Viktor Sapryka*
Olga Zvyeryeva**

VALUES ACROSS THE BORDER: AXIOLOGICAL CONTENT OF CHANGING IDENTITIES IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN BORDERLANDS

Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century, globalization shifted the paradigm of state-building processes and blurred state and national boundaries. Yet, amid the increasing development of suprastate entities, disintegration of old formations, such as the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, led to the emergence of new states longing for a shared national identity. At the same time, being ethnically and culturally heterogeneous, new states cannot be nationalized without triggering conflicts between different ethnic and social groups. In this process, national identity emerges from (1) ethnic history and the identity of continuity, values, and belief systems, and (2) dominant ideologies and conscious manipulation, including commemoration, ideology, and symbolism (Smith 2009).

The aggravation in Russia-Ukraine relations has led to an intensive rediscovery of national identity in both states and formation of new national ideologies based on new myths and axiologies. Nevertheless, the new borderlands formed on the borders of Russia and Ukraine show regional differences in contrast to the national heartland. Being a creative force, an on-going process (Soja 1996), Russian and Ukrainian border regions may transform into contact zones between cultures and civilizations or, on the contrary, become sources of conflicts on the regional and global scales. In this context, they play a significant role in the glocal space reconciling the

***Viktor Sapryka** – Ph. D., Associate Professor, Belgorod National Research University; research interests: cross-border cooperation and integration, geopolitics, strategic regional management, project management; e-mail: `sapryka@bsu.edu.ru`

Olga Zvyeryeva – Ph. D., V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University; research interests: sociolinguistics, border studies, discursive struggle, narrative identities; e-mail: `ol.zvereva@gmail.com`

processes of integration and unification with cultural and civilizational (if not ethno-cultural) self-determination and development.

Studying the core values and beliefs inherent to the residents of the Russian and Ukrainian border regions provides the means to better evaluate the cultural and civilizational split between the nations and determine the shared elements.

Theoretical Background

In contemporary reading, identity is referred to as a changing and somewhat blurred category inherent to post-modernity and global community. The classical definition of a nation and national identity as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) and a "mental construct" (Wodak 2009, p. 22), or a "system of cultural representations" (Hall 1996, p. 612), suggests that it is constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly, in narratives of national culture and symbolic representations. As a mental construct, the nation has elastic, though finite, boundaries, beyond which other nations lie (Anderson 1983). This postmodern approach is, nevertheless, challenged in times of turmoil when changes in territories and border movement, especially in the course of interstate conflicts, evoke concepts of nationalism and national security inherent to modernity.

Mathias Bös and Kerstin Zimmer call such changes "migration of borders that destroy old communities and shape new ones, create new minorities or homogenize the population inside the new borders" (Bös, Zimmer 2006). This process evokes new dominant ideologies, historical narratives, and creation of new national symbols.

Newly formed territories and states attempt to justify their integrity through formation of a shared national identity, "constructing homelands" by mobilizing "the myths and images of a primordial homeland to reinforce the depiction of the nation as an ancient community of belonging, an organic singularity "rooted" to a particular place" (Kaiser 2002, p. 230). In their quest for a homeland, nations rely on "sacralized" territories, languages, and borders, the latter often being defended in the need for security, as were the sacred spaces of temples (Raffestin 1995, p. 101).

In this process, border regions are treated as "sacred lands" having a special symbolic meaning and contested by different communities, which may result in forming new minority groups across the border. As Pamela Ballinger argues, borderland residents are often exposed to "symbolic and physical violence attendant to the ultimately impossible project of rendering state and nation congruent" (Ballinger 2003, p. 11). In response, borderland

communities often resist change, shaping their identity around this trauma-
tic experience of non-inclusion and alienating themselves from the nation's
heartland.

Borderlands become a laboratory of new types of cultural and civiliza-
tional identities, reflecting their residents' self-reference to historical systems
of values, social codes, forms of conscience and structures, behavior patterns,
cultural standards, and mentality not necessarily belonging to the nation
on either side of the border. "Borderland' identities are rather built on local
historical narratives and myths, stressing regional differences. At the same
time, they have often been places where different cultures coexist and en-
rich each other, creating "hybrid" or "Creole" identities, sometimes seen as
a challenge to the nation-building efforts of the political elites" (Zhurzhenko
2016, p. 74).

Therefore, two-fold axiological differences emerge: the nation-state vs.
other states and the borderlands vs. the nation. Axiological dualities ha-
ve a unifying role for the members of the ingroup compensating for fears
and uncertainties. Such differences promote a mythic ordering, such as go-
od/evil and sacred/profane, and allow the core axiology to dominate natio-
nal identities, normalizing the threatening image of the Other (Rothabart,
Korostelina 2006, p. 52).

Therefore, borderlands become not marginal places but central sites
of power struggle where the meaning of national identity is created and
contested. They become a laboratory for the cultivation of feelings of simi-
larity or difference and cultural superiority depending on the national policy
and the population's attitude, forming a "borderland continuum" (Martinez
1994) stretching from a full cross-border integration to borderland aliena-
tion which precludes any contact.

In the case of the Russia-Ukraine relations, the problem of the border-
lands and self-identification of their residents has a long history. First being
a part of the Russian Empire and then a republic within the USSR, Easter
Ukrainian regions were characterized by an asymmetric influence of Rus-
sian culture which transformed the border regions in the contact zones, or
of a socio-cultural space where "cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each
other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as
colonialism" (Pratt 1991, p.34), and created hybrid identities which often
have both internal identification conflicts and external confrontation with
the national policy. Since the second half of the 20th century, the dominant
socio-cultural system in the Russian-Ukrainian borderlands was established
on the basis of the common values shared by similar in their lifestyle com-
munities and promoted by the Soviet ideology of fraternity.

The disintegration of the USSR destabilized the Russian-Ukrainian borderlands, leaving new states with old Soviet ideologies which were to be replaced with new national ideas. In order to legitimize its sphere of influence and the status of a great power, post-Soviet Russia still uses the "Imperial" symbols and narratives of the Russian Empire and Soviet myths first of all.

Ukraine, after a 20-year long period of failing to build a nationally accepted ideology (Korostelina 2014), entered into conflict with Russia with numerous views on the national idea and without clear internal and external social boundaries of its population. Euromaidan and the resulting deterrioration of relations with Russia have shaped the official national ideology built on the rejection of the Soviet values (de-communization), links with Russia, the propagation of the Ukrainian language and culture, on cherishing "freedom", "independence", and "integrity" as major national values, and on filling national symbols with new meanings. In this process, for instance, the image of Stepan Bandera has acquired a new meaning as a symbol of struggle with the regime sponsored by Russia (Yekelchyk 2015), a meaning drastically different from the one representing him as a leader of the ethno-national independence movement.

Though, as argued by scholars, a successful construction of the Ukrainian identity depends on its differentiation from Russia (Korostelina 2014), the identity of Ukrainians remains closely tied to that of their neighbours, especially, in the regions adjacent to Russia. The population, closely connected with Russian regions through familial, personal, and business ties, tends to reject the new ideology, seeing it as an expansion of nationalism. At the same time, living in the situation of an intensive discursive struggle leaves the residents of the borderlands with mosaic and conflicting identities, potentially destructive for one another, the type of identities which Ulrike Hanna Meinhof visualizes through the image of a "volcano" (Meinhof 2001).

Therefore, construction of national identities and formation of a nationwide value system has a major impact on borderlands as a space of cross-border cooperation and underpins the population's attitude to the interaction between regions separated by a state border. In view of this, it is of vital importance to analyze the axiological components of the identities of the borderland residents to assess the extent of their similarities and the nature of differences between them.

Methodology

The research is based on the findings of the sociological questionnaire survey "Development of New Identities in Border Regions of Russia and Ukraine" conducted by the authors in 2015 in Belgorod, Bryansk, Voronezh, and Kursk regions in Russia; and Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernyhiv, and Luhansk regions in Ukraine; the sample is a quota multistage, and the quota attributes include residence, sex, and age; n = 1000. The participants of the survey were Russian and Ukrainian borderland residents aged from 14 to 60; 500 respondents from each side. The respondents were residents of the border regions who did not intend to leave their place of residence.

The questionnaire developed for the survey consisted of 40 close-ended questions covering several thematic blocks: micro-social and macro-social determinants of forming a cultural and civilizational identity; specific traits of cultural and civilizational identities of Russian and Ukrainian borderland residents, including national character, values, sytems, and ideological systems; and political orientations.

To analyze the axiological content of the border residents' identities, the comparative hierarchies of the core values, objects of pride, and nation-building symbols were studied.

Findings

The survey findings prove that the borderland residents in Russia and Ukraine to some extent share a core axiology demonstrating similar, though not identical, hierarchy of values. For instance, the most important value on both sides of the border is "safety" pointed out by over a half of the Russian residents and almost a half of the Ukrainian respondents. Nevertheless, the reasons for a high importance of safety may be different for Ukrainians and Russians. The residents of the so-called Novorossiya (Donetsk and Luhansk regions) feel a need for safety and security as a result of the ongoing military action. The majority of other regions seek security as a reaction to the conflict with Russia (described in mass media as Russia's aggression) and to the fear of marginal ethno-nationalistic organizations. In the Russian regions, the desire for safety and stability is intensified by the proximity of the conflict in Ukraine, with Russian residents blaming the Ukrainian government and the national ideology for it. It is further proved by the fact that the Russian respondents said that aggression as one of the most significant traits of Ukrainians (34.2%), which contradicts the traditional image of the Ukrainian national character established in Russian culture (Borisenok 2012).

The second important group of values for both regions includes personal success, trust, benevolence and generosity, independence and initiative, and protection of traditions and the customary way of life, which constitute the core of their cultural and civilizational identities.

Besides, the residents of the Russian and Ukrainian borderlands find such values as collective belonging, abidance by accepted norms, and the desire for changes less important for their life.

At the same time, the second and the third important groups show significant differences in the internal hierarchy of values. For example, the second and third important values for Russians are, respectively, "enjoying life" and "welfare", while these rank as of little importance to Ukrainians.

The said hierarchy proves the existence of a rather stable axiology resilient to changes, common historical and cultural roots, and ad hoc differences in values. At the same time, the given values are transitional from the traditional to the modern value system. While typical for traditional cultures values, such as collective belonging, defending traditions, and the customary way of life are regarded as less significant, the values related to personal safety and interpersonal relations (trust, benevolence, readiness to help others) remain important. The contemporary values inherent to the present-day global society include rejection of risks and competition in favour of individualistic success strategies and enjoying life.

Notwishstanding the similarity in the structure of the values system, the Russian and Ukrainian border residents significantly differ with regard to other identity-forming aspects. The Russian respondents show a greater consensus as to what constitutes national pride: 50.4% point out the victory in WWII and 46.8% – the historical heritage. It is congruent with the observations that the present-day Russia uses the symbolic capital of the "great victory over fascism" to legitimize its regained status as a great power (Zhurzhenko 2016).

The Ukrainian respondents point out the same objects of pride (33.8% – the victory in WWII and 28.4% – the historical heritage); the former being the reference to the Soviet times, and the latter going back to the history of the Kievan Rus and the Cossackdom (popularized after Ukraine's independence as one of the myths of the Golden Age and the glorious past of the country). This demonstrates the coexistence between the Soviet ideology and identity and the new national ideology present in the mass conscience. At the same time, 24.8% of the participants chose the answer "I don't see objects of pride", which also shows a weak positive identification with the present-day independent state.

Table 1

Hierarchies of values in Russia and Ukraine as estimated by the respondents

Russia			Ukraine		
Group	Value	Average score (1-10)	Group	Value	Average score (1-10)
1	Safety	8.3	1	Safety	7.8
1/2	Personal success	7.7	2	Benevolence, readiness to help	7.2
2	Trust	7.2	2	Personal success	7
2	Benevolence, readiness to help	7.1	2	Welfare	6.9
2	Independence initiativeness	7.1	2	Trust	6.7
2	Enjoying life	7.0	2/3	Independencem initiativeness	6.6
2	Tradition, customary way of life	7.0	2/ 3	Tradition, customary way of life	6.5
3	Welfare	6.7	3	Enjoying life	6.3
3	Collective belonging, adherence to common norms	6.5	3	Collective belonging, adherence to common norms	6.0
3	Desire for changes	6.,5	3	Risk, competition	5.9
3	Power	6.2	3	Desire for changes	5.9
4	Risk, competition	5.8	4	Power	5.3

*Source:*Author's own elaboration.

The study revealed that the residents of the Russian and Ukrainian borderlands show no consensus about the symbols forming the core of either Russian or Ukrainian cultural identities. One of the reasons for this is the denial of the historical past inherent to both nations. This may be attributed to the peculiarities of the nation-building process in both states, in which the governments are inclined to accept only those facts from the past which are congruent with the official ideology and are likely to suppress the dissemination of inconvenient information. Besides, old traditions and hi-

storic identities are lost in the course of social transformations and building new national ideologies in Ukraine and to a certain extent in Russia.

Nevertheless, the survey proved that the symbols vary across the border. The most frequently pointed out symbol among the Russian respondents is Vladimir Putin (30.0% of the respondents), followed by matreshka (20.8%), and the Red Square (17.6%). In this context, the image of the national leader seems to be so emotionally charged that it suppresses other symbols of Russian culture. These answers reflect the need for a wise and fair ruler (which is inherent to the Russian cultural matrix) and the desire for a unified ideology (similar to that in the USSR) which would ensure the national unity and provide the people with a national identity through the vertical state influence and the guidance by "the only possible" leader.

At the same time, the Ukrainian respondents show a bigger variety in their answers without a definite leader who would be pointed out at least by a third of the participants. The most popular symbols are Taras Shevchenko, a Ukrainian poet and a symbol of resistance (24.2%), the Ukrainian folklore (22.6%), vyshivanka (a traditional embroidered shirt) (20.4%), and the national flag (18.2%). This list is more heterogeneous comparing to the list of Russian symbols because it includes both cultural phenomena and national symbols. Besides, it includes more symbols related to the cultural heritage of Ukraine when compared with the answers of the Russian respondents where the symbol of a national leader outshines all other cultural dominants.

Interestingly, although the contemporary Ukrainian national idea recreates the myths of Stepan Bandera and new Maidan heroes as symbols of national struggle for independence, the Ukrainian borderland residents tend to replace them with less divisive symbols. For instance, only 4.4% of the respondents pointed out Stepan Bandera, and 9.6% revolutions and the Maidan. Moreover, the Cossackdom, which was the foundational myth of the Ukrainian nation throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and is still used in order to claim the integrity of Ukraine, was mentioned only by 10.4% of the survey participants. Paradoxically, although originally the Cossack lands covered a limited territory of the Sich on the lower Dnieper and later the Eastern territories of Ukraine on its current borderland with Russia, this symbol turns out to be more preserved in a historically non-Cossack territory, Galicia (Plokhy 1994, p. 165).

The Russian participants of the survey consider the said symbols as more typical of Ukrainians (17.2% of the respondents pointed out the Maidan as one of the main symbols of Ukraine, and 15.4% mentioned Cossacks). This may indicate increasing concerns about the rise of nationalism in Ukraine, which shape the attitude of the Russian border residents to Ukrainians.

Table 2

The results of the responses given by the Russian respondents to the question about three symbols which best reflect Russian culture

Symbol	Absolute value	Percentage
Vladimir Putin	150	30.0
Matreshka	104	20.8
Red Square and Kremlin	88	17.6
Double-headed eagle	74	14.8
Bear	67	13.4
Vladimir Lenin	60	12.0
Samovar	56	11.2
Military equipment	48	9.6
Sickle and hammer	43	8.6
Russian spirit	40	8.0
Boundless taiga	39	7.8
Accordion	38	7.6
Balalaika	36	7.2
Flag and anthem	38	7.6
Army	31	6.2
Patriotism	30	6.0
Generosity	26	5.2
Bravery	25	5.0
Social cohesion	20	4.0
Love of freedom	16	3.2
Ear-flaps hat	15	3.0
No data	24	4.8

Source: Author's own elaboration.

An important difference between the Russian and Ukrainian borderland communities lies in the dependence of the given answers on the age group. In Russia, the age of the respondents has no significant impact on their attitude towards their nation-state. The answers of the Ukrainian respondents, on the contrary, differ depending on the age group, but reveal inconsistent attitude towards the state and the nation even within one such group. For instance, the participants aged 50-59 reported to be proud of their state the most frequently (75.4%) and, at the same time, they gave the most critical assessment of the national character. In contrast, the respondents aged

Table 3

The results of the responses given by the Ukrainian respondents to the question about three symbols which best reflect Ukrainian culture

Symbol	Absolute value	Percentage
Taras Shevchenko	121	24.2
Vyshivanka	102	20.4
Ukrainian folklore	113	22.6
Flag	91	18.2
Traditionalism	70	14.0
Kyiv Pechersk Lavra	68	13.6
Salo	66	13.2
Taras Bulba	58	11.6
Red snowball	54	10.8
Cossackdom	52	10.4
Borshch	36	7.2
Revolution	26	5.2
Maidan	22	4.4
Bandera	22	4.4
No data	1	0.2

Source: Author's own elaboration.

40-49 were more critical towards their state (only 29.2% reported to be proud of it) while they were very positive about the national character.

The age impact on the Ukrainian public conscience may be explained by different socialization conditions and is a reason for the mosaic and diffusive cultural and civilizational identity of Ukrainians. Thus, elderly people still identify their state with the Soviet Union and reject the "new" Ukrainian national identity, while younger generations, despite displaying certain disappointment in the state functioning, have a better image of their nation.

Conclusion

The present-day aggravated relations between Russia and Ukraine have lead to drastic changes both in official foreign policies and in the population's attitude bringing the two nations to the point of a cultural and civilizational split. At the same time, the bordering regions have been always known for their hybrid identities that are manifested, among other things, via specific

axiological and behavioral patterns.

The presented research revealed the similarity of the core value hierarchies between the populations across the borders, which proves the existence of a common socio-cultural basis and a similar response towards the present-day socio-political instability and real or imagined threats, even though the source of such threats and instability differs across the border.

Nevertheless, the symbolic representations of the past in the public conscience of the Russian and Ukrainian borderland residents show increasing disparities. Although the common object of pride "the victory in the WWII" proves that the residents on either side of the border identify with the Soviet Union, the choice of the core symbols proves that Russians have stronger ties with the present, whilst the residents of the Ukrainian borderland bring about symbols of the past. In this context, the authors believe that the orientation to integration and cooperation, prevailing in the Ukrainian border regions, may also be explained by the inertial Soviet tradition, which is also visible in the difference in the replies of different age groups.

The findings of the research give grounds to conclude that the symbolic representations of common identities are gradually blurring in the collective conscience the residents of the Russian and Ukrainian borderlands, showing disparities in the external and internal stereotypes about the symbolic content. Such blurring is even faster in the Russian border regions than in the Ukrainian borderlands where Soviet symbols are still relevant and considered "quasi-Imperial" or "post-Soviet", rather than Russian, attributes. Changes in the Ukrainian border identities are underpinned by the generation shift and a gradual penetration of the official Ukrainian axiology and the newly formed national idea in the Eastern regions. The transformation of the identinty of the border residents in the Russian Federation relies on the search for a national idea which would consolidate the whole Russian nation. This shift is reflected in the bill "About the unity of the Russian nation and the management of interethnic relations" and other laws and regulations. These nation-building processes may modify the traditional socio-cultural environment of the borderlands and deepen the cultural split across the border.

Nevertheless, the tools and mechanisms of cross-border cooperation, new technologies, and the principles of public diplomacy may help preserve the unique socio-cultural borderland identity of the Russian and Ukrainian border regions (which is manifested in their similar ways of life, traditions, value systems, and in a cross-border dialect different from both Russia's and Ukraine's heartlands) and, therefore, defuse conflicts both between the states and between the borderlands and each nation's heartlands.

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Viktor Sapryka
Olga Zvyeryeva

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Keywords: identity, borderland, Russian-Ukrainian relations.

The present-day conflict between Russia and Ukraine has lead to drastic changes both in official foreign policies and in the population's attitude bringing the two nations to the point of a cultural and civilizational split. At the same time, the bordering regions were always known for their hybrid identities manifested, among other means, via specific axiological and behavioral patterns. In our paper we will study the changes of values across the Russia-Ukraine border to answer the question whether the borderlands witness the same cultural and civilizational split as the countries or whether we can talk about more stable and resilient border identities.

Viktor Sapryka
Olga Zvyeryeva

WARTOŚCI PONAD GRANICĄ: CZY ISTNIEJE PODZIAŁ KULTUROWY I CYWILIZACYJNY NA POGRANICZU ROSYJSKO-UKRAIŃSKIM?

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość, pogranicze, relacje rosyjsko-ukraińskie.

Artykuł dotyczy obecnego konfliktu między Rosją i Ukrainą, który doprowadził do drastycznych zmian zarówno w oficjalnych politykach zagranicznych, jak i postawach ludności, stawiając dwa narody w obliczu rozłamu kulturowego i cywilizacyjnego. Równocześnie obszary graniczące zawsze były znane z manifestowania hybrydowych tożsamości, między innymi przez specyficzne systemy aksjologiczne i wzory zachowań. W prezentowanej pracy autorzy przedstawią wyniki badań dotyczących zmiany wartości na pograniczu rosyjsko-ukraińskim. Odpowiadają na pytanie, czy pogranicze to stało się świadkiem takiego samego podziału kulturowego i cywilizacyjnego, jaki ma miejsce w obu krajach, czy raczej można mówić o bardziej stabilnych i elastycznych tożsamościach na pograniczu. Na podstawie badań, formułują tezę wskazującą na to, że reprezentacje wspólnych tożsamości stopniowo zacierają się w kolektywnych wyobrażeniach mieszkańców pogranicza rosyjsko-ukraińskiego, wykazując rozbieżności w zewnętrznych i wewnętrznych stereotypach dotyczących treści symbolicznej.