

# Corruption in Ukraine



# Corruption in Ukraine:

## *Rulers' Mentality and the Destiny of the Nation, Geophilosophy of Ukraine*

By

Oleg Bazaluk

Translated by Tamara Blazhevych

Proofread by Lloyd Barton

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



Corruption in Ukraine:  
Rulers' Mentality and the Destiny of the Nation,  
Geophilosophy of Ukraine

By Oleg Bazaluk

This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2016 by Oleg Bazaluk

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-9689-6

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9689-4

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	vii
Introduction .....	ix
Chapter One.....	1
The Geophilosophy of Ukraine: Ukraine and the Ukrainians in 1990	
Chapter Two .....	45
14 Years of Authoritarianism (between 1990 and 2004): How the Ukrainians Learnt to Give and Take Bribes	
Chapter Three .....	113
From the Orange Revolution to the Revolution of Dignity (2004–2013): The Confrontation between Two Cultures	
Chapter Four .....	189
The Years 2014–2015: Poroshenko -Yatsenyuk are Against Corruption— Corruption has Won a Victory	
Conclusion.....	223
Bibliography .....	227



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is thankful to Professor Anna Brodsky, Boris Zlokazov, Sergei Krichevsky, and Vladimir Mandrahelya for their support, new ideas, and friendly advice on the content of the book.

Special thanks go also to Professor Sergei Klepko and Denis Svyrydenko for their detailed analysis of the book. While initially the book was written in the scientific and journalistic style, after their advice, comments on the merits and friendly criticism, the author expanded the science components of the text. The life experience and broad knowledge of the scientists greatly enriched the book.

Thanks to Tamara Blazhevych this project took place. She initiated it for English-speaking readers, inspired and translated in a three-month contract period.

Sincere thanks to the whole Cambridge Scholars Publishing team for highly professional work; thanks to them this book has found its readers.



# INTRODUCTION

On 16 July 1990, Ukraine made the first step towards its independence: the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR (Ukrainian parliament) adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine. Among the 15 former Soviet republics, Ukraine took the second place (after Russia) in terms of its national wealth, and was far ahead of Kazakhstan, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan and other republics, as well as the Warsaw Pact countries: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The vast majority of the region's inhabitants did not hear the word “corruption” and were not involved in corruption schemes. People lived honestly and spent as much money as they earned.

By 2014, a few people in the world knew about Ukraine as an independent state. Someone remembered that on April 26 1986 in Ukraine, Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant reactor exploded. Someone heard that Andriy Shevchenko was a native of Ukraine, a forward of Italian football club AC Milan (between 1999 and 2006), and the Klitschko brothers, the famous boxers, are not from Russia, but from Ukraine. In April 2013, a funny situation happened with me when I was in Brighton, England. I introduced myself to one respectable woman explaining that I was from Ukraine, and pointed out our country on the world map that hung on the wall in the dining room. She could not hide her surprise. Prior to our meeting, the well-educated 85-year-old woman believed that the state, which ranked second place in Europe in area (603.549 km<sup>2</sup>) and the seventh largest in terms of population (approximately 43 million people), was a Russian territory, and she knew absolutely nothing about 23 years of history of the independent Ukraine or any achievements of the Ukrainian people!

Ukraine occupied the front pages of the world's press in 2004 during the Orange Revolution, but not for long. However, subsequent events caused disappointment. The international community did not understand the Ukrainians; nor did they understand the significance of Ukraine on the scale of civilisation. Only in 2014, after the three bloody days of the Revolution of Dignity (19–21 February 2014), Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, an undeclared hybrid war against Russia in the Donbas, did the world community not only pay attention to Ukraine as an independent state, but also thought about its mission. Ukraine occupied

the front pages of the world's press for a long period. Hundreds of analytical materials were devoted to it. Ukraine was recognised as a component part of world politics.

However, having focused the attention of the world community, Ukraine and the Ukrainians caused astonishment and incomprehension. The world community was very surprised about, for example:

1. **The level of corruption in the state.** How a nation with a rich thousand-year history (the first mention of Ukraine in writing dates back to the 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century), in a relatively short period (between 1990 and 2014), managed to get used to corruption and make it a part of its mentality? Much of what the Ukrainians consider as a norm of civilised society is rejected and condemned in highly developed countries. In 2014, according to the Corruption Perceptions Index from a non-governmental international organisation struggling and researching corruption worldwide, Transparency International, Ukraine remains among the most corrupt countries in the world, ranking 142<sup>nd</sup> out of 175 countries, having only 26 points out of a possible 100. Ukraine shared this place with Uganda and Comoros. In comparison, Denmark, which was in first place with 92 points, and the worst results were for Somalia and North Korea – eight points each [Transparency, 2014].

2. **The lack of an elite (Ukrainian ruling elite), who were sincerely interested in the democratic development of Ukraine.** Even after the Revolution of Dignity, the people who came to power had pasts that were tainted by prosecutorial decisions, which had been reported in the press but had not reached the stage of court decision-making (because of the corruption of Ukrainian courts). Literally, every representative of the Ukrainian government and parliament was accused of corrupt ties, and not one of them was able to explain the source of his income.

3. **Backward economy.** How could it be that over 25 years the financially independent and wealthy state was brought to the poverty? On 1 June 2015, the Ukrainian total debt was \$68, 000, 000, 000 in GDP, having been \$130, 908, 000, 000 in 2014! Fig. 1 below shows the ratio of gross domestic product (GDP) of Ukraine in the period from 1990 to 2010 as a percentage of GDP in 1990 [Gatsenko, 2011].

As can be seen from Fig. 1, over the years of independence, Ukraine has not been able to achieve the GDP estimates that were seen in 1990!



**Fig. 1.** The ratio of gross domestic product (GDP) of Ukraine, in the period from 1990 to 2010 as a percentage of GDP in 1990 [Gatsenko, 2011].

**4. Neglect for own health and the nation's health.** Ukraine has the highest mortality rate in Europe (15.7 deaths per 1, 000 people, according to the CIA in 2014). The country takes second place in the world in terms of death rate (after South Africa), and first place in the world in terms of natural loss of the population (-6.3 per cent or 6.3 people per 1, 000 inhabitants). The average life expectancy in Ukraine is about 70.4 years: for men it is 65.2 years, and for women it is 75.5 years. In Europe, the figures are 10 years higher [State, 2015].

**5. The population's low education level.** The processes of upbringing and education in Ukraine turned into fiction. Diplomas for secondary, technical secondary and higher education do not correspond to world standards. Most graduates from secondary and higher educational establishments do not have elementary (basic) knowledge, skills, and abilities. Because of the ineffective state educational policy, prosperous corruption in education, the daily life of Ukrainian people began to show inherent qualities in them that had not previously been there: aggression, rudeness, intolerance, boastfulness, reticence, and internal and external indifference towards society.

**6. The backward scientific and technical base.** In Soviet times, Ukraine had powerful scientific potential, which allowed the country to be competitive, sitting among the leading nations of the world, especially in such industries: the space industry, machinery, agriculture, light and food industries, and the mining and smelting complex.

In 2015 in Ukraine, there were not any competitive industries, even comparison to the rest of Europe! In its economic development, Ukraine lagged behind not only from the former states of the Warsaw Pact, but was also inferior to many states of the former Soviet Union.

The whole complex of negative processes that filled Ukraine, requires an honest, comprehensive, and impartial rethinking. In global scientific discourse, the problems of Ukraine are interpreted in a number of scientific studies. Of the latter, we should mention the collective monograph “Political Finance and Corruption in Eastern Europe: The Transition Period”, edited by Daniel Smilov and Jurij Toplak [Political Finance, 2007]; the monograph “Rotten States? Corruption, Post-Communism, and Neoliberalism” by Leslie Holmes [Holmes, 2006]; and “Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism” by Taras Kuzio [Kuzio, 2015]. The common understanding of corruption is considered in the monographs “Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts”, edited by Arnold J. Heidenheimer and Michael Johnston [Political Corruption, 2005]; “Syndromes of Corruption: Wealth, Power and Democracy” by Michael Johnston [Johnston, 2005]; “Political Corruption in America: An Encyclopedia of Scandals, Power, and Greed” by Mark Grossman [Grossman, 2008], as well as in a number of scientific articles.

In Ukraine the problem of corruption was considered in two fundamental monographs: Mykola Melnyk [Melnyk, 2004] and Eugene Nevmerzhitsky [Nevmerzhitsky, 2008], as well as in the research of Oleg Bodnarchuk [Bodnarchuk, 2015], Alexander Kalman [Kalman, 2004], Yuri Kalnysha [Corruption in Ukraine, 2010], Vladimir Lanovoi [Lanovoi, 2015], Igor Réwak [Corruption, 2011], Simon Stetsenko [Stetsenko, 2008], Alexander Tkachenko [Stetsenko, 2008], and many others.

Our book is a documentary description of events from the history of independent Ukraine; an attempt to find a scaled and unbiased understanding in comparison with the Eurasian territory and multidimensional communication space with high frontier energy. A methodology of geophilosophy allowed the author not only to consider the causes of political corruption in Ukraine, using such subjects as political philosophy, morphology of culture, ethnology, and geography, but also to offer solutions to the problem.

The author, together with the Ukrainian people, endured a vague time of changes in post-Soviet Ukraine. Instead of the declared policy by Ukrainian politicians: from the totalitarian Soviet society to European democracy, from “decaying” socialism to market economy, before the author’s eyes, the highly developed self-sufficient industrial socialist republic turned into a poverty-ridden, technologically backward, authoritarian-oligarchic, corrupt state. In 2014 the famous Ukrainian poet, writer, and essayist, Oksana Zabuzhko, stated: everything was ready for dismantlement in Ukraine, but it (for 23 years) has not been able to show itself as a country, as the European project [Chruslinska, 2014]. Why wasn’t Ukraine able to find its destination? Why has the Ukrainian elite not formulated or conveyed to the people the consolidating national idea and the main markers of national and cultural identity?

According to the author, not only in Ukraine but also in the international community, there is insufficient understanding of the role of Ukraine in modern geopolitics. An analysis of scientific literature on Ukraine (for example, the latest edition about Ukraine in English [Kuzio, 2015], and others) reveals the authors’ lack of understanding of the geophilosophy of the given region. For this reason, when writing the book the author pursued four main objectives:

1. Inform the world community about the little-known facts from the history of Ukraine’s independence; reveal the characteristics of the geophilosophy of Ukraine.
2. Mainly, on the basis of own life experience and socio-political analysis, show how corruption was formed, consolidated, and then flourished in Ukrainian society; how Ukrainians became massively accustomed to giving and taking bribes, and how it is connected with the geophilosophy of Ukraine.
3. At least partially, the Ukrainian people are absolved of responsibility for the disintegration of moral principles and the author entrusts that responsibility to the Ukrainian rulers. *Piscis primum a capite foetet* - translated from the Latin: The fish rots from the head. The President of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine have the exclusive right to determine the domestic and foreign policy of the state, an integral part of which is anti-corruption policy, and are key to ensuring its implementation. Ideally, these three highest state bodies of Ukraine (or rather the persons holding high-level positions in the state)

should form the main group of people in opposition to corruption. However, in fact, the Soviet nomenclatura past of Ukrainian rulers, and the stereotypes that had developed in their outlook by 1990, contributed to the opposite process – the emergence and flourishing of corruption. The rulers set the tone in the formation of authoritarian-oligarchic governance in Ukraine, and among the people, there were no leaders who could insist on building a democratic society and the European choice of Ukraine.

4. In conclusion, based on their knowledge of the geophilosophy of Ukraine, the author will offer a solution to the problem of total corruption in Ukraine and formulate the role and importance of Ukraine in modern geopolitics. A methodology of geophilosophy allows him to examine the details and mark out, in the history of the formation of Ukrainian statehood, the destiny of the Ukrainian people in terms of the world culture, and to establish the main markers that identify the Ukrainian nation.

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE GEOPHILOSOPHY OF UKRAINE: UKRAINE AND THE UKRAINIANS IN 1990

In the Soviet Union, a conviction predominated that said one man in a field is not a warrior. In the Russian language, there are a sufficient number of proverbs and sayings, the meaning of which boils down to the fact that it is more difficult to do things alone than you can do them with someone else. In Russian culture, the importance of the individual in history is denied.

For any authoritarian and totalitarian regime, this is a very advantageous ideological stamp, which initially limits the role of a personality in history, and turns the community of personalities into a faceless, obedient mass. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset termed the representatives of an impersonal society by the concept of “a mass man” [Ortega y Gasset, 1991]. It is much easier for any power to rule a mass man than a community of educated people who have their own point of view and defend their rights and freedoms.

However, the history of the Soviet Union and other nations of the world, the parallels between which can easily be drawn, prove the opposite: *not a mass man and individuals determine the course of the development of nations and civilisations*. What is most regrettable is that it is clearly visible on the example of the post-Soviet history of Ukraine: *the mentality of the rulers influenced the destiny of the nation!*

Under this mentality we understand sustainable intellectual and emotional characteristics of a particular person (in our case – the ruler), which are formed in the process of upbringing and getting life experience. The mentality of the ruler is an individual perception of the world, which consists of a set of stereotypical views of varying degrees of stability. These stereotypes are closely connected with the sensory and emotional experience, etched in the subconscious, from early childhood through to youth and into adulthood.

Given the fact that for a long period of independence in Ukraine the presidential-parliamentary form of government prevailed, when we speak about the Ukrainian rulers, we mean the presidents and their inner circle. The subject of this book is a study of the mentality of the presidents of Ukraine and certain influential politicians and businesspersons who, in our view, influenced the destiny of the Ukrainian nation.

In these periods of historical change, some nations were more fortunate than others were: the high ideals and concern for future generations were dominated in their rulers' mentality. Their upbringing, education, and culture helped them to put aside their personal ambitions and the authoritarian temptation in the name of public interest. Therefore, the states and nations under their leadership reached new levels of perfection. Such examples are enough in the history of civilisation. For example, the role of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and other presidents in history of the United States of America; or the role of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore's history; or the significance of Sir Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher in the history of Great Britain, and others.

Other nations were less fortunate. For example, in the post-Soviet era the Ukrainians had absolutely no luck. All five presidents of Ukraine had (and have) a mentality that was dominated lust for power, greed, and servility to rank. Therefore, instead of reaching the standards of highly developed democracies, the Ukrainian society slipped to a level of authoritarian, oligarchic existence.

The post-Soviet period in Ukraine, which is called the period of Ukraine's independence, is illustrated by the manifestation of the five presidents' mentalities. The rulers were Leonid Kravchuk (President from December 5 1991 to July 19 1994), Leonid Kuchma (President from July 19 1994 to January 23 2005), Victor Yushchenko (President from January 23 2005 to February 25 2010), Viktor Yanukovich (President from February 25 2010 to February 22 2014), and Petro Poroshenko (President from June 7 2014 to the present time).

Owing to the five presidents and their inner circle, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine did not become a self-sufficient, highly developed European state; it became a region of prospering corruption, prostitution, and crime. Instead of the European vector of development: equality of rights, freedoms, and duties, in Ukraine, law, nihilism, and the extremes of the "Asian layers" have continued to become established so far: mass

consciousness, worshiping rank, servility to rank and their awards, vulgarity, cynicism, and rudeness, amongst other things.

At present, the Ukrainian nation exists in two realities. In one reality: the presidents (former and present) with their circles live in the world of wealth and luxury, splendor and magnificence, outside the law and bon ton, amazing the world by moral perversion, bad taste, and bad manners. For them, democracy came a long time ago, and, in such a format, they are quite satisfied with it. They call it – *managed democracy*, and believe that it is this form of democracy that is adapted to the national cultural traditions of Ukraine. In another reality, the vast majority of the population of Ukraine is struggling with poverty and hunger; they live in the world of lawlessness and self-destruction, surprising the world by indifference to the excesses of power and indifference to their present and future. The fact is that for the Ukrainians, this is the daily routine, whilst for Europeans it is bad manners and taboos.

Unable to compare themselves to others (Ukrainian wages do not give the option of seeing the world), the Ukrainians are convinced that they live better than other nations. A large part of the society believes that European standards of everyday life do not correspond to Ukrainian history and culture. The Ukrainians manifest complete indifference to the authority's corruption, do not comply with the law, and do not fight to abide by the others. The Ukrainians live in the authoritarian-oligarchic state, but they consider themselves free people with a very high level of democracy.

But how could one instill a swineherd's psychology – of rejection of the better, indifference to the present, and cowardice before authority – in the Cossack clan that was always freedom loving, proud, and enlightened? Why have the Ukrainians accepted the corrupt miserable reality and believed in the mirage that power is democracy?

Let us try to answer these questions with facts from the history of Ukraine. However, before we consider the conceptual and methodological apparatus of our research.

### **1.1 Geophilosophy: conceptual and methodological apparatus of the research**

For the first time, the concept of “geophilosophy” is found in the work “What is Philosophy?” of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, published in

France in 1991 [Deleuze & Guattari, 1994]. According to their view, geophilosophy is “thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth” [Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 85]. Further, the understanding of geophilosophy was greatly deepened and expanded by Nicola Masciandaro [Masciandaro, 2010], Ben Woodard [Woodard, 2013], Taylor Webb [Webb & Gulson, 2015], Kalervo N. Gulson [Webb & Gulson, 2015], and others. However, the author has a broader understanding of geophilosophy. If you look at geophilosophy not as the concept that was only introduced into scientific circulation in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but as *philosophy of geography*, the complexity and importance of the issues raised by geophilosophy will be comparable to ontology, gnosiology, and other key philosophical disciplines. The first pieces of research on philosophy of geography were found among the ancient Greeks and, in fact, the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari – is only the visible part of the research, roots of which went back to the apophatic vision. Ukrainian philosopher Julian Tyutyunnik [Tyutyunnik, 2011] carried out large-scale analysis of the philosophy of geography. Tyutyunnik substantiates the apophatics-base of geophilosophy of the works of Alexei Losev, Martin Heidegger, and Gilles Deleuze. For example, according to Losev: “The existence starts with its apophatic moment. The existence is full of meaning and being, the inexhaustible source of life beats a key from its depths, and more and more new definitions” [Losev, 1990: 150]. According to Heidegger: “This incomprehensible nature only hits us then, when we are thinking over the position of the base, as if it would be facing backwards, not in the direction of the field and sphere of its usage, and in the direction of its own origin, i.e. from that, from where the position itself speaks” [Heidegger, 1999: 107]. According to Deleuze: “A singularity may be grasped in two ways: in its existence and distribution, but also in its nature, in conformity with which it extends and spreads itself out in a determined direction over a line of ordinary points. This second aspect already represents a certain stabilization, and a beginning of the actualization of the singularities <...> a word already envelops an infinite system of singularities <...> within this world, however, individuals are constituted that select and envelop a finite number of the singularities of the system. <...> they spread them out over their own ordinary lines, and are even capable of forming them again on the membranes, which brings the inside and outside into contact with each other.” [Deleuze, 1990: 109-110]. Thus, geophilosophy reveals the meaning of the Earth’s surface, the meaning of its landscape, in which a person is an integral part.

Geophilosophy studies the Earth, and the civilisations that populate it, as the “Earth surface area”, and at the same time as the “surface” which has depth – “rhizomes” in the understanding of Deleuze. Tyutyunnik defines the subject of geography as the locus, and geography as a science about endless localisation [Tyutyunnik, 2011: 55]. In our research, we use geophilosophy exclusively, as applied to human civilisation, and therefore the research subject of geophilosophy in our understanding is significantly narrowing. It resolves itself into the research of the loci of civilisations that have their depth, their history, and their rhizome. However, due to the fact that the rhizome is a complex interweaving of semantic lines that often have a single base in depth and branch out closer to the surface (or, on the contrary, in the depth diverse bases, which intertwine into a single and stable base to the surface), loci of civilisations are shown not as isolated of each other, but as a relatively integrated surface, in some places “redrawing”, conflicting, and in other places smooth and monolithic. Therefore, the research subject of philosophy, in our understanding, is the loci of civilisations (cultures), and the research object of geophilosophy is the Earth’s surface, woven from loci of disparate civilisations (cultures); the integrated surface of the Earth’s civilisation is inclined to endless localisation processes.

The methodology of geophilosophy, as accurately noted by Julian Tyutyunik, conjugates science and philosophy together [Tyutyunnik, 2011: 159]. This allows us to consider the surface of continually changing loci of civilisations of the Earth as the whole area to determine the junctions (borders) of loci, as well as to delve into the meanings of the loci of civilisations, highlighting their depth. For these purposes, geophilosophy uses available methods of political philosophy, morphology of culture (culturology), ethnology, economics, and geography. Thanks to the versatility of the methods and its interdisciplinarity, geophilosophy is able to fulfil three main objectives:

1. Investigate the constantly changing surface of “woven” loci of disparate civilisations (world cultures), i.e. consider endless localisation of the Earth’s civilisation in the past, present and future.
2. Investigate the individual loci of civilisations, highlighting their depth, unraveling their rhizomes, discovering the foundation, and the origins of a given culture. This allows us to find out about the strength of the locus’ surface and its stability concerning neighboring loci of civilisation, as well

as the continuous process of redrawing the boundaries of Earth's civilisation.

3. Investigate the junctions (borders) of disparate loci of civilisations and determine the strength of junctions and risk of rupture. When speaking about the level of the frontier energy at the junctions of the world's cultures, we mean the strength of connection between disparate loci of civilisations. The lower frontier energy is, the stronger the connection is between disparate loci, and accordingly, the "smoother surface" in this place, the weaker borders are. The higher frontier energy – the stronger stresses on the junctions and the higher the probability of rupture and redrawing of the boundary loci.

## **1.2 Junctions of loci of civilisations**

The logic of our research is because the territory of Ukraine is situated on the junction of two large, stable loci of civilisations. In scientific literature, the word junctions of loci of disparate civilisations are defined by the concept of the limitrophe (from Late Latin *limitrophus* – a border or frontier). The doctrine about limitrophe, as the drawn borders (in our terminology – junctions between disparate loci of civilisations), was actively developed by the German school of geopolitics from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellén, Friedrich Naumann, and others. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lord George Curzon created the term "buffer state" for scientific use, which referred to the buffer formation at the junction of the more powerful states [Curzon, 1909]. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, German thinker Carl Schmitt proposed the concept of the "large space" (*Großraum*), which in his understanding should replace the concept of "territory" as the classical concept of the nation-state into the concept of "space", with its moving and undefined boundaries [Schmitt, 2010]. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the fundamental work of Kenneth Boulding brought the research about limitrophes to a new level of understanding. Considering the concepts of the "sphere of vital interests" and the "sphere of influence", Boulding introduced the concept of the "critical border" for scientific use [Boulding, 1962].

Thus, a limitrophe, in our understanding, is a territory, which geographically runs along the large disparate loci of civilisation. This area runs across the so-called Border States, which are included in the "sphere of influence" and the "sphere of vital interests" of opposing large loci. For

example, if we look at fig. 2, we see limitrophe states that are located along the borderlines of two large stable loci: the Russian Federation and Europe are Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, and Estonia.



Fig. 2. Eastern Europe Map, 2015.

### 1.3 1990 – A new milestone in the history of Ukraine?

Now that we have considered the conceptual and methodological basics of our research in general (in fact they are much deeper and larger), come back to the theme of our research: how did the mentality of Ukrainian presidents influence on the destiny of the Ukrainian nation, and why did Ukraine get onto the list of the most corrupt countries (according to the

rating of the international anti-corruption organisation Transparency International [Transparency, 2014])?

For the first time at a state level, the Independence Day of Ukraine was celebrated on 16 July 1991, in memory of the fact that a year before (July 16, 1990), the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine. The same day, on 16 July 1990, the Supreme Soviet adopted a decree on “Independence Day of Ukraine”.

Later, it was found that Ukrainian politicians too hurried to renounce the Soviet past, to become independent. After the celebration of the first Independence Day of Ukraine, the Ukrainian parliament, on 24 August 1991 complied with the necessary legal procedures and adopted the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, which was confirmed by the people’s will on 1 December 1991 at the national referendum. Because of the legal conflict surrounding it, the date of the celebration of Independence Day of Ukraine had to be changed. On 20 February 1992, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution on “Independence Day of Ukraine”, which was established on “24 August as Independence Day, and the annual observance of it as a public national holiday in Ukraine”.

Thus, from the outset, the Ukrainian political elite demonstrated its professional incompetence: they had started to celebrate the beginning of independence before independence was legally declared.

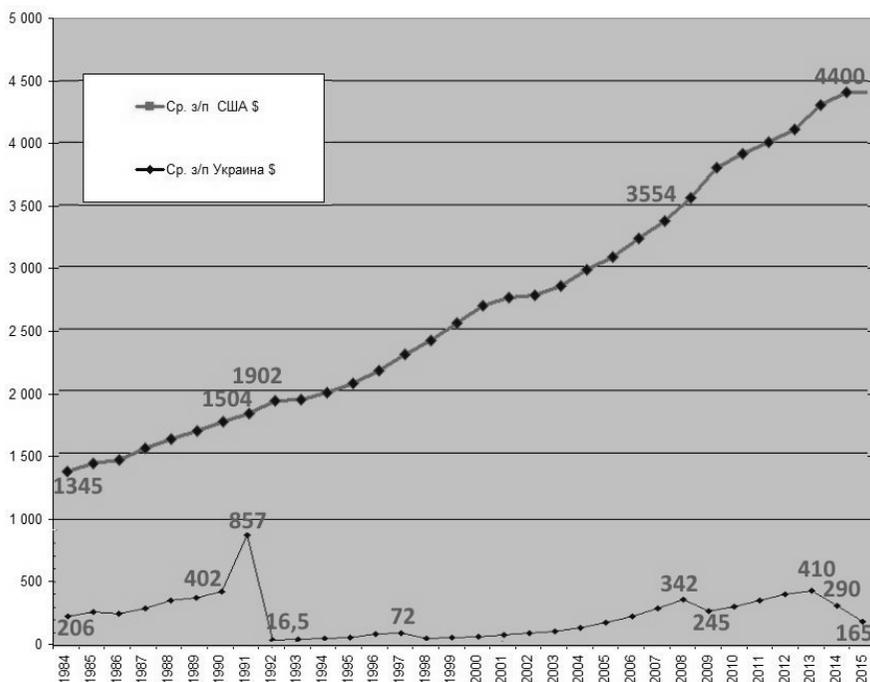
While Ukrainian politicians followed the politicians of the Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia), Armenia, and Georgia by hastening to adopt the national laws as quickly as possible to separate Ukraine from the USSR, at the same time, the Ukrainians continued to live their lives and solve their own problems.

Was the year 1990 a turning point for the Ukrainians? My memories, as well as analysis of the literature of that period, suggest only one answer – it was not. Maybe the ordinary Ukrainians supported the intentions of political leaders to change Ukraine from the Soviet Socialist Republic into an independent European state, but it did not go any further than. In the lifestyle and mentality of Ukrainians, the real changes were not observed. At that time (in 1990), for the whole world the number one event was the unification of Eastern and Western Germany. In 1991, the world community

was anxiously watching the war in Iraq and the outbreak of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia. The Declaration of Independence of Ukraine did not interest the world community.

Thus, Ukraine carried out the transition to independence quietly and completely unnoticed by the world community. Mostly, even in Ukraine, no one observed any of these steps; the Ukrainians continued to live in independent Ukraine as they had done in the Soviet period, not feeling any difference.

### 1.4. Features of the Ukrainian mentality in 1990



**Fig. 3.** The average salary of the Ukrainians from 1984 to 2015, as compared with the average salary of Americans over the same period [Mikhailovsky, 2015].

In Ukraine, 1990 turned out not to be the best year according to all development indicators over the course of its history: the lasting consequences of Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika, the introduction of the

laws of a market economy, the breaking economic ties between the republics within the USSR. However, the standard of living and prosperity of the Ukrainian population pleasantly stood out from the fraternal Union republics and Warsaw Pact countries. In Ukraine, up to 1990, the entire population worked and got a good salary. Fig. 3 above shows the average salary of Ukrainians from 1984 to 2015, compared with the average salary of Americans over the same period [Mikhailovsky, 2015].

As you can see, in 1990–1991 Ukrainians received four times less money than Americans did. In 2015, Ukrainians received an average salary that was 27 times lower than the US! Herewith, the prices for many types of goods in Ukraine (the author was personally convinced) are higher than in the United States.

In 1990 and 1991, Ukrainians still went on planning their future with some anxiety. Stability diminished in the country, but people continued to believe strongly in the common sense of the party leaders and that was the course that the new party bosses chose. The overwhelming majority of the population remembered the difficult post-war years of 1949–1955, so they were ready to stay patient until the situation improved, hoping that soon the rulers would lead the country out of crisis. *Patience to the excesses of power* is a typical feature of all the peoples of the USSR, which passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat in the first decade of Soviet power, Stalin's repressions, "Holodomor" (Ukrainian Famine/Genocide of 1932–33), the Great Patriotic War, and the difficult post-war years. The Ukrainian people endured lots in that meat grinder of bloody events, about which Timothy Snyder wrote, reasonably and impressively, in his best-selling book "Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin" [Snyder, 2015].

Fear of the authorities is deeply stuck in the minds of older people. My grandmother, until her dying day, was afraid to talk about exile in Siberia. I have not heard the details about my grandfather's communication with the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD USSR), after his liberation from Nazi captivity. Every Ukrainian family, in varying degrees, suffered from the Soviet power. Therefore, fear of the authorities had a great influence on Ukrainians' behaviour and outlook for a long time in the post-Soviet period.

We can formulate the first conclusion of our study: *to understand the Ukrainian people and their patience for the excesses of power, one needs*

*to remember the series of bloody events, through which the nation has passed for seventy years of Soviet Union history. In the course of these events the most eminent, active, and vibrant parts of Ukrainians were eliminated.* During the years of Soviet power, fear of government officials, authorities, and law enforcement bodies was firmly stuck in the minds of Ukrainians. In relation to the people, they always carried out punitive functions. This fear spawned peculiar features of the Ukrainians' mentality: timeserving to power, compromise with power, and indifference to events that do not affect personal interests.

What features of mentality characterised Ukrainians in 1990?

1. *Cordiality and hospitality.* In Ukrainian families, stability and prosperity was ensured thanks to the fertile land and the most powerful economic potential. Traditional Ukrainian tables groaned under a massive amount of food: vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, and dairy foods. The Ukrainians have been characterised by their warmth and hospitality. I still remember the days, when I was a child, when I could freely come to see my distant relatives (not to mention the nearest relatives) or acquaintances, and was welcomed with the offer of a snack, and only then did they ask for the reason for my visit.

The Ukrainians always loved feasts and holidays. They were easygoing and liked to have a rest by big companies. Ukrainian weddings lasted two or three days, hosting 200 guests or more. Anniversaries and feast days were spent not only with neighbours, relatives, and friends, but also with colleagues and friends, with music, songs, dances, and endless humour.

2. *Highly educated population, living on the territory of Ukraine.* In the southeastern and central parts of Ukraine, the manufacturing plants were concentrated and located, which set the tone for the industries of the former Soviet Union territory. Regional, national, and global-scale enterprises guaranteed high social status of their employees. The staff were highly qualified, generally erudite, and deeply minded. In Ukraine the most authoritative scientific schools were established, the world famous creative teams, well-stocked libraries, and art collections were created and worked successfully.

The favourable scientific and creative environment influenced the Ukrainian people's mentality and their daily lives. My parents and all my relatives belonged to the working class. All of them worked at the second

largest tractor plant in the Kharkiv region (up to 15 thousand jobs). I distinctly remember how, after work, my parents came back home, had dinner, and read. Cheerful feasts and reading of books, newspapers, and magazines took up most people's leisure time in Ukraine in the 80s. Our family, up to the collapse of the Soviet Union, subscribed to five newspapers and two magazines.

I remember how difficult it was to buy a book, how people exchanged books; we visited each other to "look through" books. It is true that in 1990 the taste for reading declined in Ukrainian society. The market economy had created new temptations; new types of entertainment, so reading became secondary. However, the level of Ukrainians' education remained high.

3. *Family traditions.* My parents are from large families. Every weekend we went to visit my grandmothers. Moreover, half of the day we spent with the father's parents, the second half with the mother's (or vice versa). The grandmothers usually gathered all their children with their wives and grandchildren. The adults helped somewhat with the housework; we children found our own entertainment. After work we all took seats around the table and had dinner. Having dealt with their hunger, the men played cards or dominoes, and the women sang songs. How beautifully Ukrainian women sang! At a contest of languages' beauty in Paris in 1934, the Ukrainian language took third place after French and Persian on criteria such as phonetics, vocabulary, phraseology, and sentence structure.

I remember how coming home along the street in evenings was, and from almost every yard, you could hear singing: often songs were sad and emotional, but others were funny and cheerful.

4. *The people lived openly and trusted each other.* I remember well the symbolic wooden fences with which the private areas were surrounded. The Ukrainians lived openly, without standing out. Neighbours were not simply acquaintances; they were friends, and we helped each other. People visited each other, borrowed money, food, and after a while gave it back. People trusted each other, trying not to lose and to justify the confidence. Now there is no such openness. New generations of Ukrainians replaced the wooden fences with concrete ones that were more than one and half metres high, and in many courtyards there are evil dogs. Ukrainians preferred an isolated life, watching world events on TV or on the Internet.

5. *The natural optimism of the nation.* The Ukrainian nation is unique. People survived, despite the fact that they were on the verge of two worlds – Eastern (Asian) and Western (European). Many people in the history of the world had not experienced such an amount of occupations, persecutions, and ethnic cleansing. At the same time, the Ukrainians not only survived, but also gained steady optimism. It was as if life was not hard for the Ukrainians, and they always found a reason for laughter, humour, and fun. The Ukrainians greeted each new day with smiles and jokes, even if the previous day brought grief and misery. Life went on. Optimism helped our people to survive and preserve their culture and unique identity.

Ukrainian women were often called the beauties that loved laughing a lot, and Ukrainian men never had to search for words, always finding witty phrases. Sincere laughter and singing was the healthy environment in which more than one generation of Ukrainians grew up. Eventually I taught myself to soothe a heavy heart and overcome a heap of trouble and misery, which repeatedly had to overcome my family and me, through laughter and jokes.

### **1.5 At the turn of two cultures. The basics of Ukrainian geophilosophy**

To understand the true causes of the events that have been occurring throughout the history of Ukraine, firstly, it is necessary to understand the peculiarities of the geophilosophy of the region.

The author offered the main characteristics of the geophilosophy of the region, which formed the Ukrainian mentality for centuries. Geographically, modern Ukraine is located at the crossroads of two powerful cultures in the Eurasian continent: the Asian and the European. Such an important and complex fate befell Ukraine at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In 1237–1240 the Mongol Empire's troops, in the course of the Western invasion of the Mongols (Kipchak Khanate), led by Batu and the Mongol warlord Chingizid Subutai, seized the territories that had already disintegrated by that time as the result of feudal fragmentation of the Old Russian State with the capital in Kyiv. Thus, since the 13<sup>th</sup> century on the territory of Eastern Europe the communication space with epoch-making high energy, the unique junction of European and Asian cultures began forming. More than 250 years of Mongol occupation led to the fact that on the territory

inhabited by Eastern Slavs, new generations were born, however, in their mentality, Asian values dominated, such as:

- Having a respectful and deferential attitude to elders;
- A belief in strong power and a centralized state;
- A respectful attitude to traditions and culture;
- Dominance of community interests above personal needs and interests;
- Helpfulness, submissiveness, and worship to the authority;
- Minimalism and asceticism in everyday life and personal needs, and the needs of others.

New generations of Eastern Slavs regularly started practicing raids upon the brothers: the southern and western Slavs, as well as the Golden Horde campaigns to Lithuania, Poland, and Hungary. With each generation of occupation by the Mongols, all Eastern Slavs became more different from the western and the southern Slavs, Germans, Celts, Balts, and Finno-Ugric peoples, whose descendants had laid the foundation of European culture.

From the 14<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the support of the Horde, the previously suburban principality of the Old Russian state, The Grand Principality of Moscow started to gain momentum, and expanded its territory at the expense of the neighbouring Russian principalities manyfold. It began “gathering of the Russian lands” around new political centres. In North-Eastern Russia, the Grand Principality of Moscow headed this process up, which was in alliance with the Mongols and under their influence. In Southwestern Russia, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was engaged in gathering Russian lands, which was also alliance with Mongols.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, because of internal contradictions of might, the Mongols’ forces weakened significantly. It let the Grand Duchy of Lithuania win back the land as it had been since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which was formerly owned by the Old Russian state, thereby expanding the boundaries of Asian culture to the East. In North-Eastern Russia, the Mongol-Tatar Yoke stayed until 1480.

The Old Russian state as a political organisation was not revived later. The city of Kyiv, the capital of the Old Russian state, according to various sources was founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century; in 1240, the Mongols sacked and destroyed it almost to its very foundations. From 1362 to 1569, Kyiv

was a part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and from 1569 to 1654, it was a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1654, an anti-Polish and Lithuanian uprising occurred, and Kyiv was passed “into the hands of the Tsar of Moscow”. However, up to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Kyiv (Pol. Kijów) remained under significant influence of Polish culture. From 1654 to 1991, Kyiv was under the influence of Moscow. In 2015 in Kyiv, the population was about 2.9 million. It is the seventh largest city in Europe.

In the Grand Principality of Moscow (1263–1547), Russian Tsardom (1547–1721), Russian Empire (1721–1917), the Soviet Union (1917–1991), and the Russian Federation (1991), the original culture of the Old Russian state was already present in a much smaller way. Almost two hundred and fifty years of the Mongol Yoke invasion played a role in the formation and development of the mentality of the ancient ethnic group. Now, it included the attributes of Asian culture and traditions, which in different periods of history, to a greater or lesser extent, were different from European culture. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, an authoritative Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev researched profoundly differences between the Asian and European soul of the Russians. Arguing with Maxim Gorky, who in his article “Two Souls” appealed to the Russian people: “We need to fight against the Asian layers of our mentality, we need to be treated” [Gorky, 1918: p.180], Berdyaev wrote: “Truly in the Russian soul is “Asian layering” and they always felt like a very radical Westernism of Gorky type” [Berdyaev, 1990: p.127].

Not all Russians felt ashamed about the Asian layers in their culture. For example, Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoy, the author of the concept of cultural and historic regions, believed that the main task of Russia is to create a completely new culture, their own culture, which would not resemble the European one. In the book “The Legacy of Genghis Khan”, published in 1925, Nikolai Trubetzkoy affirmed that Russia-Eurasia was the conscious heir to and bearer of the great legacy of Genghis Khan, and the Russian people were connected with the Eurasian people by a common historical destiny. Nikolai Trubetzkoy denied the relevance and viability of the Old Russian state in the implementation of the construction in Russia. In his understanding, the Russian Empire and Soviet Union were a geopolitical continuation of the Mongolian monarchy, founded by the great Genghis Khan [Trubetzkoy, 2012].

Therefore, even after liberation from the Mongol Yoke, the territory of modern Ukraine continued to be the watershed between the Asian and European culture of The Grand Principality of Moscow, and the bearer of European culture continued to be the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Subsequently, this confrontation acquired forms that are more ambitious: more than 800 centuries on the territory of modern Ukraine has a “civilisational” split between the orthodox and the western civilisations, according to Samuel Huntington [Huntington, 1996].

I want to clarify the terminology, namely, the definition of the culture of the Grand Principality of Moscow, the legal successors of which were: the Russian Tsardom, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and finally the Russian Federation. In western scientific discourse the culture of the Grand Principality of Moscow, which reached the maximal borders during the time of the USSR, was designated differently at different times. For example, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Oswald Spengler named it “Russian Siberian” world culture [Spengler, 1998; Spengler, 1999]. A little later, Arnold Toynbee named it “Russian civilisation” [Toynbee, 1995]. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Samuel Huntington named it “Orthodox civilisation”, significantly expanding its boundaries [Huntington, 1996]. None of these terms in Russian culture became acclimated, because they reflected neither the ambition nor the true state of affairs.

In fact, the culture of the Grand Principality of Moscow, which was extant, consists of different cultural layers that really give the right to speak of it as self-sufficient *Eurasian* culture. In order of priority, we can highlight the following cultural layers:

1. Byzantine culture, since the reign of Ivan III (1440–1505), the Russian Tsardom was assigned by the legal successor. In connection with the decline of Kyivan Rus as the political centre (after the defeat of the Mongols in 1240), at the end of 1325 the location of the Kyiv Metropolitans was Moscow. It was there, with the growth of the power of the Grand Principality of Moscow that the legend was invented according to which the spiritual and political decline of the Byzantine Empire, the only stronghold of Orthodoxy, became Moscow, receiving the dignity of being the “third Rome”. Starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and continuing to the present day, the aim: Moscow – the “third Rome” is a determinative for the understanding of Russian culture and imperial ambitions of Russian rulers.