



*Understanding the EU's Association Agreements
and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas
with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia*

3DCFTAs Youth Essay Competition – Prize winner

The EU as a choice of values

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My name is Mykhailo Mosora. I am 24 years old and I am doing a PhD in Political Science at the Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine. My scientific interest concerns the problems of the development of civil society in Ukraine and Europe, the ethno-national relations in the former, the peculiarities of the current political conflicts, and, especially, the tendencies of autonomy and separatism. In my research, I make an attempt to provide effective recommendations for solving the conflict situation in my home country while comparing it with relevant experience of dealing with ethnic separatism within the EU. In particular, I

focus on the cases of Scottish and Catalan separatism, where movements for national rights and self-determination are carried out exclusively within the legal framework of the member states and the EU. I believe that the Association Agreement with the EU will allow Ukraine to further boost the level of civil society development, as well as to solve, at least partially, the problems of separatism by transferring European experience and EU's legal body.



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«Twice in Vienna and Munich, he stayed longer than elsewhere. There he went to the nearest runner-up, drowned in front of a shingase, blamed beer, stroked and kissed the hands of the mistresses, and women flashed fervently in his hair and whispered: "Why do you really need to do this?" And he replied: "Europe." Some of them - he did not remember, it was in Munich or Vienna, - murmured: "Europe? It does not exist here. " Another said: "Europe! But this is not here, right?»

Heinrich Böll, «He has been selling beer»

Ukraine has always looked west. Europe for us has always been not just a territorial structure, but a model of perception of the world, a model of behavior and a moral benchmark. Ukraine is precisely the state that has appreciated and compared two models of development – western (democratic) and eastern (despotic) in their studies. After the split of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, the territory of Ukraine was made up of two empires – the Austro-Hungarian and Russian. It was during this period. In our opinion, Ukrainians intelligently compared two models of development and chose their way. Although the Austro-Hungarian monarchy cannot be called the ideal model of Western democracy, however, the difference with the Russian Empire was striking. Ukrainians in Galicia received widespread rights in various spheres of life, while Russian Empire was undergoing rigid Russification, and in general, the rejection of Ukrainians by a separate nation.

Ukrainians received seats in the Austrian parliament and the Halytsky Sejm. The parliamentary club (faction of Ukrainians) has focused on the Ukrainianization of education, the opening of a Ukrainian university in Lviv, the administrative division of Galicia into Ukrainian and Polish parts, the creation of the Ukrainian Crown Region, the reform of the electoral law to the Galician parliament. Thanks to the recognition of the multinational structure of the population of the Austro-Hungarian Empire by the authorities, all nations of the state received the first recognition of national and cultural rights, and at the same time political, economic, etc.

For the Ukrainians of the time, it was rather strange to observe two completely different models of development and values systems that dominated their territory. Russian tsarism was characterized by exceptional authoritarianism and terror. Even the revolution of 1848 – The Spring of Nations – has not manifested itself in Russia. At that time, when the whole of Europe struggled with the absolute power of the monarchs, demanded political and economic rights, the abolition of serfdom, etc., the Russian people were too blind and humble, his system of values was built primarily on the humiliation of the landlord, nobleman, the tsar. Even the idea of God's anointing of a monarch, which has long been alien to Europe, has not been questioned in Russia.

Ukrainians of the Russian Empire felt abominable oppression and distrust. The most important thing is that they were not recognized by either a single people or a nation. The Ukrainian language was recognized at best in the local dialect, and at worst – a mistake, a terrible copy of Russian. Such a state of affairs was an absolute burden for Ukrainian consciousness. Let us recall the Valuev decree in 1863, the Ems decree of 1876 and Stolypin's reform at the beginning of the twentieth century. Along with the lack of national-cultural

rights, Ukrainians suffered from economic yoke, political injustice, etc. Given that the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians of that period were peasants, the state of ensuring their rights was much worse than that of the Russians themselves. Ukrainians in Galicia were freed from serfdom in 1848, and their eastern brothers had to wait for real shifts before the twentieth century (although legally serfdom was abolished in 1861). Regarding political rights, the parliament in the Russian Empire did not consider until 1905, although neither the First nor the Second Duma gave any results.

In our opinion, it was this period that became decisive in electing Ukrainians a western, democratic benchmark in their future development. It is important that Galicia became the Ukrainian Piedmont, a free oasis for the development of Ukrainian culture, politics and economy. The prominent minds came here to create a Ukrainian fate, and later, with the beginning of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917, they returned to Kyiv, with awareness of the priorities of the western model of development.

The answer to the question - where is Europe - in our opinion, you can get when we determine where Europe is heading ("Quo Vadis"). Of course, from a territorial point of view, we all know the geographical boundaries of Europe, but we are interested in the ideological boundaries, the limits of a democratically oriented world with European values and an approach to the life of man and citizen. In the period of separation of Ukraine between the two empires, the border of Europe could be defined quite easily, it was held at the administrative boundary – on the Zbruch River. It was there that the European world ended and the world began not to be European. However, today, the territorial delineation of Europe is difficult, because the concept of the Western World and the EU has long gone beyond the continental Europe.

From the ideological point of view, the border is currently taking place in the Ukrainian Donbass. It is Ukraine that is now a necessary component of the EU. The undeniable historical status of Ukraine as a European state makes its European aspirations absolutely understandable and acceptable. The fact that, according to S. Huntington, that Ukraine is at the turn of a civilizational breakthrough in the Western and Eastern (Orthodox) community, makes its significance colossal. European integration of Ukraine is a "gulp of fresh water" for the EU. Geographically, Ukraine is a great power that can become a solid bridge on the way from the Western world to the Orthodox. It is the scale of our state that will make the civilizational scum less noticeable, and integration is obvious. The positive experience of Ukraine's integration into the EU will dispel the myth of hostility of the Western world to the Orthodox, created by Russia. One can say for sure – Ukraine was destined to lead the parade of European integration of the Orthodox world.

The association agreement with the EU, besides the economic value, is also valuable in the other. Just like a hundred years ago, during the Ukrainian Revolution, we need to support our friends. History is repeated, Ukraine is again a state of war and is experiencing economic difficulties. However, we believe that Ukraine has made its value choice, and this choice is not even Europe, but this choice is above all freedom and justice.

Today, the main requirement, besides economic indicators, is that the dignity and "nobility" of the countries should be admitted to the EU, their reputation must not be spoiled by lies or aggression – "... being lied about, do not deal in lies" as R. Kipling wrote.

2017 was the year of friendship for Ukraine. We finally saw our future in one direction and this is great. Finally, Ukraine can build strategic plans and not only tactical ones, we can confidently say about our intentions for the future. And the mission of Ukraine seems obvious – to become the bridge of friendship between the two civilizations – Western and Orthodox. This role of our state seems to have been conditioned historically and geographically, so it is unlikely that Ukraine has a chance to escape its fate. Ukrainians are optimistic to me, they always, despite difficulties and constant dissatisfaction with power, go to the next elections to choose their future, because they know the unwritten truth - those who have chosen have a moral right to criticize.

The association agreement with the EU has brought Ukraine and a lot of social benefits. Finally, Ukraine, under the pressure of our friends, will be able to force itself to hold constitutional reform, reform of the electoral system, reform of the judiciary, optimize the system of state administration, fight corruption effectively, introduce deregulation, implement tax reform and reform of the energy sector, etc.

But we must not forget the importance of Ukraine's European aspirations and the need for their satisfaction. In the light of the current conflict in the Donbass and the Crimea, we must understand the significance of Ukraine's European choice not only for itself but for the whole of Europe and even the world. In general, the association with the EU seems to us a mutually beneficial cooperation for both sides. Europe understood the whole issue of the future of Ukraine and dared to sanction Russia – it is a worthwhile step of a friend and ally. Z. Bedzinsky said quite clearly: "If there were no sanctions, then unfortunately Russia would have to unlock its hands in order to eliminate the independence of Ukraine ... The rate is really high: it is the stability of Europe, the stability of the facts and borders of states, as well as the opportunity to independently choose their own future, which is the right of each European state".

Of course, the issue of Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU often becomes a means of populism for Ukrainian politicians, but the Ukrainian people remain aware of their choices. Therefore, one of the politicians will not be able to attribute the merit of the European choice of the state to itself. This is not a choice of one generation, it's a historic choice that is embroidered with blue and yellow threads on a towel of civilization. Ukrainians made their European choice for the century before independence, but it was in 2014 that the people helped the authorities make this choice. This is of course another problem in Ukraine that our partners will help us solve – a big gap in the material and value relationship between the ruling elite and the Ukrainian people.

Returning to our scientific interest, we can confidently state that in the EU the dualism of cultural-national and political-national identities can be traced. So, the Bretons in France or the Catalan in Spain call themselves French and Spanish at the same time. This tendency in Western society allows nations to pursue a fairly flexible ethnic policy, to substitute

separatization by autonomy or federalism, and so on. Similar tendencies in Ukraine can be traced very rarely. In Ukraine, in general, the double identification of Hungarians or Romanians is not inherent. Therefore, we hope that European experience will allow Ukraine to be characterized by the double identity of ethnic communities. However, the Russian national minority is rather flexible in the issue of identification, which occurs at the expense of another group of people – “Russian-speaking Ukrainians”. Often, through simplicity and manipulation, this group of people proves their relationship with the Russian national minority, which threatens the integrity of the state. It is this experience that Ukraine will be able to share with post-Soviet Central Europe. However, of course, this concept is rather artificial, from a scientific point of view, and relates only to one feature of an ethnic community – language, thus the remaining features of an ethno-ethnic group – culture, religion, history, etc. – are leveled out.

Therefore, we express our confidence in the need to learn from the European experience of ethno-national relations. It is in the signing of the Association Agreement that we see the first step in establishing cooperation and exchange of experience. The ultimate method for Ukraine in this field, from our point of view, should be the introduction of the concept of “Europe of the regions”, where all the ethnic and regional differences of our ethnic nation state can be presented in the context of European law.