet-resurs „Dialoh“»-29.06.2004.; Riabchuk M., *Dvi Ukrainy: Realni mezhi, virtualni viiny*, Wyd. Krytyka 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Huntington S., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Wyd. Simon and Schuster 1997, s. 138, 165.

divisions and regionalism in Ukraine, which partially or completely overturned the approach mentioned above. After all, these options were based on different and various causal links, including not only linguistic, political or socio-political, but also economic, social, territorial, demographic, etc. It is in this context that the four-component or sometimes five-component approach to regionalism and regionalization in Ukraine has found its place, which distinguishes such regions of the country as the Center (actually the North Center), West, East and South<sup>12</sup>. If, in addition, Crimea was singled out as a separate region, a six-part approach to regionalism in Ukraine was formed. However, one way or another, this approach was completely different from the two-component one, because it, giving a more or less concrete picture of regional peculiarities and differences in Ukraine, leveled and still levels the factor of polarization in the state. Especially since many theorists generally insist on the vagueness or conditionality of regional borders and divisions in Ukraine, after all, if we try to attach importance to all the differences and variations, then even the division of Ukraine into as many regions as there are administrative-territorial units of the highest level, oblasts, will not be enough for the analysis<sup>13</sup>.

There is another logic in the case of the eight-component approach to regionalization in Ukraine, which in 1991-2013 was used primarily by Western scholars. The main rationale for the approach from the eight regions of Ukraine is that for two and four regions there are not enough differences between territories with different historical, socio-economic and demographic characteristics. In addition, the definition of eight regions may not fully divide Ukraine in the context of the definition of social or political identity, as it most likely describes the historical and geographical determinants of regionalization in this country. (see table 1). Perhaps the main emphasis in this context is on the inappropriateness of separating the “eastern” region as monolithic within the four-component approach, not to mention the two-component approach. The main thing is that Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhia oblasts are so different in their four-component approach that it is inappropriate to single them out as one conditional region, but they need to be divided into two parts. At the turn of the century, most Western researchers believed that the eastern regions of Ukraine were exclusively Donetsk and Luhansk, which are on the border with Russia were maximally urbanized, industrial and Russian-speaking than all other areas under the four-component approach<sup>14</sup>. In addition, in these two oblasts of Ukraine in 1991-2013 there were the most ethnic Russians (excluding Crimea), and their relative share was more than half of the total population in each of the oblasts (at

<sup>12</sup> Kuzio T., The National Factor in Ukraine's Quadruple Transition, *“Contemporary Politics”* 2000, vol 6, nr. 2, s. 147-149; Hrytsak Y., *National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of Lviv and Donetsk*, [w:] Gitelman Z., Hajda L., Himka J.-P., Solchanyk R. (eds.), *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk*, Wyd. Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute 2000, s. 276.

<sup>13</sup> Barrington L., Examining Rival Theories of Demographic Influences on Political Support: The Power of Regional, Ethnic, and Linguistic Divisions in Ukraine, *“European Journal of Political Research”* 2002, vol 41, nr. 4, s. 455-491.; Pohorila N., Rehionalni podily v Ukraini: kilka zaperechen proty dykhotomii „Skhid-Zakhid”, *“Nezalezbnyi internet-resurs „Dialoh”* 29.06.2004.

<sup>14</sup> Hesli V., Public Support for the Devolution of Power in Ukraine: Regional Patterns, *“Europe-Asia Studies”* 1995, vol 47, nr. 1, s. 19-21.

least according to the 1989 census of Ukraine)<sup>15</sup>. A similar logic of delimitation of regions was used for the rest of Ukraine, on the basis of which eight regions of the country were identified, including East, East Center, Crimea, South, North Center, West Center, West and Southwest. In general, this logic of regionalization of Ukraine sought to divert socio-political discourse from the issue of ethnic or ethno linguistic nature, and therefore should be interpreted as more natural and historically determined. In other words, the emphasis was on the fact that the topic of regionalization was less filled and conditioned by ethnic or ethno linguistic stereotypes<sup>16</sup>.

However, the attempts to regionalize Ukraine in 1991-2013 were not exhaustive, as they were supplemented by other interpretations and approaches. For example, Ukrainian researcher A. Kolodiy<sup>17</sup>, studying Soviet identity and its bearers in Ukraine, stated the need to divide its territory into 11-12 regions, in particular on the basis of a number of factors: ethnic, linguistic, national, electoral, political, geographical, etc. but certainly with a reference to history, retrospectives and political and legal culture.

Thus, another attempt was made to deny the two-pronged approach, in particular by highlighting such (more static rather than dynamic) regions of Ukraine as Polissya (or North), Podillya (or Central), Center, Volyn (or North-West), Slobozhanshchyna (or Northeastern), Black Sea (or Southern), Lower Dnieper (Dnieper or Southeastern), Donbas (or Eastern), Galicia (or Western), Transcarpathia and Bukovyna or South-West), Capital (Kyiv) and Crimea. However, on the other hand, this approach has proved to be very or relatively fragmented, which some perceive as its main shortcoming in relation to relevance or irrelevance in the analysis of socio-political processes in Ukraine. At the same time, this does not deny the possibility of similarity of regions in one or another of their patterns or outlines, which in one way or another are important analytically and comparatively.

The general conclusion is that any attempt to use the idea of regionalization of Ukraine – especially in its twofold logic (divided into “West” and “East” or the Right Bank and the Left Bank relative to the Dnieper) – in the real socio-political process in this country, but failed in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 and intensified on a large scale in 2022. Instead, even if they worked, they are very limited and not dichotomous, but in a limited area. The fact is that almost all attempts to regionalize Ukraine, but first of all two-component, were designed to conditionally “fit” the regions to the specified parameters. In addition, they, being abstract and metaphorical, were often politicized, since they focused on the polarization of socio-political views within

<sup>15</sup> Arel D., *Federalism and the Language Factor in Ukraine*, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (Phoenix, 19-22 November 1992), s. 13; Shaw D., Crimea: Background and Aftermath of Its 1994 Presidential Election, *Post-Soviet Geography* 1994, vol 35, nr. 4, s. 221-246.; Solchanyk R., The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine, *Europe-Asia Studies* 1994, vol 46, nr. 1, s. 47-68.

<sup>16</sup> Barrington L., *Stereotypes of Russians and Ukrainians in Ukraine: Views of the Ethnic “Other”, and Their Implications*, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Nationalities (New York, 2001).; D’Anieri P., *The Mitigation of Ethnic Conflict in Ukraine: The Mysterious Case of the State that Didn’t Collapse*, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Boston, 1998).; Dawson J., Ethnicity, Ideology and Geopolitics in Crimea, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 1997, vol 30, nr. 4, s. 427-444.

<sup>17</sup> Kolodiy A., *Radianska identychnist ta yii nosii v nezalezbnii Ukraini*, Konferentsiia dlia ukrainskykh vypusknkyiv proqram naukovoho stazhuvannia u SSHA Ukraina v suchasnomu sviti. Sotsialni, etnichni i kulturni aspekty hlobalizatsii ta Ukraina“ (Yalta, 12-15 veresnia 2002 r.), s. 36-37.

certain factors that were taken as the basis for regionalization: linguistic, ethno linguistic, electoral, etc. This is complemented by the fact that all existing attempts to regionalize Ukraine in 1991-2013 were limited in population, as they have always been based on the “centers / cores” of certain territories, but not these territories as a whole. In fact, as the events of 2014-2022 have shown, the real clustering of regions in Ukraine is dependent on populosity / population throughout the country, regardless of geography, after all, this, at first glance, amorphous (“non-eastern” and “non-western”) space demonstrated the idea of national consciousness and civic nation, which completely denied the logic of the two-part division of Ukraine. In other words, this means the fiasco of the two-pronged approach to the regionalization of Ukraine, because this approach has never represented the cultural and political characteristics of the center and the entire population between the conditional “West” and “East.” Especially their dynamism and the fact that regionalism is not only about socio-political and linguistic differences, but also about social, historical, cultural, economic, civil, ideological and civilization differences in general. However, this does not mean that the issue of regionalism and regionalization in Ukraine does not need to be continued and developed. Of course, it is necessary, but in a completely different way and direction, especially given the launch of European integration processes in this country. Accordingly, modern, more natural, rather than artificial, constructs of regions should be taken into account, which are defined not so much culturally and ethnically as cross-border, party-political, party-ideological, socio-class, religious, etc., even reflecting existing socio-political divisions and polarizations.

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