Transition, Europenization and Identity in the Ukraine Case

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Introduction

Ukrainian crisis whose manifestations are known as Euromaidan broke out on November 23, 2013, when former President Viktor Yanukovych has decided to suspend preparations for Ukraine's Economic Association Agreement with EU, preliminaries commenced in March 2012 (Gardner 2014: 6). Also, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has suspended the agreement with the European Atomic Energy Community (Interfax 2013). Former Ukrainian Prime Minister, Mykola Azarov, claimed that this decision was taken in order "to ensure Ukraine's national security," a financial security measures, as will be seen: if the EU at that time offered a loan of 610 million Euros in addition, being required major changes in Ukrainian law; Moscow will provide to Kiev 15 billion Euros in loan (McHugh 2014) to which was added the promise to lower the price of gas by one-third without structural reforms, such requests were imposed for receiving West loan (Gardner 2014: 8-9). In these circumstances, the former leadership of Kiev chose Russian support. Ukrainians discontent against the decision of the former president, Viktor Yanukovych, was manifested by protests in Independence Square in Kiev, demanding the government resumed negotiations with Europe and removing with Russia. The protests intensified after the former administration signed the law on banning protest.

The population's disappointment was expressed especially in the western part of Ukraine, closer to Europe as politically and culturally point of view. Soon, the protests turned into real riots, forming two camps, pro-Western (with the centre in Kiev) and the second one pro-Russian (dominant in the Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk, areas populated mostly by Russians ethnics and Russo phones). This event was the pinnacle of social

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and political instability that has persisted in Ukraine, since the beginning of its existence as an independent state.

From the beginning, starting with the events which marked the recent history of Ukraine, this paper aims to highlight the political and social development of the Ukrainian state that led the second revolution of Ukraine and the reasons why dissatisfied people up against former leadership. The transition / democratisation and Europeanization of the state were the main demands of pro-Western revolutionaries. In this context, this analysis will address the concepts of transition and Europeanization in the context of existential situations in Ukraine, being analysed in relation with the concept of *identity* and the role that concept may have on the political vision of state under an international regime. The work will be divided into two levels of analysis: a) approach the theoretical concepts of transition / Europeanization and identity in the context of the existential situation in Ukraine; b) evolution of Ukraine's relations with the European Union over various presidents of the Ukrainian state.

Transition and democratization in the context of Euromaidan

The events that occurred for approximately two years (November 2013 to mid-2015) revealed differences of attitude, vision and political orientation between Western and Eastern Ukraine. The revolution's results showed that the Ukrainian society is much divided, and the phenomenon of transition and Europeanization is not agreed in unison. Ukrainian crisis episode can be analysed at least two respects:

• The society openness to change, which involved two camps: modernist who wants change, transition and Europeanization of Ukrainian society and the traditional, adept of classical and historical values outlined by Russian historical tradition.

• The shaping of pure social identity, the Ukrainian identity- a mix between pro-westerns (who measure the formation of a pure identity by merging with European values) and nationalist (whose new values will be shape on a semi-western foundation, but where Ukrainian identity means a majority of indigenous elements – in other words, the vision of moderate segment of society). This vision has faced the society who militated to preserve the identity of "our" Eastern identity which cannot be merged with the immoral western values.

The process of Europeanization (westernization) of the Ukrainian state is a phenomenon initiated since 2004 and has gained momentum during the next period and Euromaidan Revolution. Overall observation of Europeanization phenomenon and its application in Ukraine case will enlighten efforts being made and the extent to which

this process of will be met in the context of the state. On the other hand, the adoption of identity constructivist theory can explain the phenomenon met post-Euromaidan in Ukraine, that of societal division, in this case, the militants for a pure Ukrainian identity and activist of maintaining indigenous traditions (Russian values). Using these two theoretical approaches - the Europeanization process (transition) and construction of identity - will be examined socio-political metamorphoses and their impact on the future of Ukraine, becoming part of the western environment or remaining hereinafter under the political-cultural influence of Russian.

The concept of Europeanization is essentially a benchmark for non-Member States whose progress should be guided by this standard (Kratochvil 2008: 397), in the idea that they want to be an integral part of European society. Unfortunately, at the base of European evolution of Ukraine lays several issues which have delayed the process: foreign policy promote by his leadership, over time (an oscillatory policy between West and East); pro-Russian administrations at the helm of state and the influence of the Russia Federation, in close link with the lack of coordination between EU and Ukraine. All this made almost impossible developments of Ukraine to Western values – incompatibility of standards. In another ways of things, political discourses have an important role in determining of external objective, and the following structure can explain how discourses influence foreign policy of a state:

- Speeches of public and elites are key factor in our debate
- The idea of structuralism - speeches of these agents (public and elite) can be divided into two categories: specific discourses and superficial discourses
- Then, the incompatibility between different discourses of agents obstructs successful socialization between small agent (audience or governmental organizations, in the case of Ukraine) and one higher - political figure.

Starting from this perspective, in the sphere of foreign policy and politics, in general, the discourse is a tool that analysed worthy may provide important details of a person's thoughts. There are particular rules of political actions that can be identified in political discourse, and also its frequency. On the other hand, making a structure of discourse may be revealed three stages of its: deep speech that would be the link between nation and state; speech as concept of a demonstration of the nation-state related to its relation with Europe and the discourse regarding the state outlook speech towards Europe (Kratochvil 2008: 398-399) (this classification belongs to Oleg Weaver). The same theorist states that relation between state and his people is identical with the deepest discourses, because, in this context, Weaver sees a link with the country's identity, a link which is more important for state's foreign policy than internal security. Nevertheless, the classification made by Oleg Weaver does not fit entirely to the internal case of Ukraine, providing only

a general explanation of the mismatch between elite and public discourses. Using the analyse of discourses just for foreign policy utility, it does not explain as well the internal political crisis.

Further, referring to Kratochvil, he emphasises the requirement of the *nation-state* concept dissociation, because, in the case of Ukraine, associating the term of state with the term of nation makes difficult to determine the type of "nationality" which is preferred by the society/public (Kratochvil 2008: 400-401). For instance, we speak about pro-Western "nationalist" and pro-Russian, thus it can be designed no concrete, comprehensive, unambiguous foreign policy as a single-voice of estate, nor achieve of internal security. The belief that Ukraine is one entity can confuse the essence of analysis forasmuch customizing of identity may be incompatible with the principles which the European regime is built now. International regime no longer focuses so much on the nation-state based on national identity, the less European, the less EU.

The second approach refers to contemporary social-constructivist theory vision, according whom identity is located in relation to "others". These "others" (Russo phones and Russian ethnic in this case) plays an important role in the identity politics and constructivism theory display identities, generally, in relation to others. In this dealing "we-others", an issues is the uncertainty whether the latter are needed into establishing an identity and whether they may be associated with antagonism and identity violence that occur in a given territory. The second assumption is concerning if the "others" play or can play a subversive role in the negotiation and the contest of identities (Morozov, Rumelili 2009: 28-29).

The assumption that constructivist theory starts is that "others" must be regarded as "we", in other words, they must be embedded and integrated in society and national identity, in the end to regional or global identity. Thus, identity is constructed linked to various factions of "others", both internal and external. By giving this multiplicity to "others", a key question is whether the identity (national case) can be built through temporality of "others", i.e. by this instrument, the status of their past to be taken as a benchmark in the construction of identity (Morozov, Rumelili 2009: 30-31). This is a very sensitive issue for Ukraine. At the moment, what happens at the socio-political level in Ukraine contradicts seriously the hypothesis exposed by constructivist theory – namely identity is built alongside "others" - for two reasons:

• Shaping a pure Ukrainian identity supposed to depart from tradition and ancient culture. The old identity is always associated with oppressive political influence of the Soviet Union and then Russia. For the moment, version of 'others' inclusion into version of "pure" Ukrainian identity seems excluded.

• Socio-political nature of the Ukrainian state is still incompatible with Western

model, where "others" means largely "us" (recognition determined by the status of a European citizenship). Vision variant of Ukrainians for "others" fall into two categories: a model of a central-eastern, of attempt to identify and self-identify in their own values, as currently happens in Poland or Hungary or model promoted by the Russian Federation - that of Russian identity, different from others with too less similarities. Therefore, this nature of identity vision obstruct for the time being the adaptation of that kind of constructivist theory hypothesis.

In other news, the construction of identity does not mean exercising power over "other" or coerce them. To build an identity implies an process, somehow, conditioned by a common "written-constitution" of the "insiders" and those "outside", where the both category enjoy the same rights (Morozov, Rumelili 2009: 32) (to use their own language, religion, and the possibility of setting up agencies, their own organizations).

Also, the creation of a national identity consisted by "we" and "others" faces one more obstacle in Ukraine. Presuming that could be achieve a national identity (but hybrid yet) and the process of Europeanization of the Ukrainian state should start, there is no guarantee that both political class and society will not be affected by the fact that they have to embrace Western values, different by the tradition they have shared during the last twenty-five years. Taking into account the messages illustrated by some anti-Western demonstrators, in those short interviews conducted on the street during the revolutionary movements, they worried about the extent of liberty that Western countries allow to its citizens in terms of moral or legal rights – for example, the acceptance of prostitution, recognition of homosexuality and other such aspects.

Finally, we must not forget that Ukrainian society seeks for shaping of her national identity, a process that implies two phenomena:

• an identity that is currently trying to define itself by giving up old values, directly associated with the Soviet Union or Russia, and

• adoption of new values, new visions. But what means "new" for Ukrainian society cannot be guaranteed as a synonymous with European values.

The failure of EU relations with Ukrainian administrations

A brief history of the Ukrainian leadership, after the country got his independence, helps in order to point out the attitude of different presidents of Ukraine and their position and openness to cooperate with European Union. This action emphasises why both Ukraine and EU failed to get close. Equally, EU's leadership because of their tolerance and lack of determination to engage more decided to bring Ukraine closer to EU represented another point that maintained a continuous process of duplicity, in terms of Ukrainian's foreign policy.

After a period of almost three years, Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of an in-

dependent Ukraine, was replaced by Leonid Kuchma, who apparently declared himself pro-European, took controversial policies and he frequently changed the priorities of foreign policy of state. He declared formal alliances with all the countries which he visited (United States, Russia, India, China – on the principle of the highest bidder) , as for the relation with EU, he seemed to be willing to reforms until intervened Russian blackmail and better offer from Russia. As a result, Kucima proved that he was a very unpredictable President and easy to be blackmailed.

Only in 2001, for the first time, EU has taken a firm stand against Ukrainian president because of two reasons:

1. The case of Gongadze - President Kuchma was allegedly implicated in the murder of a journalist, the proof of records of a conversation between the president and killer being disregarded as evidence.

2. The dissolution of Yushchenko's government - disagreements between the president and Prime Minister at that time, Victor Yushchenko, has led to the dissolution of the government. The main causes of this event were corruption and economic reforms that was attempting to be applied in the interests of oligarchic class by the president, and Yushchenko did not respond to those requests.

Following these two events, the Council of Europe discussed, for the first time, the exclusion of Ukraine from the European Commission. Shortly afterwards, everything was forgotten.

In 2004, took place extremely controversial presidential elections, but in the end, Viktor Yushchenko won. Yushchenko's victory represented a step further for EU-Ukraine relations as well as seeming to be a step toward democratization of the state. Immediately after his election, the new president visited European capitals in the hope that, sooner or later, Ukraine will become an EU member. Finally, everything remained at the level or rhetoric, Ukraine has found them as corrupt and undemocratic as before.

In 2010, the presidential chair was won by Viktor Yanukovych, which meant reorienting Ukraine toward Russia Federation and the cooling of relations with European Union. In 2010, the presidency was won by Viktor Yanukovych, which meant turning away toward Russian Federation and Ukraine weakened relation with the European Union. President Viktor Yanukovych has established the Working Group that aim to improve the electoral legislation in line with international standards. Despite the fact that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, OSCE, the Venice Commission and other organizations has stressed the need for immediate changes to legislation regarding elections at various levels, in the end, this body has failed to carry out amendments to the law on presidential, local and parliamentary elections. These changes were necessary in the context of the preparation of Ukraine for the subsequent signing of the Association

Agreement with the European Union. Finally, three years later, we witnessed what was called generic Euromaidan, a bloody revolution, which led to his removal and taking power by force of new political figures, until the election that took place in May 2014.

Currently, the administration led by President Petro Poroshenko, seems to have a pro-Western vision. It remains to be seen whether this policy will materialize in the coming years. If the beginning seemed promising, about two years after the installation of new management, things are looking confuse - the new administration inability and political instability are revealed by events such as the conflict in Ukraine's parliament, in December 2015, when a member of Petro Poroshenko Bloc, namely Oleh Beam, bullied Prime Minister Iatseniuk. Petro Poroshenko Bloc and the People's Front have been the parties that began the governance and have promised to Ukrainian people to reform the state, but the results are still far from expectations. Relevant in this perspective was a message sent on a social network against political class: *"We do not want a new revolution, which you are unknowingly pushing us towards. We are ready to take responsibility for the future of our country. Thus, we do not ask, we demand: to start a real fight against corruption; restoration of justice, rule of law implementation; transparency in government; formulating a plan* (action) *clearly ... and every day of delay* (to implement them) *kill your chances to return the people's support "* (Euromaidan Press 2015).

Conclusion

The transition process / Europeanization of state is and will be a costly episode in the process of Ukraine's evolution which cannot be achieved without solidarity of the whole Ukrainian society. Without awareness of the new political class, which was chosen on the grounds of his pro-Western vision, any setback would mean the loss of Western support in this process. Although the new leadership's inception was promising, yet domestic developments are identified with difficulty. On the other hand, the European Union must realize that the ultimatum imposed in November of 2013 is, on the one hand, its obligation to engage more strongly in the domestic construction of Ukraine, because despite support in reforming main systems and institutions towards democratic transition, numerous reports of international organizations (EU, CoE, OSCE) pointed out that many of these legislative provisions have not been fully implemented and the political and judiciary system were subject of political actors interference (oligarchs or groups of oligarchs). In other words, it encountered an Ukraine that made very small developments which attest their incline towards a democratic perspective both institutionally and socially, an example being national minorities who suffer whenever the government changed.

During Yushcenko mandate, the minorities suffered because many of their rights was violated; when presidency was taken by Victor Yanukovych, he introduced the law concerning regional language (a law that put advantages to Russian minority) and after assumption of power by interim govern (led by ultra-nationalist political activists) meant to repeal that law – the law of "regional language" was reinforced after Poroshenko took the lead. Thus, the Union's position must to be more committed and when the Ukrainian politicians that hold the offices "will fail" to be sanctioned.

Whenever European Union tried, economically speaking, to spur the Ukrainian state to develop democratic institutions, the initiative was halted from the very beginning, perhaps because of Russian Federation, which has all the interest that Ukraine to remain an unstable country, to depend by Russian support. But in these circumstances, the EU aware of the situation, fails to westernize Ukraine, the Union has to accept that Ukraine is an essential buffer-zone and "shield" for the Russia to prevent the extension of EU and NATO near Russian state border. On the other hand, incentives for Ukraine for the most part were considered unsatisfying for association and no motivating for the country to undertake the required reforms (if the EU at that time offered a loan of 610 million Euros, in addition, being required major changes in Ukrainian law; Moscow was offering to Kiev 15 billion in loan, to this being added the promise to lower the price of gas by one-third and no applications for structural reforms as they were required to receive Western loan - this is the level whereon the European Union must be aware she is struggling with the Russian Federation). Ukraine became more a burden for the European Union than a reliable partner, for the most part because Action Plan for Ukraine contains a number of priorities which are general and devoid of concrete targets. Also, regarding judicial reforms and anti-corruption policies, it is noted that, aside from a few warnings and negative assessments about Ukrainian administration regarding alignment prospects to EU, there has been nothing concrete in Union's hand (concrete steps consisting in sanctions, termination / suspension of the partnership, to the exclusion of Ukraine from CoE etc.).

At least, Ukraine is a particular case concerning European integration. The unsuccessful attempts of the EU to support European reconstruction of the Ukrainian state can be attributed to two key issues - social, political and cultural development of Ukraine and the influence of Russia that the EU failed to replace during the last two decades - issues that are key elements of the debate on Ukraine's integration in the European space, a central-western Europe characterized by other values, different by the former Soviet Union whose traces can still be found in the attitude of a part of Ukrainian society and the Ukrainian leadership.

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