Radboud University Nijmegen –Belgorod State University

MASTER THESIS

THE EUROREGIONAL GOVERNANCE AS POSSIBLE BRIDGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND RUSSIA?

A GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS

Research presented for the Master of Science in Human Geography – Radboud University Nijmegen – 2010 2011

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THE CASE OF SLOBOZHANSCHYNA

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A GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS

Acknowledgements

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of figures

INTRODUCTION

In this document are presented the results of a research conducted in Belgorod (Russia) about geopolitical issues between Russia, the European Union and Ukraine. The photo on the cover page has been taken at a wedding celebration in the Soviet Union between a Russian and Ukrainian families. At the time, the border between Ukraine and Russia was only characterized by an administrative line which allowed free crossing of people. Nowadays, the space is divided by the newly erected border, symbol of the new independent Ukraine. Several unsuccessful trials were implemented to come back to the previous situation in the regions. However, it appears that this border has gained a geopolitical importance that has monopolized the attention of politics and lead to a dead end. Through cross-border relations between Ukraine and Russia and the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna, this research attempts to provide alternative answers to questions of integration and influence that ultimately seek at building bridges between Russia and the EU. The example of marriage shows how the border has always played a role in the life of the individuals even though the latter was transparent. For instance, small differences in legislation modified the legal age according to the location of the marriage. This is an example of how the border has always been used through history even if its physical representation was transparent. This is on that precise idea that the research is built.

The first section the research contextualizes the European Union's enlargement in Russia's close neighborhood with a particular attention to the geographical definitions of Europe and Russia. Then the methodology that has been used for conducting the research is approached. The key analytical concept is the "institutionalization" of political aspirations by using a comparative method, derived from the attribution of meaning in linguistic, in a three leveled dimension. By doing so, the project tries to assert that political behaviors seek at the settlement of criteria defining a particular institution (in this case the border) though discourses. The discourses here do not exclusively mean the speeches used by the different players at stake but rather their attempt to create a favorable environment to condition a favorable perception to their desire.

After exposing the methods of data collection and the method of analysis used (the policy-perception-people approach) in the ending of Part1, the second part tries to expose the situation created by Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the European Union in order to set the environment basis in which resistances and accommodations are taking place.

Thus, the process of nationalism in Ukraine is approached in the context of the different projects of integration led by the EU and Russia. The traditional cleavage East-West is considered and complemented by a more nuanced approach. These elements influence Ukrainian politics and condition the framework under which borders are constructed. In this research, the European Union's concerns about security, stability and migration are also considered through the plans of association implemented with Ukraine. Through these facts we are able to see how concretely the European geography is constructed. This theme becomes particularly relevant when placed aside to Russian traditional streams of geopolitics. The last sections of the second part attempt to expose what were the principal influences of Russian thinkers on Russian geographical politics. They support the analysis of the consequences generated by the different projects of integration led by Russia; with the focus on the border Russia shares with Ukraine.

Thus, by paying attention to this particular area, the project reveals key points that are conflicting with the regional cooperation. The conditions created by (inter)national policies generates a set of rules which interferes with regional discourses and behaviors. For some reasons that are presented in the research, regional politics remain subjected to the national views which absorb the few incentives regions could enjoy. As a consequence, the research underlines the lack of civil participation in the elaboration of policies. Yet, the individuals living in border regions of Kharkov and Belgorod are not really constrained by the mental scheme produced by the environment generated at the Ukrainian-Russian border by the European Union, Russia and Ukraine. Although they have to experience the domination from political centers, their wills and expectations are located on several different plans which transcend the traditional oppositions of national policies.

Identification and cross-border practices are thus re-shaping the delimitation of space such as suggested from "above".

Then, the institutionalization of cross-border relations between the two regions seemed to be the correct action regarding of their wishes. Thus, the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna was created and was supposed to be the highest structure of cooperation between Belgorod and Ukraine. However, the multilayered configuration of the organization is reproducing cleavages already existing at national levels. The top-down character of the Euroregion is clearly under-estimating the possibilities of the project. Indeed, it may appear that individuals' practices and thoughts might overcome state considerations if only proper participative structure and legal framework were implemented to reverse the logic of governance in place.

PART 1: PREPARATORY SECTION

1. SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) in 2004 created strong tensions between Moscow and Brussels. From Brussels' point of view, the Kremlin fear economical and political risks due to the European proximity of the former USSR republics, and a perception that they may push the EU to develop a stronger politic toward Russia. The strategy of enlargement and the neighborhood policy of the EU are sometimes perceived as "detaching former soviet-republics from their motherland.

Lynch affirms that, since 2003, Russia feels challenged by the West within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The post-soviet space is perceived as a new front line and an important topic of tensions between Moscow and Brussels (Lynch, 2005; Facon, 2007) (e.g. the divergences concerning the resolution of conflict the frozen conflicts, the gas issues or the advancement of NATO). The attitude of Russia toward the European Neighborhood policy (ENP) is another topic of tension. Nevertheless, the two actors mentioned their willingness for creating a neighborhood composed by a ring of friends. Because some countries are on both political maps of what is called their neighborhoods, must we see those areas solely as zones of tensions or can we think about other developments?

1.1 THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA'S CLOSE NEIGHBORHOOD

For Bachkatov, Russia rejects the definition of "power in transition" (which it considers as a western terminology for denying its evolution). Thus, Russia thinks that the country is moving away from its recovery period and is now ready to regain its status as an international power that it has lost during over the last 20 years (Bachkatov, 2009 in Santander, 2009).

In fact, the awareness of being "something else" other than a *simple* country is historically printed in what she calls the Russian specificity. This perception implies Russia's "natural" destiny to be a world power. From 1992-1993, Yeltsin wanted stressed the break with the soviet period by putting emphasis on policies adopted for economic and social reforms as well as a particular attention to new special relations maintained with the close neighborhood. The rest of the world was rather neglected even if the failed western reforms triggered anti-occidental reactions (Vinatier & al., 2008).

It is important to underline the development of threats faced by Russia to understand its motivations. In the period going from 1993 to 2000, Russia's weaknesses, such as the internal contradictions, the relationships with the countries of the CIS and the political instability of the federation inspired a doctrine based on the multipolarity of international relations (Gomart, 2006).

But in 2000, the situation evolved. The risk of separation in the federation decreased, but dangers caused by organized criminality, and especially, the escape of capitals replaced it. Under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, Russia started to pay more attention to economic reforms and to take a more pragmatic approaches to solving its problems. According to Putin's doctrinal text[1], Russia is hardly ready to defend its vital interests and must focus its attention on the Asian military threat as well as recognizing the importance of stability in the European continent.

The concept of Foreign policy of the Russian federation (adpoted in 2008) reflects the confidence showed by the Kremlin between 2000 and 2008 and their conviction that the globalized world will provide opportunities for competition, eroding the differences between internal and external tools for protecting national interests,

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[1] Available on http://eng.kremlin.ru/acts

and allowing them to melt into each other. Therefore, Moscow recognizes that the EU and Russia have common interests in their periphery (stability, economic integration), and that the EU has specific interests (terrorism, organized criminality, access to energy sources…).

However, initiatives taken by the EU have led to a degree of disbelief in certain areas. For instance, the Kosatchev's speech about the lack of trust between EU and Russia (Torbakov, 2004) or the discourse held by Tchitov in Bratislava about the dualistic choice between "a stable and peaceful existence with the European union or the darkness of Russia" (Facon, 2007). This ambivalent discussion is not only held in Russia but can be witnessed in some countries *within* the European Union. While some countries propose an accommodating line, others (such as the United Kingdom and Poland) insist on moving away from the dominant logic of 'neighborhood' to one of pre-adhesion. This last position expresses the possibility of a dominant (Eu)ropean position inside of a part of land which 20 years ago was still part of one unique country.

The proximity of the EU has already proved that countries subjected to its attraction have shown more openness to norms and values diffused by the former, which in turn directly impacts on the relations that the latter have with Russia. Here, the various outcomes of this process may vary according to the logic adopted for approaching the case (e.g. zero-sum, the win-win view).

Facon explains this interest in Russia's exclusion from the European political continent through the implementation of EU's policies in the common periphery. But, as stressed by Putin, the economic development that is designed to create a new image for Russia as a stable country requires playing in the realm of globalization and stepping away from presenting a threatening front. In fact, the economy has been a key tool in the (re)building of a national identity and in the conducting of foreign policy (Bachkatov, 2008). However, the world context has made it difficult for Russia to impose this idea.

Hence, it is difficult for the "west" (mainly the European Union and the United States) to conceive, outside of a *cold war* framework, that Russia is actually moving toward an exercise of soft power. Indeed some elements have forced Russia to reconsider the use of its *hard power* and blurred the comprehension of its neighbors. For example, the US intervention in Iraq (denounced by Russia), the reaction to the Georgian attack in South Ossetia (in fact triggered by the lack of military capacity which has prevented Russia from drawing a true line of demarcation) or the situation on Ukrainian debts (which has shown the limits of using exclusively soft power mechanisms).

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When attention is paid to the Russian geopolitical approach, the close neighborhood is perceived as the natural sphere of influence on Russia (Facon 2007). This territory is important because it is a part of the Russian identity as a cross-over between Europe and Asia. The strategic location is part of the Russian justification for being a key player in world affairs. Thus, if Russia cannot be considered as being influent on its claimed zone of influence, it seems difficult to see how it could be taken seriously as a world player. It has to be noted that, regarding the same neighborhood, a similar remark can be made with regards to European ambitions to become a world player.

1.2 A NEW WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY?

In 2008, Medvedev inherited leadership of a country which had recovered its past self-confidence, supported by economic growth of consistently 7% or higher since the beginning of 2003[2], very high levels of support for the president and its prime minister and a the predominant role of Gazprom (Kim & De Roy, 2007)

Two axes have been introduced in determining the new Russian foreign policy. The first is based on a commercial orientation as already highlighted by Putin. The second is a defensive orientation as underlined by the military strategy 2008-2030. It refers, for instance, to the unbalanced situation between the US and EU technologies which runs the risk of ruining the regional stability and the extent of space militarization[34].

Thus, the pressure imposed by the Bush administration for a closer partnership between Ukraine and Georgia in NATO has further increased the distrust between Europe, its American ally and Moscow (Facon, 2008). The hardening of military positions intervened in a context of Russian perpetual growth. The military development as well as the western criticisms on Russia's internal issues have led Moscow to redevelop a new politic of sovereignty, claiming for *a Russian way* (Facon, 2008) "opposed to the European standards and values".

However, the situation since 2008 has changed. First of all, Yanukovitch's victory in the last presidential elections in the Ukraine has contributed to changes in the political image of "Orange Ukraine". Second, the dissidences within NATO (especially concerning the war in Iraq, Afghanistan…) and its existential questioning have pushed Russia to make a move toward Europe as proved by the last summit in Deauville, allowing room for better cooperation between key actors.

In addition, 2008 marked a turning point in the Russian economy, which has faced its first continual recession since 1990. In that frame, the double dependency between Europe (energy) and Russia (capitals) has become vital for the two entities. Therefore, this context allows us to think that a pragmatic solution could be found on the basis that the European energetic dependency and Russian economic dependency could combine security and economic needs of the two actors.

It seems that those questions are now under fire. As Baroso and Van Rompuy declared before the last meeting held on December 7th 2010:

> *[THE SUMMIT] will be an important opportunity to strengthen EU/Russian engagement. We will follow up on earlier discussions on the modernization of Russia not least by taking stock on our partnership for modernization. The summit should focus, in particular, on achieving decisive progress on Russia's accession to the WTO, and on some our outstanding bilateral issues, such as trade, investment and cooperation in the energy sector. We should see how we can enhance the efficiency of crisis-management co-operation on the basis of a comprehensive approach to security issues, including frozen conflicts. We should also register progress on the visa dialogue entering a fully operational phase through the elaboration of common steps. As always, the summit will be an opportunity to openly address questions related to human rights and the rule of law.'*

geographical and cultural problem of the shared neighborhood. In Munich, Putin expressed the common history of Russia and the European family but claimed the danger of drawing new walls, even virtual ones. This

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[2] Annual economic reports of the Russia Federation:
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/RUSSIANFEDERATIONEXTN/0,,contentMDK:21032960~menuPK:989684~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:305600,00.html
[3] Interfax AVN – 8/08/2008 & 5/03/2008
[4] Interfax AVN – 8/08/2008 & 5/03/2008

ambiguous statement locates once more Russia as being inside and outside Europe. In fact, it stresses the question of how Russia could be attached to the European continent.

This question is more complex than it seems. As Bachkatov pertinently points it out, the biggest incomprehension on the European side resides in the inability to know if Russia is part of Europe or apart of the continent. The consequences of possible answers have broader interests than those limited to Russia and the EU. The United States have a benefit to prevent a closer partnership between Moscow and Beijing for instance.

But this may also be part of a political strategy. When in 2007, Putin underlined this by observing the move in economic dynamism and technology towards Asia, and in doing so implicitly asking where Russian attention should be placed in this context. Nevertheless, as Bachkatov and Facon both emphasize, Moscow is in a delicate situation in those regions. Their insofar-successful relationship with China could be compromised in the long term by the "Asian uncertainty" (Facon, 2008) problem of Chinese immigration in Siberia and Mongolia, the military development of Beijing and the two countries shared border. Thus, if Russia needs to pay more attention to China, this might also be a reason to strengthen the links with the European regional power.

2. SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

2.1 THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSE

However the concept of "natural space" is analytically misleading because it neglects the fuzzy definition of what "natural" is. Indeed, according to Kramsch, any reference to 'naturalism' in geopolitics hides the inherently *political*, and hence, man-made, nature of geopolitical strategy. Therefore, closer notice needs to be paid if we are to understand what the vital interests of Russia in its neighborhood are. An interest in the relationship between Russia and Ukraine is mandatory, as it leads to a greater understanding of the different economic and social ties that unite the two countries.

According to Facon's opinion, the *Russian way* is challenged though the competition recorded in countries such as Ukraine. Her focus derives from economic and security interests to reach the question of standards and values which, in her opinion, cannot be harmonized between Russia and the EU because of the incomprehension surrounding the two actors. For instance, the European encouragement for the accession of Ukraine to NATO; the regime of borders favored by Brussels at the eastern part of Ukraine; the lack of interest in Russia's modernization in other sectors than energy supplies; the limitation of trans-national trade felt by local businessmen. Felt most strongly however, is the perception that the support the Ukraine gains from the WTO as being illegitimate, hence the efforts taken to prevent the country from joining the economic area created for the CIS. This approach is well-suited to explaining macro-economic politics as well as matters of international security. Within both topics, experts are very confident in the possibility of finding pragmatic agreements that would be convenient for both regional powers together. For instance, Bachkatov mentioned the importance of economic power in the re-emerging Russia, especially within its neighborhood. Therefore, it has not been surprising to observe during the last EU-Russia summit that strong attention was paid to trade and partnership over security issues. But as we will see further, these topics do not solve all the issues as stake.

For instance, the "Orange revolution" in Ukraine triggered reactions of political distrust which confirmed to Moscow the geopolitical objectives of the ENP. This lead the Kremlin to consider the ENP as an *"enterism"* strategy designed to challenge Russia's geopolitical foundations. Nevertheless it is important to consider the Ukrainian political system and the divided nature of Ukraine. Hence, before dealing with the ENP and Ukraine as a political whole, one has to understand the risk to fastening ones analysis in the "territorial trap of the state" (Agnew, 1994).

Presenting Russian ambitions in terms of classical geopolitics is also too restrictive. Moscow's complex stance is balanced between realist, idealist, and imperialist streams.

From a pragmatic point of view, one may refer to Medvedev's five principles used in the guiding the Russian foreign policy: *The recognition of the supremacy of the international law to solve conflicts between nations; the rejection of any unipolar system; the rejection of isolation imposed by others or by Russia itself; the protection of Russian citizens wherever they are and the notion of primordial Russian interests[5].* It is reasonable to consider this statement as being polished for political uses; nevertheless it is certainly not innocent. These principles avoid any return to cold war situations; it pushes for favoring cooperation in a "multipolar" world motivated by Russian interests and the protection of Russian minorities in, now, foreign countries. They express as well the concept of primordial interest. According to Sergeï Larvov, they do not refer to cold-war fashioned conceptions of zones of influence, but are made for affirming Russia's willingness to be a new geopolitical center in the region.

Hence Bachkatov refers to Russian policy as an exercise of pragmatic 'soft power' similar to the European one. However, according to her, the western fear of Russian pipelines has turned what could have been a perfect tool of cooperation to a security issue. This idea omits the fact that Russia's economy and gas exportation are under pressure from European demands. Hence, the nature of EU/Russian tensions is not seated purely in economic issues, but more in the "natural" definition of a geographical relationship. The (Eu)ropean territorial expansion through the unclear shapes of "Europe" encounters the same fuzziness in the delimitation of "Russia". These perceptions hide two political projects covering a common part of land which give an explanation for the tensions occurring between the "European Union" and the "Russian Federation".

2.2 A CRITICAL APPROACH

The aim of this section is to clarify the geographical approach and to introduce the framework that will be used throughout this research.

The first notion to be review is the classical conception of geopolitics. The foundations of this term are to be found in Mackinder's geopolitical pivot of history (1904). The idea of a geographical pivot is clearly structuralist by referring to a land composed by superior richness in culture and resources. This is what will be called later the idea of center & periphery introduced by Wallerstein. **Mackinder mentioned the importance of communication as a way of control which he divided in two types: land and communications (through railway and water).** Although in the era of the globalization, these conceptions might seem to be out of date, the idea behind this representation is still very contemporary (e.g. controls of flows such as capitals and persons in a geographic area; the strategic importance of the black sea for securing accesses). For example, Russia's concept of "natural space" can be approached by several conceptions that are built on the same basis. In 1942, Haushofer defined geopolitics as a "future" oriented science made for supporting realistic goals and approaches ("We must see nations as they are", aiming at the recognition of the national determination in the natural living space"). As for the concept of natural space, Ratzel depicted historical references as a continuum of geography. The latter frames the need of nations to navigate between their opposing *desire* for space versus their *actual* possession as being the source of most conflicts. Consequently, Russian classical geopolitics must be understood through the balance of historical legacy and geographical resources of development. Hence the structuralist stream is very present in the approach chosen for analyzing the issue of the relations between Russia and the EU.

Yet, this structural approach to classical geopolitics has many weaknesses. First of all, the concept of "natural" space has already been much debated in modern literature. According to many authors, the definition of "natural" is always related to the concept of *"discourse"* used to delimitate the "limits" of nature. According to

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[5] www.kremlin.ru

Muller's view (2008), a discourse can be defined as a double relationship between a set of rules and narratives, framing the actions of individuals and the actions of individuals framing the discourse. Throughout history, many discourses have affected the implementation of international policies.

Thus, some authors have already highlighted how imaginaries in American Foreign policy have shaped the geographical picture of the cold war summarizing the conflict as a division between East/West. Indeed, this vision covered many regional conflicts that re-emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). Tuathail and Agnew have within their work confirmed Said's conclusions (1984) when he presented the "*oriental*" position. According to which, there are many divisions in the ways that the world is being observed, even though there is only one historical world. The visualization of a situation is related to various understandings, values and interests which do not especially cover the reality of the field. But this perception of relations between the central and periphery imaginative is often center-produced because of the capacities of influence that dispose hegemonic powers on the international realm (Said, 1984; Tuathail & Agnew, 1992).

The problem is that this approach tends to simplify the situation to a dual opposition that becomes very close to what is depicted in Huntington's clash of civilizations (1993). If this approach is chosen for analyzing Russian and (Eu)ropean relationships in their common neighborhood, it opposes without any alternatives the two actors and lock them into a zero-sum game. But in our case, the triangular relationship between Ukraine and Russia and the EU overlooks the fact that the three actors do not represent homogenous blocs. Therefore, it would be dangerous to consider monolithically the three countries within their state borders. In addition, this approach also calls for some critical distinctions which must be made when dealing with borders.

A border is a zone or a line of demarcation that can be of different natures. Kristof (1959) brilliantly exposed the ambivalence around the concept of border through *the nature of frontiers and boundaries.*

In short, a boundary marks the delimitation of a bounded space. In a conceptual legal framework, the explicit translation of the idea is the delimited state border *as the essential of statehood* (Kristof, 1959).

This idea can already be found in the Greek conception of the "*cité*". The term πολις (polis) derives from the term ακροπολις (acropolis) which means: « Fortress » marks the origin of the function of protection of the collectivity. Therefore, the wall of the "polis" which gives protection depends on the function of identification: Who is in, Who is out? It is a geopolitical fact that the periphery of a state is less protected than the center (Verjans, 2006). Nevertheless, this lack of protection does not avoid certain recognition by the center of this periphery as being part of its identity. This process is materialized by the boundary.

> *The frontier is outer-oriented. As history, American, Russian or Chinese, well illustrates, the borderlands often develop their own interests quite different from those of the central government. They feel neither bound by the center nor binding its realm. Rather they represent runaway elements and interests of the state's corporate body.* (Kristof, 1959)

Thus it does not imply that the periphery (or the territory located at the frontier) is *de fato* bond by the boundary that acts like a discourse of reality. The word "frontier" derives from the literal conception of what is in the front. It is a zone of contacts and exchanges which does not mark the end of a territory but rather its beginning.

> *Historical memories play a role in the choice we make between the two words. […] This because we associate past frontier conditions with the areas through which these present-day boundaries are drawn.* (Kristof, 1959)

In his presentation, Kristof presents the historical memory of a frontier of a boundary as the determinant of present-day boundaries. Because he wrote his article in 1959, he could not consider the processes through

which boundaries were drawn after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Therefore, as he remarkably explained it, divergences arise between borderlands and political centers in the determination of whether or not the border is considered as a frontier or as a boundary. Again, imaginaries play a decisive role in the attribution of meanings, which is in full contrast to Huntington's essentialisms.

2.2.1 DECONSTRUCTION AND ANALYSIS

The influence of Huntington's theoretical approach pushes one to look at the situation from a macro-level related directly to the geopolitical situation. This is in fact well-suited to understanding what the actual macro-forces in action are because of its narrative translation into political projects. However, it does not provide the necessary lens for understanding processes at the edge of "civilizations". The fact that hegemonic blocs are emerging in the multipolar world must not be neglected, but Huntington's theoretical tool is not precise enough to understand mechanisms located at the edges of these blocs. Huntington presents civilizations as being both impermeable and conflictive. Hence he predicts a future clash of different blocs, which predicts re-bordering processes that will follow the lines of the different "civilizations".

Several problems arise from this interpretation. First, his conception of civilization is problematic regarding his system of categorization. Second, this idea contains only a little on the formation of civilizations. Third, it does not explain how the process of re-bordering will take place.

The problematic conception of civilization is well summarized by Sen:

> *The difficulty with Huntington's approach begins with his system of unique categorization, well before the issue of a clash—or not—is even raised. Indeed, the thesis of a civilizational clash is conceptually parasitic on the commanding power of a unique categorization along so-called civilizational lines, which closely follow religious divisions to which singular attention is paid* (Sen, 2006)

Lipset and Rokkan in 1967 had already demonstrated how the formation of different cleavages were constructed though history in order to define many divisions within a society. Therefore, the categorization of a civilization under a unique criterion tends to hide the different classification that can be realized within a society.

> *Increasing reliance on religion-based classification of the people of the world also tends to make the Western response to global terrorism and conflict peculiarly ham-handed. Respect for "other people" is shown by praising their religious books, rather than by taking note of the many-sided involvements and achievements, in nonreligious as well as religious fields, of different people in a globally interactive world (Sen, 2006).*

Hence, by partitioning the population of the world by this unique classification, the division is implicitly used to place people firmly inside an equally unique set of rigid boxes (*Ibid*). The latter point developed by Sen is particularly interesting because it undermines the instrumental tendency to reproduction. Thus, by the reproduction of classification, a certain discourse is produced and shapes the perceptions we have of the "historical" world.

The process of formation of the civilization, as interpreted by Huntington is wrong. His approach is in fact biased by his unique conception of antagonist bloc. An alternative is proposed by Fernand Braudel (in Verjans 2006).

	Short term	Middle term	Long term
Macropolitic			Geopolitics
Mesopolitic		Social	
Micropolitic	Individual		

Fig 1 – Structural table of societal formations

In this proposition, the historical and social analysis is presented in three steps: *The short term implies the immediate issues of actions previously described by the event history, the middle term marked by the length of the human life (or institutional projects and collective challenges), the long term measured by the life of the civilizations (*Verjans, 2006).

Nevertheless, civilizations are not impermeable; on the contrary, they are relatively porous on the basis of reproductions of two levels: individual and societal. Hence, the usual life reproduced at the micro level is generalized in the world by conditioning the meso level. But the meso level has the possibility of influencing the mirco level by shaping it in a second term, as political actions are not a simple reproduction of social demands. There is a double conditioning between time and dimensions, regarding the superior and the inferior level. Therefore, the middle of this matrix corresponds to the actions of politics. The relationship between individual and civilization is mediated by the politics which correspond perfectly to the theorization of the concept of discourse made by Muller.

	Short term	Middle term	Long term
Macropolitic			Geopolitics
Mesopolitic		Social	
Micropolitic	Individual		

Fig 2 – Post-structural table of societal formations

Finally, the use of classical geopolitical discourses is by itself a source of problems for re-bordering the perimeter of a civilization. In fact, as we already showed, they are not collapsing but melting into each other. Then, the opposition is based on political discourses instead of micro-realities. Several reasons are causing this problem.

For instance, Micheal Wintle (1999) explains how the geographical representations were translated into maps. Those representations are subjected to the historical environment and the state of knowledge where they were produced. If his attention is more devoted to history, his reasoning is still very useful to illustrate the problem of fixed civilizations.
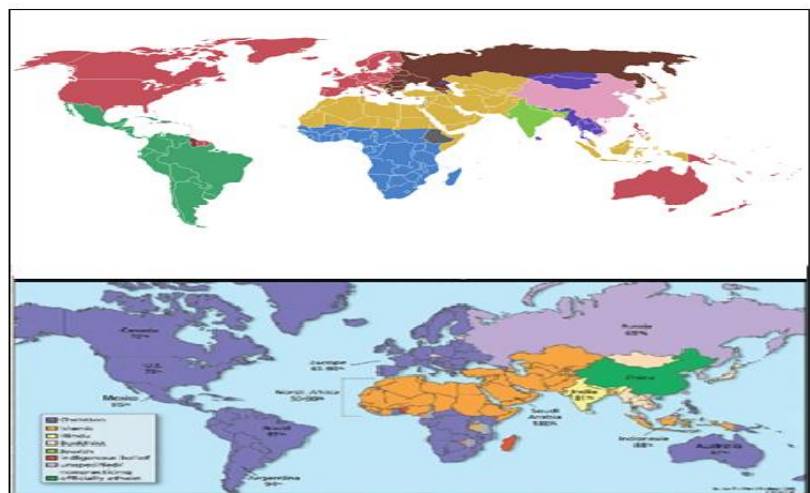
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Fig. 3 & Fig. 4 – Comparison: Civilization depicted in Samuel Huntington's Clash of civilizations & the main religious influences presented by Timothy R. Furnish

Here is a practical example: The following figures are maps in which different civilizations are presented as represented by a religious basis, as suggested by Huntington. In our case, we will pay further attention to Ukraine. From one representation to another, the Ukraine has shifted from the Orthodox world to the western Christian world. First, the Ukraine is considered as a homogenous bloc represented by its state borders. Second, the identity of the country is aligned from one side (Russia) to another (The EU) according to the map.

Finally, those maps undermined that, because of the political representation, a country can shift its alignment from one side to another because of its tradition of civilization.

Elden (2009) points out that the international system is based on the notion of territorial sovereignty. International law refers to the principle of territorial *status quo*. Therefore, it is understandable that state borders still have an impact on the approach of the situation and that they represent a great instrument in the shaping of the notion of territory. Through a classical conception of geopolitics, territory becomes meaningful and its significance becomes instrumental. Because of "state conservationism" of international law and its official recognition by the EU and Russia, the struggle over Ukraine seem to take place only at the state level translated by the fuzzy terms of "governance". As long as the actors at stake remain in this context of legal recognition, no process of re-bordering is possible. In fact, the issue over the Russian/European periphery is not only based on economic issues but is a question of geopolitical definition shaped by the influence of state borders.

Therefore, since the delimitation of countries is guarantee by the international system and in order to solve the geographical argue presented by Bachkatov (*the biggest incomprehension on the European side resides in the inability to know if Russia is part of Europe or apart of the continent). T*he attention should be paid to borderlands where the conflictive relation of frontier and boundary is at stake. By looking at state borders as the re-affirmation of the overlapping narratives of "Russia" and "Europe", the following question is being considered in this research: Are we witnessing the frontal collision of two competing geographical projections or can we think about a different development, a place where Russia and Europe could melt into each other?

3. CENTRAL GOAL

The project has connections to various topics. Firstly, it aims to bring insights to the geographical interaction between Russia and Europe. The broad implication of this issue implies the project seeks at providing understandings in the interaction of global, regional and local policies at border and for Euroregional matters. If the purpose of this research is, related to European, Ukrainian and Russian foreign policies, it has narrower goals. This paper seeks at supporting for developing regional cooperation across the Ukrainian/Russian border.

Theoretically, this paper tries to escape the naturalist conception of Huntington's analysis in order to overcome the traditional opposition brought (inside and outside, us and them, open and controlled space) by borders. In order to do so, the theoretical framework deals with notions of imagined political spaces through the formation of discourses. However, the principal attention is the institutionalization of these spaces.

The case study used in order to elucidate these ideas is the Ukrainian-Russian border through the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna. Local officers are aiming at developing technological cooperation, educational space, as well as other kind of projects. However, one of the sub-objectives consists to support the political project to bring it *alive*. Behind this attempt lies the Balibar's idea that a political space becomes a public space (or "sphere") when it is not only "mapped" by sovereign powers (including supra-national organizations), or imposed by economic forces (the "automatic domination of the market"), but "used" and "instituted" (or constituted) by civic practices, debates, forms of representations and social conflicts. Thus, empirically, the research tries to prove the inadequacy between national policies, euroregional structures and local cross-border experiences. In addition, it seeks at demonstrating why the involvement of the individual in the good conduct of the cross-border project opens new paths in geopolitical interactions.

Finally, even if these goals may appear to be diverging in different directions, they interrelate in the attempt of resolution of the geographical issue between the European Union and the Russian federation which could help to find common grounds in the respective foreign policies. Especially in border matters. The basic hypothesis is that the borderland population is not fatally tied by the reality of the border: while seeking at a unified

territory, they must also face more physical lines on the ground created by elements such as the legal, politic and infrastructure frameworks which shapes their socio-economic relations.

The constitution of effective regional governance could help to solve the tensions that arise from the development of borders. This idea could overcome the idea of borders as place of inclusion and exclusion and help to solve the geographical issue of Europe and Russia.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As previously introduced, the general hypothesis behind the research is that the Ukrainian/Russian border can be thought of in terms other than exclusion and/or inclusion. In regards of the geographical issue between the European Union and Russian the research question is the following: **Can the Euroregional governance serve as a bridging alternative in the construction of Russia and Europe?**

It interrogates the scheme of two collapsing homogenous blocs and aims at demonstrating that Europe and Russia are composed of regional disparities that can be used to link the geographical concepts one to another. In order to answer this question, we need to start focusing on a general level: The dynamic of creation of the European neighborhood and its implication on the Ukrainian/Russian border.

1. What effects have the European Union on the Ukrainian/Russian borders?
   - How does it influence the Ukrainian policies?
   - How does it influence the Russian policies?
2. What are the perceptions of the Ukrainian central government on the Ukrainian/Russian border?
   - How does it influence the border regime?
   - How does it affect the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna
3. What are the perceptions of the Russian central government on the Ukrainian/Russian border?
   - How does it influence the border regime?
   - How does it affect the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna

Once the general trends will be presented, the research will have to deal with the regional levels of governance in order to see if/how the macro-narratives are being reproduced:

4. What are the objectives behind the development of the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna?
   - What are the main preoccupations of the regional government of Kharkov and Belgorod?
   - How does the governing structure look like?
   - What are the connections between the Euroregional authorities and the individuals constituting the Slobodan space?

Finally, a micro analysis will be conducted to present the relationship between the actual experienced space of the border and the top-down dialectic shaping the border.

5. What are the local experiences regarding the Ukrainian/Russian border and the project of cross-border cooperation?
   - How do the individuals perceive the border?
   - How do the individuals perceive the Euroregion?
   - How are their lived experiences shaped by the border?
   - How are their lived experiences shaped by the Euroregion?

5. "METHODS"

5.1   THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Verjans (2006) developed a cross-cutting approach between the Fernand Saussure's analyses of the linguistic and the cleavages advanced by Stein Rokkan. This research will be conducted using this approach for binding Said's concept of *orientalism* and Balibar's idea of political and public spaces. The institutionalization of the space will constitute the backbone of the analysis.

This analysis fits remarkably in the study of border impacts, especially in the understanding of the meanings attributed to borders by different level of actions (micro, meso, macro) and by the communities experiencing the border. The advantage of this approach is in its ability to provide a theoretical lvel of support for explaining divergences in the definition of the same concept (the border, the Euroregion).

5.1.1 POST-STRUCTURAL AND PHRASAL ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
According to Verjans:

> *Juridical institutions present often themselves under the configuration of rules more or less stables of social relations. The efficiency of these rules comes from their capacity to refer their interests to the monopoly of state violence but also from the balance between parties, product of numerous accumulated experiences (translated from French, Verjans 2006)*

Thus, the process of institutionalization of state borders is very similar to his definition of legal institutions. In fact, the imposition of a state border is maintaining, often violently, a sort of stability in social relations. The efficiency of a state border resides well in the monopolization of a space through the controlled repetitions of accumulated experiences. Therefore, it is easy to find in this statement the legal nature of a state border presented as boundary by Kristof (1959). In this project, the concept of boundary will be used as *a cartographic 'line of delimitation representing the border between two countries* (A state border). A border is the zone of demarcation.

In our conception, this legal settlement (or this set of rules to match with our discursive analysis), could be the expression of a political institution as the translation of meaningful social relations but this proposition does notpermanently occur. In fact:

> *The political institutions do not present this stability through generations. Yet the different forms of analysis attempted to explain by their forces a part of their efficiency. (translated from French, Verjans 2006)*

As pointed out by Verjans, the lack in stability of a political institution does not correspond to the stability of the legal one.

Nevertheless, this process seems to be intensively more complicated when it occurs with the legal institution represented by a "boundary". As already mentioned, Elden (*Ibid*) stresses the principle of territorial preservation which makes difficult any changes which would touch the sovereignty of countries. Thus, the role of the politics is often compromised when he deals with boundaries because there can be inabilities to change into the legal system related to the boundary to the societal changes at the bottom of populations. Moreover it would be naïve to limit the role of the politics to the legal translation of political institutions. As mentioned above, the action of the politics is directly located at crossing path between the "individual" and the "geopolitics". As a mediator between the micro and meso levels, the political statecraft is in fact re-formulating the discourses in use, within the limits of his scope of actions, to achieve his own desire.

On this basis, let comments the Verjans' use of Saussure's analysis.

It is useful to remind the analytical basements of linguistic institutions […] It worth mentioning that the starting idea consisted in analyzing social institutions as Ferdinand Saussure did in its linguistic analysis with a double articulation of sounds of signified referring to a meaning, a signified or in other words a conceptive container. (translated from French, Verjans 2006)

To take an example presented by Verjans, this statement can be presented as a matrix articulating a simple semantic system of a red fire where the colors would replace the sounds and would be articulated in the talked language (Umberto Eco 1992 quoted in Verjans 2006)[6]. It is in fact the adapted representation of Saussure's analysis of the linguistic.

		Signified	
		Walk	Do not Walk
Significant	Green Fire	X	
	Red Fire		X

Fig. 5 Articulation of significant and signified for a traffic light

In fact, this matrix gives us the relationship that could exist between the cultural choice and the political institution. Verjans explains that the cultural attribution "walk" to the green color to and red to the meaning: "do not walk" can be reversed if the individual considers that the "signified" does not fulfill its role anymore. Let considers this statement within the frame of the border context. For political and societal reasons, it could appear logical to draw a boundary between two different populations. It is the legal translation of a political institution with the simple signification: On this side of the line, this is us, on the other side, them. But as Verjans showed, the individuals could consider the political institution as obsolete. Thus, the distinction between "us and them" can be questioned and in pure theory, modified. Therefore, the signified of the boundary is not fixed. However, as we showed earlier with the principle of territorial status quo the legal institution of the boundary is likely to remain. Many reasons for such persistence can be found such as geopolitical interests (access to water, control over way of communications, energy supplies...)

The last paragraph shows that there can be an opposition between the will of individuals and the will of a "state" translated in the legal disposition expressed by the boundary. Nevertheless, even if the social context is reconsidering the meaning of the political institution of the boundary, its legal signification remains.

In those conditions, this legal signification is instrumental. It is the translation of a political will corresponding to political interests. A violent maintaining of a boundary which aims at conducting the individuals to reproduce daily actions in consideration of the border in order to avoid any bottom-up changes. In the long term, the final outcome of this continuous reproduction "aims" at a fatal perception of the legal experience of the border seen as an authentic boundary despite the other narratives that could exist upon the space.

As a first conclusion, we can see that there is a panel of significations around the boundary which is the cross-road between at least two wills and two interests.

The individual approach can be seen as being more generalized based on global principles of actions. In his structural analysis, Verjans presents the process of formation of societal choices that, around a certain issue, can solidify to become ideological. Hence for him, the institutional positions imply intentions that are registered into large conceptual frame. With the analogy to the linguistic analysis, this polarity is called "institutionalized" which gives large political and ideological content to the political institution. In our case, the boundary is not necessarily a political institution but its role plays the same effect. Thus, its political content is

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[6] Translated from Verjans : 2006 - Pierre Verjans. «Cahier n°4 - Analyse structurale et syntagmatique des institutions politiques». *Cahiers de Sciences politiques de l'ULg*, http://popups.ulg.ac.be/csp/document.php?id=142

not necessarily given by what Verjans calls a societal choice but by the legal (and violent) developments imposed on populations.

> *Through container of the political institution, the institutor would repeat the interests linked to institutional positions. Regarding each institution, one can imagine a projection in the future that will favor a geographical or functional pole of the society. (translated from French, Verjans 2006)*

Finally, what Verjans suggests is that the institutions can be analyzed with the same techniques than the ones used in linguistic. The institutional behaviors (namely, the actions conducted according to perceptions one has regarding an institutionalized element such as a border) are influenced by series of discourses. Therefore, on one hand, the analysis of discourses can provide explanations and the predictability required for a theoretical framework. On the other hands, the analysis of actions and behaviors provides evidences of the discourses adopted. Both are part of a same matrix crossing wills and interests through *significant* and *signified.* This explains as well why there can be contradictions between different wills and interests which are not necessarily the same at every level of analysis. Each has its own approach which can also be divided into a system of compliance and opposition. The advantage of the structural analysis resides in the crossing of interests of political "*institutor" (political significants)* and intentions of political "*instituted" (political signified).* Verjans shows that this matrix is usable in every level of analysis (micro, meso, macro) which gives the possibility of a singular structural analysis. If there is resistance, the discursive domination of the "*institutors"* can thus be deconstructed by looking into the behaviors of the "*instituted"*.

5.2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL & RESEARCH MODEL

5.2.1 INSTITUTIONS, BORDERS & POLICIES: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As presented in our theoretical chapter, this analysis will deal with institutions. The term comes from Latin origins *Institutio* which means *the rule*. Lucien François in his deconstruction of the legal relationship has identified the relational atom, namely the *Jurème*. It is the smallest particle of the relation which is characterized by the real of fictive believed threat that one exercises on someone else. An institution is a social translation of this relation.

There are many types of institutions which compose our life and form complex networks. For instance, an institution can be political or/and legal. As Verjans underlined, the legal institution is fixed in time through texts. Its "revolution" happens rather occasionally and is often caused by an external factor such as the modification of the social environment. The political institution is the relationship that defines the structure of social norms. They are constantly in evolution because they are interpreted and re-interpreted.

As Umberto Eco, following Saussure's logic, presents it, a political institution is signified by people through the "institutionalization" of norms. It marks the difference with a juridical norm which represents a certain type of political institution. The juridical institution is designed to provide a code of conduct seeking at managing behaviors. The justification for this institution lies in the concept of discourse.

As Foucault explains, a discourse as a set of norms, behaviors, conducts that are imposed on the subjects. Thus, the attribution of the signified is intrinsically tied to relation of domination in the social construction. This relation of power, in other words, the *Jurème,* is constituted by several practices that Muller (2008) divided *between discursive and non-discursive practices***.** On one hand, it proves that the bottom-up process of institutionalization can be taken seriously for re-shaping the discourse imposed on the subjects; on the other hand, it explains the process though which legal institutions are implemented to impose the elites' "desired" stability in social relations.

When it comes to the definition of borders, the explanation of discourses and institutions is particularly meaningful. As clarified above, a border can be at the same time a frontier or a boundary. But in fact, the

situation is complexer because at the very beginning, a "border" is *not a legal concept, nor, at least not essentially, a political or intellectual concept. It is rather a phenomenon of the "facts of life" – a manifestation of the spontaneous tendency for growth of the ecumene* (Kristof, 1959 quoted in Zhurzhenko, 2010).

Therefore, the concept of frontier (*Literally: what is in the front; the attribution of a centrifugal meaning to the border (Op Cit, 1959))* or boundary (*The outer line of control of a government; the attribution of a centripetal meaning to the border*) can be used simultaneity for designing the same border.

Once this conceptualization has been made, it becomes clear to understand, in geographic terms, the issue behind the policies that relate to borders. It constitutes the production of positions that aim at regulating the social relations; as if they were dealing with a frontier or a boundary. In this regard, several policies can be identified across the Ukrainian/Russian border such as the ENP, the CIS, the Single Economic Area (SEA), etc. In practice, these policies are translated though the legal & political systems of the countries at stake such as delegations of political power, different tax and custom systems, the implementation of joint projects, the ratification of international conventions regarding cross-border cooperation, for instance.

This gives the whole dimension to the changing nature of borders because the institutionalization of those policies is especially designed to influence this process. In fact, it proves the ambivalence and the difficulties to deal with this theme.

However, it would be wrong to consider solely the policies to influence the nature of the border produced only in the national parliaments (the border regime, most of the commercial taxes, the ratification of international convention are federal competences). For example, the regional and local authorities have also their word. In fact, the different actors are using different techniques – *What Foucault might call "la gouvernementalité"* – in order to manage the conducts of individuals in the borderland.

Our case study partly focuses on the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna. Consequently, it is important to define the concept of Euroregions to approach the most relevant actors. Nevertheless, the term "Euroregion" has not been yet defined as a legal structure *per se*. Therefore, it appears that the concept can be approach only through a large definition in order to enclose the variety of organizations that have been developing through time.

The Mission operationelle transfrontalière attempted to solve this issue and defines Euroregions as:

> *Territorial collectivities and their organs cooperate on both side of the border (1) in their domain of competency according to procedures written in their status in respect of the national legislation and the international agreement concluded by the state where they are located (2) in order to lead a cross-border project with a common interest (3). The territorial collectivities and their organs on both side of the border…*

1. *Territorial collectivities and their organs cooperate on both side of the border*

In our case, this refers to the regional authorities of Kharkov Oblast and Belgorod Oblast as well as their municipalities. It has to be noted that when this research will deal with the municipalities, it will implicitly deal with the individuals composing them for two reasons. First as we will show, there is an absence of implication of the municipalities in the Euroregional decisional process. Second, as Meny & Surel (2004) points out, because *in no other place than within the local level is realized the osmosis between political power and territorial representation.* But the "territorial" collectivities are also organized with other structures such as NGO's present in the decision making process.

2. *… in their domain of competency according to procedures written in their status in respect of the national legislation and the international agreement concluded by the state where they are located …*

In our case, this refers to the relation between the respective regional authorities and the national respective ones of Ukraine and Russia. But as we pointed out earlier, supra-national convention might influence the process. Naturally, the EU has no "direct" implication of the Ua/Ru border but must not be forgotten in the analysis of the relationship.

> 3. … in order to lead cross-border projects with a common interest.

This last part is probably the more interesting and fits well in our conceptual framework. The notion of common interest has to take in account the different actors at stake, their inter-relations, their different objectives and visions for the Euroregional model. The role of the border in this matter is of the first importance. The power is not located in specific positions but is diffused through the different actors at stake with the border. Hence, border policies implemented can refer to horizontal synergies/antagonisms as well as vertical synergies/ antagonisms. Consequently, one of the goals of the research is to identify the relationship between the cross-border organization and the different narratives that cover the border

Lastly, another source of influence must be considered, namely: the individuals. Their opinions, experiences and perceptions will be the core of the research's empirical findings. As Muller presents it, the narratives used by the individuals are also sources that can shape a discursive reality. But if conceptually, it is rather easy to imagine the borderland population, in practice it reveals to be difficult. The borderland is a fluctuating concept that shrinks and stretches according to its given definitions. In this research, the concept of "borderland" in particular means Kharkov and Belgorod regions' administrative borders. But its generality can be general can be extended to the administrative regions across the Ukrainian/Russian border. Hence, as the target of analysis, the terms "individuals" and "population" refer specifically to the people living in Kharkov and Belgorod regions[7]. However, it is vital to understand the social relationships the individuals carry with the border are wider and deeper than their contacts with the Euroregion. Therefore some dimensions affecting individuals in the Belgorod and Kharkov can be generalized to the overall Ukrainian and Russian border regions

5.3 METHODOLOGY

5.3.1. DATA COLLECTION

5.3.1.1 DESK STUDY

It aims at providing the sufficient literature required for understanding theoretically the dynamic taking place at the Ua/Ru border. During this process were collected and analyzed the different documents[8] that supported the research. Other methods for collecting data were mobilized. During the research period at Belgorod State University, it had been possible to attend and prepare several conferences[9]. Although most of the topics presented were in Russian, it had been possible to obtain raw analysis and some key presentations that were translated afterwards. The involvement in the preparation of some events (e.g. the spring school of cross-border cooperation) provided interesting observations that serve the general understanding of the context. Finally, personal experiences with the border itself brought a better understanding of the situation

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[7] Belgorod Oblast in 2008 – Around 1.500.000 people; Kharkov Oblast in 2008 – Around 2.750.000 people. In other words, this represents a consequent amount of people that live less far than an hour from the border.
[8] See references
[9] - International Scientific and Practical Conference; "Formation of networks of cross-border cooperation in Ukraine" - May 12th-13th 2011 - Chernovtsi Trade Economics Institute KNTEU with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Ukraine.
 - "The Ukrainian-Russian contiguous: status and prospects of cooperation" – Kharkov University VN Karazin – April 16th.
 Seminar: "Formation for innovative projects" (Euroregion Slobozhanchyna) – Mars 24th 2011

5.3.1.2 INTERVIEWS & TALKS

In the research, open interviews aim at providing complement to literature study and document analysis. The collection will not make a complete qualitative tour of the question; however it hopes to underline points, ideas, practices that have been missed in the desk study.

The interviews were conducted in function of their possibilities. The problem of languages constituted a huge working weakness. The accessibility of officials was another burden. Due to linguistic and financial problems, only one formal interviewed were conducted with the help of a translator with Valera Vasilenka and the Dean of the history department[10]. In fact, informal talks were more adapted in term of feasibility. Thus numerous discussions were engaged with different personalities.

- Bibik Nathalya (Kharkov's council)
- Kiyriukhin Alexey (Secretary for Eastern regions at Association of European border regions)
- Kolosov Vladimir (who recently published a book about the 20 years of the Russian/Ukrainian border)
- Sapryka Viktor (professor at Belgorod University)
- Zhuk Nadya (Researcher at Institute for regional economy problems Russian Academy of Science)

Frequent acquaintances with locals (e.g. Yrina Voronina, Inna Kaskova) and debates with students also provided subjective insights that helped to consider direct emotional themes in regards to the border. Finally, the participation to English seminars for local professors allowed realizing weekly debates which contributed to bring details and precisions over the themes of the research.

Goals of the interviews/talks:
- To know what are the practical roles of the border at federal and regional levels and to compare these findings with the narratives previously highlighted.
- To know what are the practical roles of the Euroregion at a federal and regional levels and to compare these findings with the narratives previously highlighted
- To establish conclusions regarding the operation of the Euroregion

5.3.1.3 SURVEY

In order to support empirically the research, a survey has been realized among the population living in Kharkov and Belgorod. The survey has been conducted after a period of literature studies, informal talks with officials, academics and experts mentioned above. In total, 54 people were interviewed. The number of people interviewed was decided by the amount information newly provided to the questions. Hence, in term of statistical inferences, the survey suffers from methodological shortcomings. But since the objectives of the qualitative process were not the generalization but rather a collection of opinions, it supports sufficiently the research's empirical findings.

The goals of the survey were:

- To explore the overall perception of the border by the population in the borderland of Kharkov and Belgorod (hereafter: the population).
- To explore the population's perception regarding the legitimacy of the border
- To explore the main reasons of crossing for the population
- To explore the possibility of an instrumental use of the border by the population
- To explore the level of awareness in the population of the Euroregion Slobozhanschyna
- To approach the level of connection between the population and the cross-border authorities (Euroregion Slobozhanschyna – Kharkov Oblast – Belgorod Oblast – Municipalities)

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[10] Available online at http://www.megaupload.com/?d=3OKBQKF1

- To explore the perception of the European orientation of Ukraine
- To explore the perception of the geographical imaginaries of the Ukrainian space
- To explore the question of identities in the borderland
- To explore the evolution of the tendencies from one generation to another
- To explore the tendencies on both sides of the border

The survey was firstly drafted in English and translated into Russian by a native speaker with English proficiency. The nuances regarding the meanings of the words used were discussed between the drafter and the translator in order to reach the closest translation to the original ideas.

The interviewees were asked in Russian to participate to a survey after the explaining of the reasons of that triggered its conduct. Information about the individual who answered the survey was asked on the survey itself while assuring them to keep their anonymity.

Interviewees were asked to answer themselves to the survey through a computer directly in their native language. The translation of the answers was realized later on.

It has to be noted that it was extremely difficult to conduct the survey and approach the population due to the fact that I do not speak Russian enough and that most of the people contacted regarded me as a "odd foreigner".

To conduct the investigation on people born after 1986, an investigator was asked to present the survey to student at Belgorod State University (for people residing in Russia) and at Kharkov Karazin University (for people residing in Ukraine). The place of residence is not the legal address but the address people considered they spend the most of time.

The choice of asking randomly students is justified by three reasons.

1. This target potentially constitutes the future elites in the regional development. This probably socio-economic ascendancy opens more possibilities regarding their involvement in cross-border activities.
2. The student population is generally born after 1986. They were still relatively young when Ukraine became an independent country. Thus, it was possible to determinate their relatively new live experiences regarding the border. More importantly, we consider that the education of these people started around the same moment.
3. The lack of financing for conducting the research, the lack of access to officials' lists or any other administrative documents pushed the investigator to focus the survey on an accessible source.

To conduct the investigation on people born before 1986, an investigator was asked to contact the target population according to their place of residence (The place of residence is not the legal address but the address people considered they spend the most of time) through computer technologies because of the practical difficulties to conduct the survey (language, distance, time, finance). Only the people corresponding to the criteria's determined were chosen.

The choice of asking randomly people through computer technologies was to assure a better control on the selection process. For instance, people with significant experience in the administrative cross-border cooperation were not chosen for answering the questions. Other reasons justify the target of this population.

1. This target constitutes the socio-economic population that experienced the border through its different administrative forms.
2. This population is generally born before 1986. They are considered as living a significant amount of time with Ukraine as a part the Soviet Union. Thus, it was possible to determinate their relatively live

experiences regarding the border. More importantly, we consider that the education of these people had already started reasonably before the independence of Ukraine.

3. The lack of financing for conducting the research, the lack of access to officials' lists or any other administrative documents pushed the investigator to focus the survey on an accessible source.

In order to see the results of the survey and their analysis: *see Appendix*.

5.3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

According to the "politic – practical – perception" approach (PPP)[11], the border isn't only a legal institution designed to assure the territorial integrity of the state territory but a product of social practice (according to Lefebvre), result of a historical and geopolitical development. It consists in a multi-level analysis between first, local authorities, trans-border business, local authorities, NGO's, etc; second the state infrastructure and institutional development and third the social perceptions of the border.

The border is the marker of the "political identity". This method seeks, in fact, at combining the two traditional approaches of "High" and "Low" geopolitics by considering that the activities occurring at the border are interdependent and that no-one has conceptually the ascendancy. The evidences will become meaningful once contrasted with one another. The research proposes to follow the leads suggested by this approach to superpose effects triggered by geopolitical considerations at a macro level on the practices and perceptions experienced at a micro-level. The goal is to read in successively both analyses to point the divergences and convergences at these different levels in order to meaningfully read the data collected.

5.3.2.1 MACRO-ANALYSIS

The first one consists in a macro-analysis of the geopolitical situation between Europe and Russia. The relationship has been approached in terms of economic, power and political cooperation in a multipolar world. But as presented, Ukraine is considered through its unity guarantee by its executive power. Hence before considering Europe and Russia's geopolitics, it appeared important to relocate the debate within the Ukrainian political system.

Because it was difficult to obtain direct sources from the different players at this level, the analysis is mainly based on situational description and practices in the hope to highlight the positions adopted at a macro level. Nevertheless, the following sections are built on the analysis of diverse documents which reflect the concerns resulting from the political intersections within the players of the international scene.

The process of nation-building in Ukraine (chapter 1) constitutes the starting point of the research. The Ukrainian considerations of the border will be exposed through the political situation the country has to face between its domestic specificities as well as European and Russian integration. Both integrations are in fact key elements regarding the border regime that needs to be deconstructed. Several sources of information are mobilized in this chapter. The process of nation-building in Ukraine has been visited by many studies. One of the main elements that were stressed was the division East/West within the country. This was supported by the analysis of electoral results of the different Ukrainian parties throughout the past 20 years. As for the comprehension of the Ukrainian political system, it was first approach through the Ukrainian Constitution. In order to understand its practical extensions on country's political life, many contacts were engaged with different local layers, specialists and officials. These discussions were productive in the sense that they allowed to gain "insiders" insights which were useful to present the Ukrainian political system from a regional point of view. Economic indicators were used to confirm the leads opened by the people questioned in the conduct of the research. The regional approach in Ukraine allows understanding the impacts of Russian and European policies on the territory as it precisely locates the different doors through which their influence is diffused.

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[11]From Kolossov V (2005), *Étude des frontières approches post-modernes* , Diogène 2/2005 (n° 210), p. 13-27.

Conflicts involving parties at the different political levels of Ukraine could not have been approached solely by the relationship between the Rada and the presidential supremacy.

The chapter 2 gives the opportunities to evaluate the European influence on the border through the relations Brussels has developed with Ukraine. Beside previous studies and many informal contacts with local officials and academics, one interview was especially realized with Nadya Zhuk. Furthermore many documents were covered to support the analysis of EU-Ukraine relations such as:

- EC development cooperation for ENPI countries – Ukraine – Midterm reports
- ENPI CBC Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Programme
- ENPI CBC Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Programme
- ENPI CBC Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova Programme –
- European Charter on Local Self-Government, Strasbourg, 15.X.1985,
- European commission (2003), Wider Europe— Neighborhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbors, Brussels, March 11th
- European Commission, European Neighborhood and partnership instrument, Ukraine, Country Strategy Paper, 2007-2013
- European council (2003), A secure Europe in a better World, European security strategy, presented by Javier Solana, Brussels, December 12th European Outline Convention on European Union External Action Service (2009), Summary of European-Ukrainian economic relations
- European Union External Action Service (2010), Economic indicator of Ukrainian-European trade
- European Union External Action Service (2010), EU-Ukraine Association Agenda –
- European Union External Action Service (2010), List of the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda priorities for 2011-12
- EU-Ukraine Association Agenda to prepare and facilitate the implementation of the Association Agreement
- List of the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda priorities for 2010
- The additional protocol to the European charter of local-government on the right to participate in the affairs , Utrecht 16.XI.2009

Conferences regrouping specialists of Ukraine cross-border relations were attended:

- International Scientific and Practical Conference; "Formation of networks of cross-border cooperation in Ukraine" - May 12th-13th 2011 - Chernovtsi Trade Economics Institute KNTEU with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Ukraine.
- Conference: "The Ukrainian-Russian contiguous: status and prospects of cooperation" – Kharkov University VN Karazin – April 16th 2011.

The interests of the Russian federation are approached in the chapter 3. To support the analysis of Geopolitical thoughts of Russia, many contacts were developed with professors at Belgorod State University. For instance, the course of geopolitics given thought by Viktor Sapryka has been mobilized for providing the ground ideas. In combination, Russian's foreign policy key documents were mobilized such as:

- The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation
- The Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation
- The National security Council of the Russian
- The Russian concept on cross-border cooperation

One of the difficulties to deal with Russian sources was that they had to be translated in order to become workable. Thus, the accessibility of sources proved to be one of the hardest tasks of the research.

Once the general profile established, the principles were compared to different Russian projects of integration: military, economic and politic. The outcomes of these projects were then contrasted with the domestic political situation of Russia and its presidential attitude.

5.3.2.2 MESO-MICRO ANALYSIS

After dealing with the macro-analysis from a geopolitical perspective, it will become clear that one of the key dynamic in the geopolitical interaction between the EU and Russia occurs at the Russian Ukrainian border. Hence the interest will be given to the border in itself to actually observe the how the diverse strategies mobilized to favor or hamper border-relations according to the different considerations affects the zones of life cycles such as socio-economic conditions, infrastructures, educational process, intellectual development, etc

The first chapter of this last section constitutes the mediation between the macro-politics that are depicted in the second part. It focuses on direct interests in States and regions' political agendas. It begins with a description of the border through its geographic and socio-economic components. With the points underlined in the macro-analysis, the military, economic and political consequences are exposed and put in relation with the regional cross-border incentives.

This section is supported first by the highlights of the macro-analysis as well as many talks conducted with regional officials such as Nadya Bibik and Alexey Kiyriukhin. The participation to conferences brought many observations and local opinions that proved to be particularly relevant for the case. The statistics and economic indicators were extracted from the SWOT Analysis realized by the ISIG for the council of Europe. In a certain extent, personal observation and journalistic sources also contributed to shape the content of this section.

The official documents that were mobilized for this section were:

- Constitution of Ukraine
- Ukrainian law on self-government
- Constitution of the Russian federation
- Russian law on self-government agencies

The second chapter of the meso-micro analysis focuses on the micro elements which constitute mainly the empirical results of the research. The focus is given to individual's narratives about the border according to their practices and perceptions. This section seeks at pointing the divergences between political considerations and local realities. This chapter is empirically supported by the conduct of the survey realized for this research. In a certain extent, the results do not appear in literary in the text although the answers provided constitute its principal background. Hence it is advised to consult the appendix in order to become familiar with the answers provided in the survey. Even though it has already been mentioned, it worth reminding that the survey has [2]been conducted after several meetings, discussions and lectures that constitutes raw data as well mobilized in the section.

Finally, the chapter 3 dives into the potential of cross-border cooperation for multi-level operations of geopolitical interests. As already mentioned, the study of the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna provides a suitable platform for realizing crossovers between the different elements. Nevertheless, its rather informal structure and its lack of meeting for the last five years have made the analysis of the situation rather complicated. Nevertheless, it has been possible to conduct observations while being involved in conferences and seminars that were organized for the Euroregion

- Seminar: "Formation for innovative projects" (Euroregion Slobozhanschyna) for Kharkov and Belgorod region – Belgorod State University, March 24th 2011
- Spring School of cross-border cooperation – Student session – Belgorod State University – April 25th 2011

Contacts with local officials were also conducted such as a discussion (helped by a translator) with a mayor of a Russian bordered municipality, Nathalya Bibik (Kharkov Oblast official), Alexey Kyriuhkin (AEBR official). Vitkor Sapryka (academic & Euroregional expert), Pavel Chernomaz (acadmic & Euroregional expert). Other elements were brought by the survey (appendix 1.)

Additionally several documents were mobilized analyzed:

- Charter of the Euroregion – Slobozhanschyna (in Russian)
- Law on the creation of the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna by the Federal Duma of Belgorod (in Rusia)
- Council of Europe, Additional protocol to the European charter of local-government on the right to participate in the affairs , Utrecht 16.XI.2009
- Council of Europe, *European Charter on Local Self-Government,* Strasbourg, 15.X.1985,
- European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities – Council of Europe 1980 (Madrid Convention) – n° 106
- The Additional Protocol to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities - Council of Europe 1995 – n° 159
- The Third Additional Protocol to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities - Council of Europe 2009 - n ° 206

5.3.3 LIMITATIONS

The conditions under which this research has been conducted have five principal limitations. In order of importance:

1. Language limitation

The research was conducted by a non-Russian speaker both in Ukraine and in Russia. It has to be noted that contacts with the population were made extremely difficult because English or French were not widely spread in those regions. Contacts were only possible with a maximum of preparation regarding the explications and the interaction with the locals. This constituted a huge weakness in the possibilities of investigation.

As a consequence, it has been difficult to deal directly with discourses of diverse sources (Russian and Ukrainian documents, Russian and Ukrainian officials, Russian and Ukrainian people). The research could therefore be improved by refocusing its attention to narratives presented in the Russian sides. For this, a better comprehension of Russian would have been needed.

2. Accessibility

As a foreigner of the local political sphere and as a student, it has been difficult to contact officials such as desired in the conception of the research. Furthermore, the language limitation also played a great deal in this matter. Hence it may appear that the number of people interviewed or contacted is relatively little. Moreover, it appears that some aspects were harder to investigate because they were perceived as shameful or delicate (e.g. corruption).

As a consequence, it has been difficult to deal directly with discourses of diverse sources (Officials). The research could therefore be improved by refocusing its attention to narratives presented by officials. For this, a better status would have been needed.

3. Axiology

Although I tried to remain objectives and to base the analysis on evidences (official documents, statistics) and empirical supports (interviews, survey), it is important to mention that the research has been realized with a European eye on the situation. The research was also influenced by a Russian environment.

4. Time limitation

The research was conducted under the frame of an internship at Belgorod State University. Even though through this internship I was involved in many events regarding the Euroregion, I was also assigned to participate in specific conferences on the behalf of the University, to prepare lectures and activities for

students. In addition, I had to follow courses both in Radboud University and in Belgorod for the program of Human geography. Thus, the organization of the research has been narrowed against the original schedule which created time difficulties for its good operation.

5. Financial support

Generally, the conduct of a survey is supported by financial contribution and support for this analysis. Hence the saturation method has been chosen. It allowed collecting significant amount of data while avoiding the number of people questioned to be unworkably high.

| Language limitation |
| Accessibility |
| Axiology |
| Time limitation |
| Financial support |
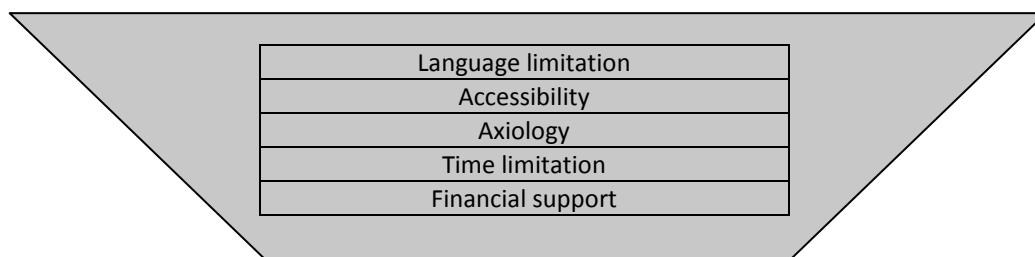
Fig.6 Limitations

PART 2 MACRO-ANALYSIS

1. UKRAINE: DOMESTIC DIVISIONS AND NATION-BUILDING PROCESS

1.1 UKRAINIAN CULTURAL DIVISIONS: HISTORY, LANGUAGE AND ECONOMIC ORIENTATIONS

Twenty years after its independence, one can witness in Ukraine re-calls to historical legacies to present political forms, orientations and delimitation of projects defended by politics. The task is not an easy one. Through history, few countries have been divided like Ukraine has.

From its origins in the 9th Century, its actual territory has been divided between various ethnicities and political occupants. Before the foundation of the first eastern Slavic state (Kiev Rus), the different parts of the area were invaded and occupied by Cimmerians, Schythians, Samartians, Huns, Bulgars, Khazars and Magyars. Kiev Rus is a figure that is now always stated as the "mother of all Russias" since it links the millennium city, Kiev, to its present. However, the Kievan state did not last long and the Mongol invasion put an end to its domination. With the support of the Moscovite State, Cossacks were able to repel the Mongols out of the part of land they occupied and from the 14th to the 18th Centuries, the territory was divided between the Polish and Lithuanian domination as well as the Russian's. In addition, it was possible to find a land that was freely administrated by the Cossacks.

From that point, one can already witness the embryos of actual Ukrainian orientations. Indeed, the polish domination marked the western part of Ukraine through Catholicism and Europeanism. But the longest, and probably the biggest, influence on Ukraine was the Russian cultural domination that developed itself from the Russian empire and through the Soviet Union. This has led to intermarriage and the sharing of a common language and religion.

In terms of socio-cultural polarization between east and west of the country (in reality, cultural differences, there are far more complex) among the Ukrainian political elite in the early 1990's, the prevailing view is that Ukraine would become a modern state only when the society will have achieved some cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Moreover, it is believed that democracy can flourish only in nation states that are not torn by ethno-territorial tensions, (Kuzio, 1998, 2005). Thus, many modern Ukrainian ideologues and state officials see a way to overcome the duality of social structures in creating a Ukrainian ethnic, and perhaps even a political identity, to build a truly independent Ukraine as a new major European state in its opposition to Russia (Kolosov, 2011).

Following Beaufays' approach, several facts are worth being mentioned (history-consensual, Ethnic linguistic, Economic). First, the nationalism based on a consensual history has been subjected to various interpretations supporting the Ukrainian versions. Historians have played a major role in forging the different national identities in the local populations after the independence in 1991. From the historical legacy, the religious identity played a major role in forging a unity from the Kievan state. Religion was also a part of the Russian doctrine during the Russian empire. But the influence of Poland has to be also noted which did not really give a religious homogeneity to Ukraine. In fact, Nataliya Boyko and Kathy Rousselet (2002) have pointed how the different religious cleavages are shaping the political perceptions of individuals. But they also underlined the decreasing role of the religion, delegated to a supporting role. Thus, the orange legislature marked the peak of the so called "war of memory" that characterized the Ukrainian-Russian relations during the past twenty year. Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledge that the comeback of Yanukovitch is synonym of appeasement on that matter.

However, the last elections did not bring a solution to the case of the status of the Russian language. According to Ernest Gellner, the education system and nation-state are in a tight interdependence: one is impossible

without the other. In the former Soviet Union, fluent Russian language was seen as a condition for improving social status. Its widespread use as a means of international communication has made it the main marker of the Soviet and Russian identity (Kolosov, 2011).

Language	Kiev	Urban	Rural
Ukrainian	30,0	33,2	82,7
Russian	70,0	64,0	16,5
Other	0	2,8	0,8

Fig. 7 Languages spoken at home in urban and rural population of Ukraine- From Kolosov, 2011 – Russian Ukrainian borderlands- twenty years of division

From the Russian point of view, the recognition of Russian as an official language of Ukraine would represent the respect the guarantee of the respect of the Russian culture in Ukraine as well as the testify of the link uniting brother nations. But for nationalist Ukrainians, the recognition of the Russian language is perceived as a decision that would weaken the process of nation building of Ukraine.

The issue over the language hides another one. The Eastern borderlands of Ukraine mainly composed of Russian speaking people have developed, through regular and centenaries contacts with Russia, family ties and economic relations across the border. There are tens of thousands of Ukrainian workers settled in Russia who are important for the Russian economy and it is frequent to meet individuals whose family tree is composed by Ukrainian and Russian members. These individuals also perceive the recognition of the Russian language as a required step in the normalization of their relations with Russia.

In addition, the Eastern regions are the most developed in term of financial contribution (GRP) regrouping heavy industrial centers such as in Kharkov or Donetsk that rely mainly on the Russian market for their development. Russia remains the largest trading partner of Ukraine supplying more than a third of Ukraine's energy needs, and pipelines carry Russian oil and gas across Ukraine towards markets in Europe. Thus, the construction of the Ukrainian nation must deal with trade orientations of which conflictive elements are translated into the Ukrainian multi-vector foreign policy.

In 1998, President Kuchma issued a decree "Strategy of Ukraine's integration into the EU", which contained a list of actions needed to adapt the country to the European integration which appears to be one of the primary goal for the "independent Ukraine". For ideologues of state-building, "Europeanization" represents the cornerstone of the Ukrainian political and ethnic identity, which is predetermined by its geopolitical position, the traditional areas of economic relations and even the demographic structure and mentality of the population. The loss of statehood as a result of joining Russia is regarded as the main reason for all the ills of the Ukrainian people, including the Holodomor, the Chernobyl disaster, etc. (Kolosov, 2011). Thus, the European path is perceived as being the surest way to affirm Ukrainian identity even if it goes against the prior economic considerations of the Eastern Ukrainian regions.

However, Ukraine's commitment to the "European vector" is based on rational and completely objective political and economic considerations. In the long term, Russia has less to offer than its European alternative with an economy principally built on energy supply when the EU could provide an access to diversified economic sectors[12]. Thus, although the Ukrainian public opinion has lost hope for an improved economic situation with the EU, the policy of European integration was confirmed by the administration of Viktor Yanukovitch. The desire of the EU remains a strategic limitation in Ukraine's relations with Russia. Ukraine rejected the possibility of joining the Customs Union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, as it contradicts the European vector of development (Kolosov, 2011). Other arguments were advanced to justify this decision. The comparison of economic and political models on both sides of Ukraine is thus prevalent. According to Kolosov, the Russian model of "sovereign" or "managed" democracy does not serve as a benchmark for the most part of

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[12] Conference at Economic institute Chernivsti, May 12th, 13th 2011 – Dr. Galuchka

Ukrainian society. Thus, some intellectuals in Ukraine fear that the economic union could be used as a political engine to recover the lost influence in Russia's periphery through different legislations and aggressive companies publically supported which would have the effect to satellite Ukraine once again.

Finally, one of the other consequences of the European integration is the increased collaboration with the western military association which is the guarantor of Ukrainian sovereignty. Events in Georgia have weakened the military trust between Ukraine and Russia. Moscow accused Kiev to have supported *la revolution des roses* by supplying weapons to Georgia while Ukraine saw in this military intervention a threat to the integrity of its territory.

1.2 THE DIVISIONS IN UKRAINE: POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

1.2.1 FIRST APPROACH: THE CLEAVE WEST/EAST

As presented by Zhurzhenko (2010), there are several variations of Ukrainian nationalism. Although they are both constructed with different levesl of opposition to Russia, there are mainly two differences between them; first, as we presented above, the Ukrainian nationalism constructed on the top of the European orientation; second, the one which adopts a balanced view between Russian and Europe accepting the opposition within the Ukrainian territory.

The traditional division between West and East in Ukraine has in fact a huge repercussion on the political landscape. In 2004 many observers noticed that this opposition reached its peak. The election of Yushchenko (the so called the Orange "revolution") brought a sharp rejection of Russian leadership that perceived events in post-Soviet space as a "zero-sum game" winner-takes-all (Kolosov, 2011). Thus, under the President Yushchenko, huge disagreements arose between Moscow and Kiev regarding the trends in the politics of Ukraine (we previously quoted the status of the Russian language that was slowly ejected of Ukrainian schools, but questions such as the bail of the Russian naval basis in Ukraine or the "war of memory" reached their summits of tension). It is also during this period that Ukrainian policies really favored cross-border programs in the west in their long term goal to join the European Union. The behavior of the presidency falls in the first stream of Ukrainian nationalism.

However, the last elections (in 2010) brought Viktor Yanukovitch, who was officially supported by Moscow, to power. It is worthy to note that one of main election issues concerned the status of the Russian language, the Ukrainian/Russian relations and the European integration[13].

At first, reactions in the Russian federation were very positive regarding the results of the elections. As Yanukovitch declared[14], the friendship with Russia has tangible benefits. He thus mentioned the price of gas and the high income earn from the rent of the Russian Navi Fleet in the Black Sea. Many Ukrainian reports stated Kiev needs to be balanced between Russia and the EU but it appeared that it has not been the case during the past legislature and that this renewed orientation is only effective since 2010. Hence, his pro-Russian character must be nuanced. For instance, several discussions occurred between Yanukovitch and Medvedev about the Single Economic Space promoted by Russia and so far, Ukraine has always rejected this possibility as "it opposes to the European integration". Even if the nature of the evidence is highly contestable as reveal the disagreement among the Ukrainian experts, which are deeply influenced by their cultural choices[15], the economic orientation of Ukraine remains deeply rooted toward the west.

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[13] Kyiv Post, Experts: *Presidential campaign characterized by poor programs of candidates. – Online Nov 23 2009 -* http://www.kyivpost.com/news/nation/detail/53400/

[14] BBC News - 2010

[15] Author's observations - Conference: "The Ukrainian-Russian contiguous: status and prospects of cooperation" – Kharkov University VN Karazin – April 16th & International Scientific and Practical Conference; "Formation

Changes compare to the previous presidencies regarding the West/East orientation are to be seen in the military and cultural issues. The American reaction to the last Ukrainian presidential elections is thus more related to military matters. While in the president Yushchenko asked for NATO membership in 2008 (followed, at the Bucharest summit in 2008 by an official statement that Ukraine would be welcome into the organization as soon as the country would fit within the NATO requirements), Viktor Yanukovitch considers the level of relations between Ukraine and the Atlantic Organization sufficient[16] which represents a significant change in the conduct of Ukrainian/Russian relations. For instance, Kolosov predicts a reduction of the attempts to complicate the tasks of the military float in Sebastopol. On the cultural matters, many other observers present the election as a light of hope for the cessation of the "war of memory" and the cultural fight of Ukraine against Russia. In that sense, rather than classified Yanukovitch as a pure pro-Russian, it is better to consider his policies as simply more balanced between Europe and Russia.

Yanukovitch seems to be revisiting President, Leonid Kuchma,(1994-2004)'s "multi-vector" policy of when Ukraine played a balancing act between the West and Russia, trying to use differences between them to its advantage.

1.2.2 WEST/EAST CLEAVAGES IN UKRAINIAN GOVERNANCE

There are several sources of explications to justify Yanukovitch behavior. Firstly, Ukrainian presidential elections have been characterized by a traditional division between East and West. Western regions (beside regions adjacent to Moldavian/Transnistrian territory) showed themselves to be traditionally supporting pro-European candidates while Eastern were tied to candidates recalling Russian orientations (Communist party, Party of the regions, etc). In the Eastern regions, the swing between blocs of representation is rather weak; therefore elections are played within Western parts of Ukraine.
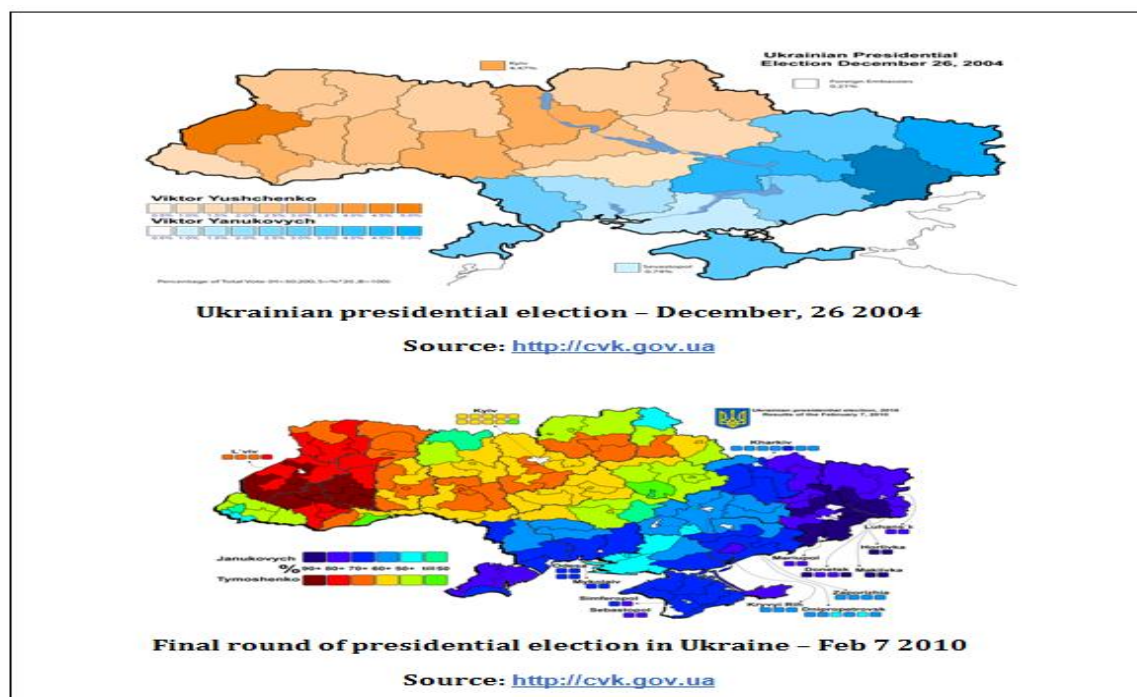
Fig. 8 Electoral bases of support for pro-Eastern or Pro-Western parties. Evolution between 2004 and 2010

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of networks of cross-border cooperation in Ukraine" - May 12th-13th 2011 - Chernovtsi Trade Economics Institute KNTEU with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Ukraine.

[16] Kiev post, *Nato confirms readiness for ukraine's joining organization,* Ed. Apr 13, 2010

Secondly, if Ukraine is characterized by cultural divisions, as we explained in the section above, the Ukrainian political system is defined by the division of power between the legislative and the executive branch. The system of representation differs highly in the Ukrainian Rada than for presidential elections (which end up with only one candidate); conflicts may arise between the presidency and the parliament for the conduct of policies. Especially because of the centralist nature of Ukraine which implies that decisions taken by the government have the same effects for the whole territory.

In Ukraine, the president has great power since he enjoys the right to veto parliament laws (and can only be overturned by a two-third majority) and as the guardian of territorial sovereignty, he appoints heads of local administration[17].

Nevertheless, the nomination of governors has to be countersigned by the prime minister also appointed by the president but with the support of the majority of the parliament.
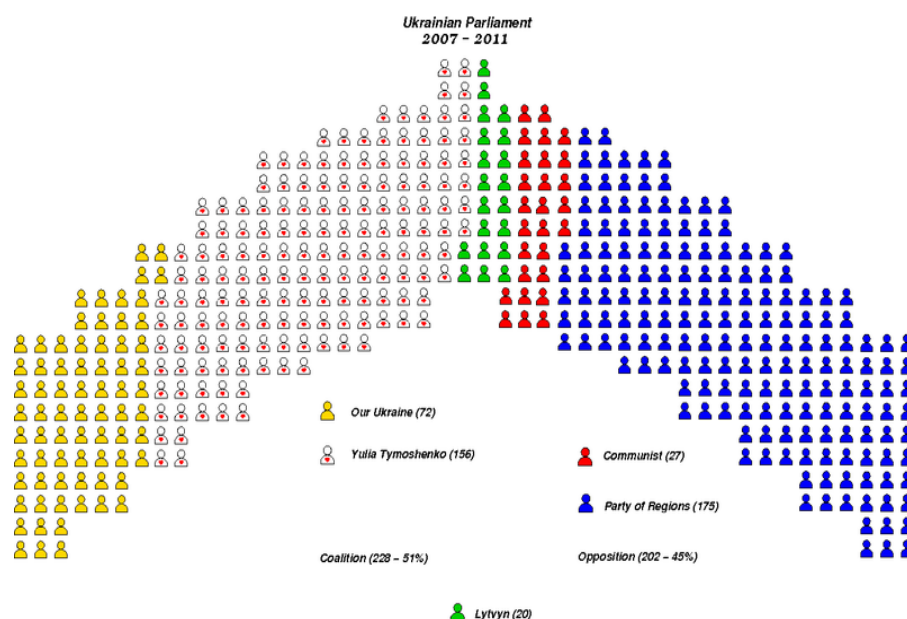
Fig. 9 Composition of Ukrainian Rada 2007-2011

The composition of the Ukrainian government and the laws that are passed by the parliament must therefore deal with the presidency of Ukraine who represents, by law, the whole integrity of the Ukrainian territory. Therefore, any decisions in term of the orientation of foreign policy matter, in addition to deal with a culturally divided country, have to face the potential divisions between the two branches of legislative and executive power. During the last legislature, the president Yushchenko could actually rely on a government with the same formation that deeply facilitated the European orientation[18].

But Yanukovitch must face an opposed coalition in the parliament which makes the tasks for his prime minister, Mykola Azarov, more complicated. Therefore, in order to preserve balance for running the country, Ukraine has adopted a political position that reflects its legislative divisions according to a cleavage West/East.

Consequently, the configuration of the political system of Ukraine makes the adoption of political choices precarious since they depend on several institutional entities for their implementations. For example, the centralist character of the country creates a situation where regional issues are decided by political issues in the center. The nomination of governors falls under the hands of the president while the votes regarding regional policies in matter of foreign policy are entitled to legislative vote. For instance, many tensions

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[17] According to the Ukrainian constitution
[18] Exceptions made for the political crisis that occurred during the past five legislatures

following this path have created locked situations (the development of Euroregions between Ukraine and Russia reached a dead speed during the last legislature) that have really slowed down the development of border regions because it did not fit within the political orientations of the Rada or the presidency.
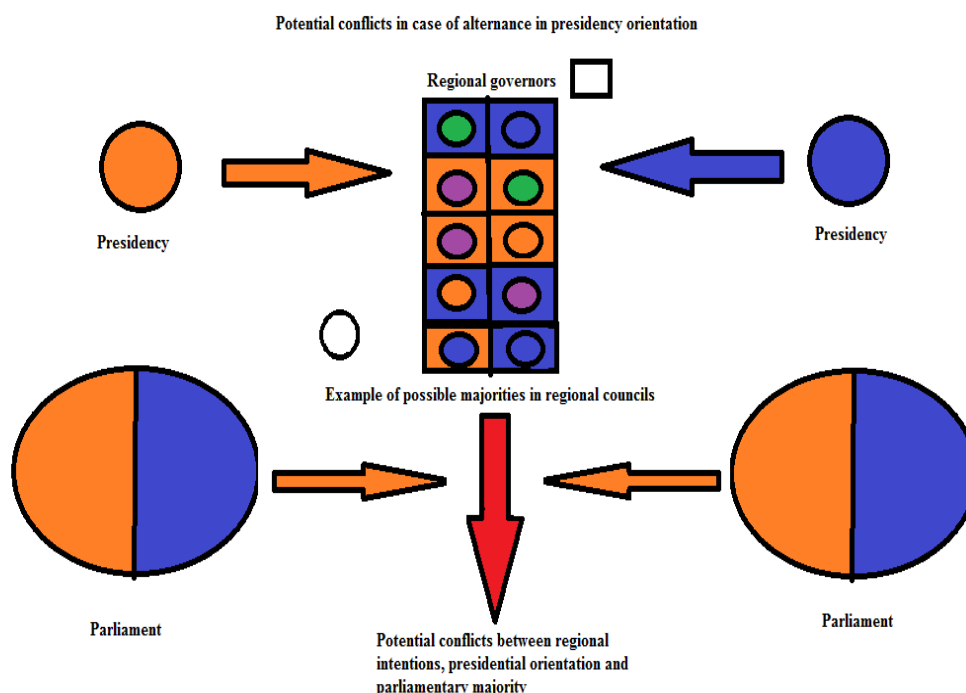
Fig. 10 Visualization of the possible conflicts between political parties within the Ukrainian levels of power

1.2.3 UKRAINIAN CENTRALIZATION AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Recently, opinions about a federalism form for Ukraine have been expressed[19] in order to fit with the situation imposed by the "Huntington line" as called by Olga Mrinska (2004). But the reaction regarding this idea among Ukrainian politicians was very negative for a governing system they seem to perceive as a threat to Ukrainian independence and sovereignty. Thus, one of the principal features of the Ukrainian nationalism remains the preservation of a centralized state with the main goal to preserve disintegration of the Ukrainian territory. This approach of centralization is, in fact, interesting to combine with the traditions received from the former socialist structure (as underlined by Popescu) that still characterized Ukraine nowadays and that allow to go beyond the strict Huntingtonnian analysis such as the presence of a certain nomenclature locking the access to power up.

Thus, the process of nation-building Ukrainian identity is contrasted by several other components such as ethnic and cultural differentiations (Russian, Little Russian, Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Russified) spread over regional disparities. The process of nation-building aspires to reduce the social and cultural distance between regions by building a centralized, unitary state. Hence, issues of education and culture are solved mainly in the capital. But the main task of national construction in the Ukrainian transitional period is regularly represented by the solidification of these disparities through the successful recovery from the economic crisis with the restructuration of a new and independent economic tie with Russia (Kolosov, 2011) Consequently, the geopolitical orientation is closely intertwined with other key problems of Ukrainian statehood, political and economic reforms (Kuzio, 1998).

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[19] Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, (Russian Speaking Ukraine), *We have to build the system of federeralism in Ukraine. There is no other alternative – August 27 2010 -* http://r-u.org.ua/en/-federalism.html ; Vikno, *Zatulin: the federalism can unite Ukraine only,* February 25 2011 - http://vikno.eu/eng/politics/politics/atulin-the-federalism-can-unite-ukraine-only.html

Ukraine is characterized by a unitary political system with a strong political presidency relying on decentralized relays to implement the executive tasks. Without entering too much into details, it is worthy to mention some institutional mechanisms. For instance, the executive branch is preeminent in the construction of regional policies. Technically, regional governors represent the decentralized arms of the presidency and the prime minister according a mechanism of co-decision. In practice, the president appoints regional governors with the purpose of supporting national interests. Hence in Ukraine, the relationship between electorate and executive is thus mainly decided during the presidential elections through the different parties represented.

But while the elections often present a reproduction of the West/East cleavage, it is important to mention that the candidates do not come from all the existing parties in Ukraine. It is mostly blocs of parties gathered around the same ideals or convictions. It is not rare to observe that local parties are not represented at the Ukrainian Rada but connected to a larger movement gathered around politicians who had already achieved power (Ayata, Ergun & Celimli, 2005) such as *Our Ukraine, Party of regions*, Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko, etc. It is therefore better to talk about prosperous clans based on regional representation (ex: Donetsk with Rinat Akhmetov, Viktor Yanukovitch, Mykola Azarov; Dnepropetrovsk with Yulia Tymoshenko, Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Pinchuk, Sergey Tigipko[20] and Kiev with Viktor Medvedchuk). Thus, this system has favored the creation of oligarchic networks that influences the western/eastern a according to personal interests combined with cultural aspirations and economic realities of their relays within the different regions.

The Ukrainian system is also characterized by the centralization of the financing resources. Regions do not have the authority of disposing directly of their own resources which are allocated by legislative decisions. Thus centralized mechanisms also concerns decisions that are seen desirable for the regional authorities which must therefore be submitted at the national parliament. Moreover, the unitary system of redistribution set upon regional economic disparities disfavors Eastern richer regions that were economically boosted during the Soviet Union. According to the local population[21], it results in an unfair repartition of the production through national investments that favor the Western poorer regions. This fact has to be put in relation with the national attempt to increase living standards at EU borders such as stated in the diverse cross-border programs implemented.

If centralized policies do not fit with the internal division, the so called Huntington line, this appellation is not correct either. The historical development of the regions around the Dnieper is as fixed as presented in Huntington's theory[22]. The close relation between the eastern part of Ukraine and Russia coupled with the rise of an Ukrainian national identity as well as different conceptions about the link of the ethnicities have let Ukraine into a multi-national state. Ukraine counts more than 100 very small groups, a strong Russian minority (22%) and the official Ukrainian population (which could be also divided in Ukrainians and former Russians). Through history, territories around the political line of division have shifted from one ruler to another, collaborating with their neighbor fighting against Poland or Russia for reasons of loyalty in a twenty years lap. In fact, it is more relevant to talk about regional loyalties representing more the shape of the Ukrainian political system.

Thus, if the appointment of regional governors is linked to the results of national elections, it does not mean that heads of regions do not have political influences. They are the relay between national and regional politics as they represent diverse local interests indispensable to earn electoral supports (Zhurzhenko, 2010). This is a key understanding of their roles.

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[20] On that matter, it worth to mention the recent division between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko that led to the constitution of two different parties which resulted by the electoral defeat of Yushchenko during the 2010 elections

[21]Author discussions with Ukrainian locals

[22] Author's interview with Valera Vasilenka

	Gross regional product (mln.UAH)						Per capita gross regional product (UAH)					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Ukraine	345113	441452	544153	720731	948056	913345	7273	9372	11630	15496	20495	19832
Autonomous Republic of Crimea	9901	12848	16044	20874	27365	27396	4951	6460	8101	10574	13898	13933
Vinnytsya	8123	10207	12414	15381	20094	20104	4700	5966	7328	9159	12061	12145
Volyn	4994	6553	7687	10072	12784	12225	4771	6285	7397	9711	12340	11796
Dnipropetrovsk	30040	41227	52347	71173	104687	93331	8609	11909	15239	20868	30918	27737
Donetsk	45617	58044	72361	92093	117646	103739	9713	12490	15725	20197	26028	23137
Zhytomyr	5947	7430	8784	11127	15008	14731	4397	5554	6636	8485	11545	11419
Zakarpattya	5297	6700	8185	10508	13208	12542	4238	5373	6576	8452	10626	10081
Zaporizhzhya	15255	19968	24787	33158	42445	37446	8093	10683	13369	18022	23232	20614
Ivano-Frankivsk	7311	9622	11316	13916	17883	17241	5238	6916	8157	10055	12940	12485
Kyiv	11883	15362	19188	26221	35687	37548	6652	8673	10918	15033	20593	21769
Kirovohrad	5594	6877	8187	9989	13961	13389	5122	6394	7723	9546	13515	13096
Luhansk	14672	19716	24159	32280	42985	38451	5973	8131	10085	13628	18338	16562
Lviv	13992	17192	21486	27987	35534	35955	5396	6657	8351	10915	13902	14093
Mykolayiv	7934	9553	11876	14767	19410	20336	6424	7801	9769	12227	16175	17050
Odesa	17029	20762	24898	33116	46994	48647	7028	8619	10379	13827	19638	20341
Poltava	13983	18099	22179	28355	34118	33629	8841	11574	14330	18500	22476	22337
Rivne	5599	7263	8924	11180	14074	13469	4817	6269	7724	9695	12217	11699
Sumy	6275	8025	9566	12341	16210	16060	5009	6497	7848	10249	13622	13631
Ternopil	3948	5137	6452	8276	10618	11173	3516	4603	5819	7510	9688	10240
Kharkiv	20524	25618	32023	43868	59389	58923	7182	9025	11353	15645	21294	21228
Kherson	5200	6469	7565	9034	13174	13436	4546	5713	6744	8122	11944	12256
Khmelnytskiy	6344	7958	9603	12339	16061	15758	4549	5764	7023	9100	11932	11780
Cherkasy	6623	9014	10957	13656	19101	18707	4853	6681	8209	10331	14581	14393
Chernivtsi	3277	4234	5126	6672	8833	8484	3589	4654	5650	7369	9771	9383
Chernihiv	6181	7627	8950	11532	14918	14636	5163	6474	7714	10081	13213	13121
Kyiv	61357	77124	95267	135900	169564	169537	23130	28780	35210	49795	61592	61088
Sevastopol	2213	2823	3822	4916	6305	6452	5847	7452	10079	12961	16592	16966

Fig. 11. Gross regional products - Ukrainian regions

For instance, regions such as Kharkov and Donetsk which are characterized by strong economic ties with Russia, are great industrial centers extremely dependant on Russian energy supply, facing higher prices because of their Ukrainian location and which have to face better living conditions on the other side of the border. Thus, from regional perspectives, the combination of oligarchic interests and the presence of chauvinistic tendencies in border regions increase the fears about separatism or national disintegration. As evidence, this question appeared during the presidency of Yushchenko when the former governor of Kharkov played the Russian card.

Hence Ukraine faces a situation where interest-oriented governance from oligarchs, cultural diversities, languages and historical myths are fragmented. The centralist character of Ukrainian nationalism determines the conditions under which the country is ran. For an institutional approach, this form of political organization is therefore a corner stone in the understanding of Russian/European relationship in Ukraine because the consequences of such a system have to be considered when it comes to political harmonization and inter-regional cooperation realized at a state sub-level.

1. WIDER EUROPE AND DIVIDING LINES

2.1 UKRAINE AND THE EU

The relations between Ukraine and the EU have repercussions on many issues. On domestic policies, "deepening cooperation with Europe could send out important signals that would influence the course and pace of reform within Ukraine. Everyone agrees that Ukraine needs to change fundamentally its political, administrative, economic, social and education systems" (Le Monde diplomatique, 2011). On foreign policies matters, Ukraine is not part of most of the international organizations and remains isolated on the international scene. Even if the country is, nevertheless, a member of the United Nations and the council of Europe, but it takes part to the WTO and the OSCE mainly because of European support. Therefore, it remains outside the major economic and security blocs of the North (*Ibid*).

Russia and the EU represent the different possibilities of integration and until now Ukraine has been choosing to deal with both simultaneously. The problem is that Ukraine is divided and the different fractions do not agree on which socio-economic model should be embraced. The confusion sometimes undermines reforms and international actions.

On the one hand, the Eastern integration is often depicted as being the natural way for Ukraine because of the long common history, the cultural ties and the friendship developed between East Slavic nations through time. On the other, The Western integration would assure Ukraine to become closer to NATO and to guarantee security and independence against eventual Russian actions. It would also assure to attach the country to the European dynamism and its great market possibilities.

The European Commission in 2003, prior to the European Neighborhood policy, launched its concept of Wider Europe. In this document, the European Commission (2003) repeated statements such as the *determination to avoid new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union*. By doing so it *reaffirmed that enlargement would serve to strengthen relations with Russia as well as Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus*, etc… A list of priorities had been established in this same document identifying the principal points that should be worked to create a common framework in order to bring peace, security stability and to reduce poverty. As a result, the European Neighborhood Policy is born setting the guidelines for policy implementations that would be segmented according to the concerned neighbor.

Fig. 12 The European external relations in the neighborhood according to the European Commission (2011)

The participants to the ENP implicitly participated to the localization of the "Wider Europe" which embedded a European core and the European periphery. Russia, by defending its "specificity" is absent of the program and decided to treat with the EU on an "equal footing" through the "four common spaces". Furthermore, the concept of Wider Europe clearly states that the neighborhood policy constitutes a pillar of the overall EU/Russia strategic partnership. But this decision also helped to shape the definition of Wider Europe which would appear to be the space where the EU is able to harmonize its norms with its neighbors.

The ENP creates rules of compliance between the EU and its "strategic' partners. But it is not considered as being a tool of pre-adhesion (European Commission, 2003) as well as it does not resolve the basic dilemmas facing the EU – how large should it become or where the final border should be set – but it does provide additional tools for fostering friendly neighborhoods (Smith, 2005). It is therefore a purposefully unclear policy setting space for EU/Russian cooperation while not limiting EU's will of spatial expansion.

In terms of analysis, the ENP, with its elaboration *à la carte,* allows to deal with the dynamics happening a in single country at a time. Thus, Ukraine (with the official intention to join the EU) has already been recognized "European" by Brussels. The hope of European accession had a great effect on Ukrainian reforms that are getting closer and closer from the European standards. It appears that the European integration is something that still unites Ukraine's political, intellectual, economic and social elites, and a large part of the population. Thus, joining the EU is widely accepted as a path toward modernization by Ukraine although the way for doing it is more controversial. Indeed, Ukraine's integration within the EU is of a great importance but attachment to Russian opportunities remains in the air, especially in Eastern regions where the effects of European integration are less visible. Nevertheless, Europe is connoted positively in Ukraine by the average population.

For all those reasons, Ukraine is considered by the EU as a part of its concept of "Wider Europe"; a European country but not totally European (as in part of the EU) yet due to the progresses it still has to realize on matters of good governance, human rights, etc. As often pointed out, the strategy mobilized to achieve these developments underpinned the idea that if a neighbor is exposed to the European "way", it fasters its reforms according to the formula: "everything but institutions".

2.2 EVERYTHING BUT INSTITUTIONS?

There are several key documents that help to understand the evolution in the relations between Ukraine and the EU (in 1998, through the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement; in 2004 the former action plan adopted; the new association agreement that set the guidelines for deepening the cooperation between the countries).

However, the term "association" between the two actors has to be nuanced in the sense that the drafted documents are extremely Euro-centered and tend to refer more to an integrative concept.

Some elements allow confirming this statement. It worth mentioning that negotiation between Ukraine and the EU are not established on the same footstep. Behind Russia, the EU represents the second biggest partner of Ukraine with almost one third of its external trade (European Commission 2011). As a foreign partner, the EU invested in 2009 19.8 billion euro in Ukrainian stocks, exported 13.9 billion and imported for 7.9 billion of goods[23]. These statistics only represents the amount that represents the EU for Ukraine. More interestingly, a deeper analysis shows that Ukraine is highly dependent on the European production for all products that would lead to its modernization such chemicals, machinery and transport equipment.
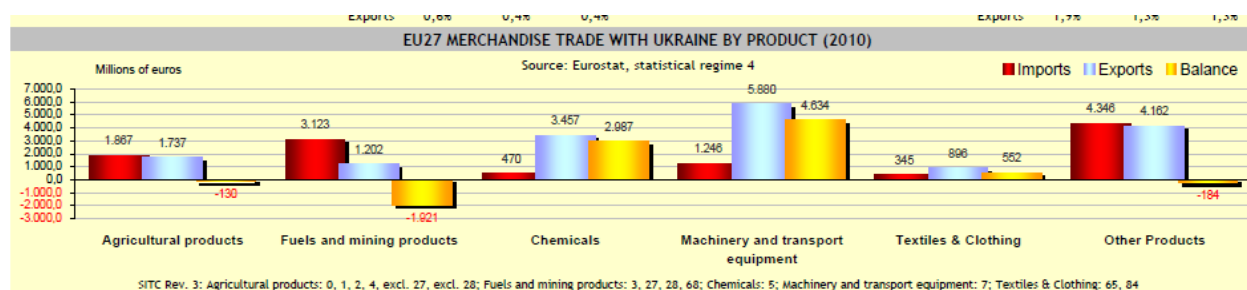
Fig. 13 EU27 Merchandise trade with Ukraine by product in 2010

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[23] Eurostats - http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113459.pdf

As a foreign direct investment, the EU also represented in 2009 3.0 billion of Euros (total and balanced). Thus, even if the negotiations between Ukraine and the EU are not binding, it appears that Ukraine has little economic leverage to value regarding its European neighbors.
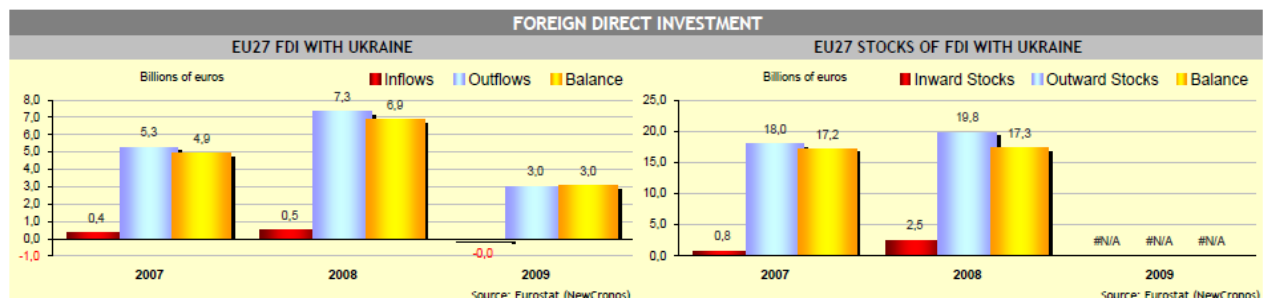
Fig. 14 Foreign Direct Investment of the EU with Ukraine

The Euro-centric dimension of these documents appears in other statements.

> *The ENP is a virtuous circle; a policy based on shared value and enlightened self-interest: by increasing our neighbors' prosperity, stability and security, by projecting our prosperity, stability and security beyond our borders, **we increase our own**. In a very real sense, **"by helping our neighbors, we help ourselves"** (European Commission, 2004)*

The point of view defending that the EU and Ukraine would align their norms and standards together must therefore not be misinterpreted. The documents imply a clear adaption of Ukrainian systems in order to fit within EU's criteria's.

> *Reforms will "help to consolidate democratic reforms notably reform of the judiciary, respect for the rule of law and human rights, transparency and democratic accountability, the fight against corruption as well as increasing citizens' participation in public decision-making in Ukraine (Action Plan EU-Ukraine p3). "The EU is seeking an increasingly close relationship with Ukraine, going beyond mere bilateral co-operation, to gradual economic integration and a deepening of political co-operation (website EU country profile 2011)"*

But thanks to its attractiveness, the EU is able to diffuse its soft power beyond its borders with a presumptions of superiority translated into different uses of language or policies. Hence the word "integration" has to be balanced because the domains established through the documents specifically target sectors where the EU can generate profits from.

As an example, let us consider a few lines from Eneko Landaburu's speech "From Neighbourhood to Integration Policy: are there concrete alternatives to enlargement?"

> *"How can we encourage prosperity, stability and security in our neighbourhood ? Or, in foreign policy terms, how will the EU pursue **our geo-strategic interest** in expanding the zone of prosperity, stability and security beyond our borders for our mutual benefit? How can we use **our soft power**, our transformative power, **our gravitational influence,** to **leverage the reforms we would like to see in our neighborhood?"***

For instance, the creation of standards and norms would help to facilitate trade and exchanges through a better predictability. However, this process does not require especially a specific policy as their results could be reached through different international organizations (ex WTO). But the EU is still creating its own standards that it imposes upon the agreements (Chilosi, 2007). The general asymmetry in the relations between Ukraine

and the EU[24] always makes easier the European development and export flows. Indeed it seems also unlikely that some key elements regarding this aspect will appear soon on the table of negotiations such as a granted access to the common market for agricultural goods where Ukraine and its fertile soil, cheap labor and huge potential in agricultural development could compete with the European producers. The balance of importation and exportation in that domain has remained rather weak between the two partners while trade for heavy industrial products has generated huge profits on the European side[25].

As another example, the International Organization on Migration estimated in 2000 that there were approximately half a million migrants tried to enter the EU with a great majority from the East-West path (cited in Marko Bajcun, 2005). The security of (Eu)ropean borders in Ukraine has become one of the main interests of the European Union as testifies the huge amount of money transferred for this purpose[26].

This attitude has big repercussions on Ukrainian policies. Indeed, free and automatic Visa for the European Union has become a very important topic for Ukrainian politics. The citizens of the EU have already been granted by a 3 months access to the Ukrainian territory only on passport presentation. Ukrainian citizens must still face the old Visa procedure that remains unclear and appear to be subjective. Since the extension of Schengen area to Poland, Ukrainian border regions have been suffering from high restrictions to the movement of people. For Ukrainian politics, this distinction is difficultly accepted (Informative report n°448 (2009-2010) for the French Senate). For the "locals" in Lviv the situation is also perceived as abnormal.

> "*I don't understand why my relatives and my friends in Poland are able to come and visit my at any time and when I want to cross the border I must face the through the whole administrative procedure, the cost, and I have always the risk to face a rejection for the Visa application[27]*".

This topic potentially affects cross-border economic relations which have made the conduct of transfrontier business harder.

A visa facilitation agreement between the EU and Ukraine was signed in May 2007. However, a rapid look of this document already shows the asymmetry in the redaction of the document. Thus, while citizens of the EU does need a visa for a duration of 90 days on the Ukrainian territory, only officials, business people and representatives, drivers conducting international cargos, international train drivers, journalists, scientific staff, students participating to exchange programs, participant to international sport events, people visiting close relatives (from Grand-parents to Grand-children), people visiting for burial ceremonies and people visiting for medical reasons are sure to be issued a visa by a member state of the EU under the condition they can provide a letter of invitation that support they visiting purpose.

It is worth mentioning that this agreement was seen by Ukraine as a real first step in the negotiation for free Visa access between Kiev and Brussels. But from the European point of view, it is important to mention that Ukraine is considered as being still far from that agreement. This appreciation is related by several factors. First, the differences in the way of life between Ukraine and Europe remain high which has provoked the rise of illegal crossing, smugglings and trafficking goods and persons. Second, the corruption inside the country is still a problem for the allocation of falsified documents (Informative report n°448 (2009-2010) for the French Senate). Third, Ukraine is on the road of numerous migrants from Central Asia. Thus, even if Ukraine can improve its efficiency regarding the fake documents within its territory, the EU has few controls on what is happening further the Ukrainian borders especially on the Russian side.

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[24] For more detailed information see :
http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113459.pdf
[25] Eurostats: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113459.pdf
[26] See the webpage of the European Union's external relations with Ukraine.
[27] Discussion with local inhabitants of Lviv – June 07th 2011

For Luiza Bialasevitch[28], Russia has been using migration as an element of pressure on the EU. However this statement seems to be a little too harsh regarding the complex situation Russia is facing in term of illegal migration. According to Nadya Zhuk, this situation has even relayed the Visa discussions between Moscow and Brussels as an empty process[29]. If it is true that Russia tends to slow the process of border construction between Ukraine and its territory, as a reaction of the European integration of Ukraine, it is useful to mention that since the election of Vladimir Putin, Moscow seems to be more and more concerned by security issues as testifies the Russian concept on cross-border cooperation[30]. Hence, it is more accurate to say that migration flows through the Russian territory constitutes a topic of discussion between the EU and Russia rather than an actual subject of bargain.

But as a consequence, the little progress on the visa issue has been acquired thanks to a bigger concession. Following the visa facilitation agreement, on June the EU and Ukraine 2007 signed a re-admission agreement. This accord has created a real problematic situation for Kiev. Practically, it means that the illegal migrants (National, non-national) crossing from Ukraine to the direction of the European Union are now conducted back to Ukraine. Ukraine is also committed to provide structures for taking care of them. However, Ukraine is far from having the resources to take care of such amounts of people. In addition, the developing situation of the country does not allow regularizing such waves of migrations. Consequently, and as a corollary of the Visa agreement sought by Kiev, the only solution has been to strengthen the security (the hardness) of the borders with Byelorussia, Moldavia (Transnistria) and the Russian federation.

2.3 THE EFFECTS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM ON BORDERS

Borders can be historical, natural, cultural, political, legal, economic and symbolic. The problem is that they do not necessarily match each others. Ukraine inherited of its actual territory in 1991 but like most of the states, it did not correspond to a homogenous ethnical territory. Throughout history, a lot of divisions related to certain cultures characterized the Ukrainian society. Although the perceptions are felt by the individuals, they are also influenced by the political power in place

Eventually, the negotiations about the Visa policy between the EU and Ukraine have the effect to strengthen the "hardness" of the security at the Russian/Ukrainian border, at least on the Ukrainian side. Moreover, the economic agreements and the harmonization on European standards have the consequence to create difficulties in the relations between Russian and Ukraine. For example, the criteria set by the European integration for goods are hardly compatible with the ones in Russia making trade between the two countries unpractical. The Single Economic Area proposed by Russia aims at overcoming this burden. But it seems that the European integration is creating a differential that never occurred before at this place of the world, creating de facto a new division. How to appreciate this differential?

Dimitrovova (2010) identifies three paradigms in the concept of borders that will serve us to appreciate the situation: "Imperial", "static-centered" and "Networked". More than boxes containing hermetic theoretical tools, these paradigms are lenses through which border effects can be seen. Because some examples supporting the imperial and static-centered approach have already been given, more attention will be paid to the Network one. Nevertheless, it is not useless to repeat some points in order to keep the logic of the argumentation.

2.3.1 IMPERIAL AND STATE-CENTERED APPROACHES OF BORDER

It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbors who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organized crime flourishes, dysfunctional

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[28] Discussion with Luiza Bialasevitch – Radboud University Nijmegen 2010
[29] Discussion with Nadya Zhuk – Saint Petersbourg – May 7th 2011
[30] Available in Russian on www.mid.ru

societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems to Europe (European Council, 2003)

When the imperial analogies once referred to military development, the notion of empire detaches from its original source. As a consequence, it is not problems of a military nature or territorial conquests that dominate EU discourses in its neighborhood borders (Dimitrovova, 2010) but the concerned state's strength to deal with troubles that are likely to affect the EU. Thus, the latter is willing to use its power of attraction, its economical power and its apparent values on its neighbors to help them facing these problems.

Indeed, because of its historic past, namely, the construction of a peaceful entity to overcome the dangerous cleavages created by nationalisms, the rightness of these standards are seen as extremely elevated among the European Union which now *allows the past to serve as a moral high ground for "teaching peace"* (Barry Buzan and Ole Waever cited in Bialasevicz, 2010). Just as an empire seeks to establish and maintain a zone of peace to enhance trade opportunities and generate wealth (Weaver, 1997). Thus, the ENP can be understood as a peace project with a "similar mission" (Dimitrovova, 2010). Therefore, the basis for the neighborhood policy is to fight threats that arise from these borders by sustaining the development "weak" states through economic assistance and the illustration of the "good" path. Ukrainian aspirations for European integration and economic wellness have allowed the EU to spread its norms beyond its territory.

Even if the European ideals are actively built through time (Bialasevicz, 2010), the reference to these common values in the associative documents (cited above) between Brussels and Kiev all refer to the historical past of Ukraine stated as a being European. The fact that the EU has officially welcome Ukraine's intentions to join the EU includes the country in a set of similarities that do not characterize countries located on the African side of the Mediterranean Sea for instance. The suggestion according to which Ukraine is part of the European culture assumes civilizational similarities in religion (Catholicism), history (The Polish and Lithuanian commonwealth, Kiev Rus), and overall relationships (war against eastern invaders, against the Ottoman Empire, the first independent republic from the Soviet Union, etc).

In 2004, the Orange "revolution" polarized the former presidential legislature in that sense with the acceleration of the EU-Ukraine relations as well as a closer collaboration with NATO as the defense of the "Western" sovereignty. Nevertheless, this civilizational choice highly neglected opinions and feelings emanating from Eastern parts of Ukraine deeply rooted in the Russian culture. It is relatively common for Eastern Ukrainian to think their geographical location within "Russia" with a reference to civilizational aspects such as Orthodox religion, the Russian empire, the communist period, the common language (Author's findings). Politically, this fact is translated by the perpetual domination of the communist and/or relatively pro-Russian parties in these regions.

Central commission of Ukraine – Ukraine Parliamentary election –
http://www.cvk.gov.ua/vnd2007/w6p001.html
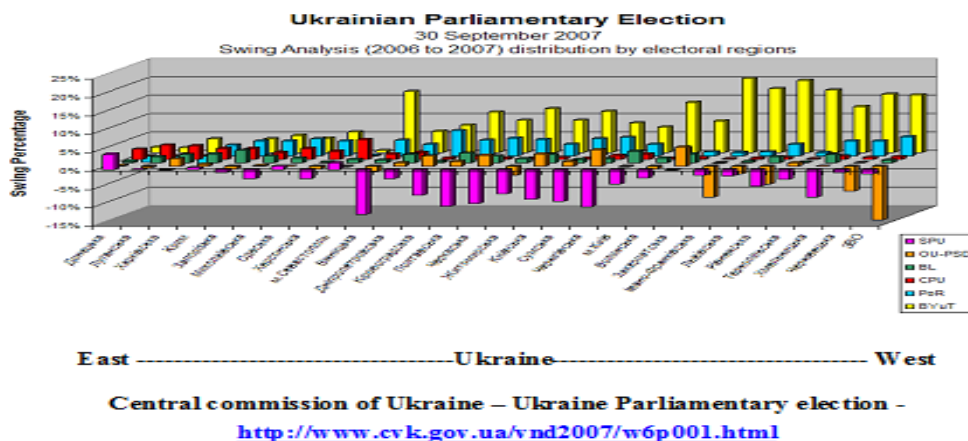
Fig. 15 Swing analysis 2006-2011 - Distribution by regional elections

However, as we pointed out earlier, Yanukovitch has adopted a balanced profile between Europe and Russia. This has, of course, visible grounds. Indeed, if Southern and Eastern regions traditionally support Russian candidates, it does not mean systematically that they are against the European integration. This can be explained by the fact that, as Walter (2004) argues, the standards diffused by the EU are no longer associated with notions of civilization – they are more neutral, technical and universal norms of political and economic governance. Hence, Eastern Ukrainians do not feel especially threaten by the European integration that they judge profitable as long as it does not interfere with the links they maintain with Russia (Author's finding).

In fact, the oppositions between West and East are mostly visible in the implementation of European policies within Ukraine. If Orange Ukraine has showed its readiness to accept European soft power on its territory through the Schengen border, it also accepts to deal with the fears and desires of its powerful neighbor such as an exclusive economic harmonization through the denial of the Russian project of integration or the ratification, in 2008, of the re-admission agreement by the Ukrainian parliament. This acceptance has strengthened the emergence of Ukraine as a buffer zone for the EU; guarding the European gated community (Houtum & Pijpers, 2007).

The political tensions that occur when it comes to the orientation of the country are well exposed by the division between the presidential and legislative powers. The pro-occidental parties seeing the Schengen border as the source of good governance and the border shared with Russia as the marker of undesired political alternatives of integration while pro-Russian parties remain closer to a civilizational approach.

This leads us to the second paradigm, the "State-centered" approach of borders.

> [In this paradigm,] *border-related strategies remain a powerful instrument between the hands of states. On this reading, as states are conceived as the main container of people and of society, state borders are to be regarded as barriers to human, economic, cultural and social cross-border contacts represented by the lines that separate territorially defined units.[…] In this connection, it is important to note the regulatory function of states in the field of cross-border mobility. […] (*Dimitrovova, 2010)*.

This paradigm illustrates well statements given in the first chapter. Indeed, Ukrainian nationalism feeds itself in state-centered approach. If the principle of territory preservation is likely to remain (Elden*, 2009)*, the boundaries of the state serves as international containers within which sovereignty is instituted.

As Paasi argues:

> *The boundaries between nation states hence receive their meanings in the continual nation building process, in the social reproduction of the nation-state and in the socialization of the citizen into specific territorial frames. Boundaries can hence be understood profoundly only in the historical and social context* (Paasi in Kuzio, 1998)

For the Ukrainian national state, they serve as lines of demarcation between what is inside or outside; a mark of otherness for preserving the Ukrainian particularity. Thus, borders represent the limit of the sovereignty of one state on another and the status quo in the international system; borders play a role which is essential to differentiating nations, since they are one of the many symbols of the state. Borders are essential to all human processes, both at the individual and the social level. *Indeed, all processes of identity construction are simultaneously border-generation and border-deriving. Nationalism is a matter of definition and if a particular notion is to be defined, it must be bound and delimited that is tied to a previously established space* (Barth, quoted by Conversi 1995). Therefore, borders are an additional symbol of any new independent states which define its territory and sovereignty.

The opening made in 2002 by Kuchma and the continuing rapprochement with NATO participate to the re-enforcing the relevance of analysis of state-centered paradigm. The trans-Atlantic military organization is

perceived as the prevention of any actions against the Ukrainian territory which contributes at re-affirming the symbolic character of the boundaries of the country. Russia's views on NATO remain extremely negative when it comes to its activity in Ukraine. The presence of a "hostile" military organization near the Russian borders is a topic of high tensions because Russia sees this organization as a potential troublemaker in the realization of its foreign policy agenda. The different interpretation about the conflict in Georgia or the recent demonstrations in Libya have not re-enforced the trust between West and East. Sensitive issues such as the presence of the Russian Naval basis (on which Moscow highly relies) and the conflicts over maritime border in the Sea of Azov prove that Ukrainian-Russian relations are not off any military tensions. As a result, the diverse events of cooperation that occurred since 2005 (first meeting of Yushchenko to a summit of NATO in Brussels) between NATO and Kiev are messages sent to the Kremlin towards any attempt to impress Ukraine and for affirming the independence of the territory.

The second feature of the state-centered paradigm is the prevailing mistrust among states that stresses the difference between insiders and outsiders. As for the European border shared with Ukraine, it is well characterized by the regulation on the movement of people and the opening of markets. Following the Visa issue for Ukrainians, there is a clear restriction of movement outside of the Schengen zone marking the distrust that exist for "weak regimes" such as Ukraine and Russia where cannot entirely trust the system against corruptions. The fact that illegal migrations and crimes are considered as being the biggest threats arising from borders re-enforced the consideration of security at EU borders as let presume the checked and controls operated and the diverse institutions (e.g. Frontex based in Warsaw Poland) set to build up defensive capacities of states.

Moreover, *the fact that candidate countries are excluded from the ENP (e.g. Turkey) suggest that, at least for now, it is clear to EU officials where the ultimate borders of the EU lie* (Dimitrovova, 2010). As a consequence, the acceptance of the ENP by Ukraine has the effect to set Ukraine outside of the European Union. Therefore, the only chance for Ukraine to "escape the East" (Kuus, 2004) and to reduce these barriers established between insiders (of the EU) and outsiders (of Ukraine) is to assure absolute control over its territory and to exercise legal, administrative and social controls over the inhabitants.

Borders as state technologies have thus been used to ensure this control as let testifies the increase of security that occurred during the past seven years at the Ukrainian borders with the EU and Russia.

2.3.2 Borders as Networks: the work of the European Union

The increase of state-centered interpretations regarding border issues has *de facto* created new dividing lines for Ukrainian inhabitants on both sides of the country. The European concerns on migration at Schengen and the nationalist interest of the orange legislature at the Ukrainian/Russian border made people's movements harder. The enhancement of Visa requirements for the European Union have thus created a problematic situation for people of Western Ukraine that must face a long, complicated and expensive process for the delivering of a Visa allowing to cross the border. Consequently, cross-border relations for border regions have become more difficult while some individuals were highly relying on inter-state labor and trade for sustaining their level of life. Moreover, the time spent at the border exceeds mostly what people are ready to endure compare to their expectations of security. If Schengen controls are long and painful (Author's experience), the situation at the Ukrainian/Russian border is in some way comparable. For instance, while Kharkov and Belgorod regions are only separated by 80km (2 hours travel) with good transport conditions[31], individuals have to wait from at least one more hour at the border for both Russian and Ukrainian controls to eight hours in peak times.

> *"The ENP must have a human face, and citizens of the EU and of neighboring countries should have more opportunities to interact and to learn more about each other". The ENP cannot only be a matter for officials and politicians.* (European Commission, 2006)

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31 According to the SWOT analysis realized in 2004 for the council of Europe

Following this path, the EU is trying to change the experience of individuals in the borderlands and to interconnect them despite the requirements adjacent to borders.

Concerns related to border issues have created new relations between officials that are mostly imposed upon the individuals living in border areas. But such a situation has the consequence to create a negative image of the European Union in regions that are described as pro-European. Indeed, the enthusiasm created by the enlargement and the Orange revolution in 2004 is slowly disappearing. To overcome that problem and to keep a positive attitude toward EU policies, the European commission had to adapt its thoughts on the border situation. According to Rumford and Delanty, the concept of borders for the European Union is no longer a line on the ground but is *stretching to the one of borderland*. In this context, the EU wants to give the impression that borders are geographically wider, politically inclusive and economically attractive (Dimitrovova, 2010).

Axford underlines three basic features of networks. First, communication and coordination that are not characterized by vertical control structures and that may abjure formal horizontal links too. Second, networks overlap and interconnect with other networks, often across or regardless of regional boundaries, and third, internal and external ties are sustained by shared norms and trust rather than contractual relationships and bureaucratic rules (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001; Urry, 2003 cited in Axfod 2006).

Especially since border-cooperation is seen as a generator of examples showing European success stories that aim as creating interests for further economic and social developments, the European Union has thus developed programs of specific funds for border regions in the form of the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument. Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programs seek to reinforce cooperation between EU Member States and partner countries along the external border of the EU. The CBC strategy has 4 key objectives (Zaytseva, 2011):

- Promote economic and social development in border areas;
- Address common challenges;
- Ensure efficient and secure borders;
- Promote people-to-people cooperation

In theorey, projects financed by these funds state as criteria's the necessity to have components facilitating contacts between people, involve parties on both side of the border through regional, local or even private authorities interacting with each other.

With 5.500 km of land borders, Ukraine has a great potential for developing cross-border cooperation, particularly at its highly strategic western border. The "opening" of this border promises to offer a high level of security to Ukraine while allowing the free movement of goods, capital, services and people (Mrinska, 2006).
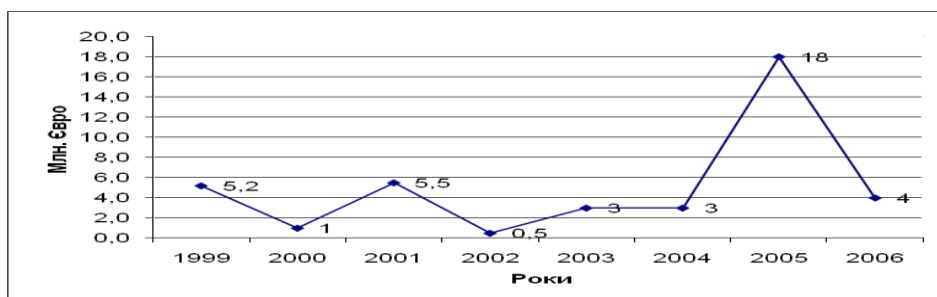
Fig. 16 Tacis program 1999-2006 in millions Euro

Thus, right after the enlargement, one can witness an increase in the level of financing allocated to Eastern European regions. This approach implied the acknowledgement that regulatory functions traditionally performed within territorial states are no longer the sole responsibility of these states (Dimitrovova, 2010).

But this approach is tied to the other paradigms. Indeed, if the ENP countries agree and implement these programs, they will become significantly integrated into the EU space of governance. For instance, it is worthy to note that with strong electoral support for the "Party of Regions" on the Eastern and Southern part of Ukraine, the results of last Ukrainian elections mainly depended on the "Western" Ukrainian vote. Therefore, to earn electoral support on this region, the "European Orientation" of Ukraine is one of the key electoral elements. The imperial character of this situation underlines the geopolitical character of cross-border programs supported by the EU.

But if these programs aim at softening and stretching the Western borders of Ukraine, it does not mean that they erase the concerns gravitating around them. On the contrary, the European Union still worries by security issues, migrations flows, etc. Therefore, they cannot be considered without re-calling the state-centered paradigm of borders.

But as previously demonstrated, the ENP has repercussions on borders of Ukraine in general while cross-border programs only target Western regions. As let appear the financing of cross-border programs for Ukraine 2007-2013, no amount has been planned for the Eastern regions of Ukraine.

Program	FEDER	European Social fund	Total
Poland-Ukraine-Byelorussia	114.455 mil. euros	71.746	186.201
Ukraine Slovakia	40.972	27.667	68.639
Romania, Moldova, Ukraine	63.359	63.359	126.718
Others	6.653	8.653	17.306
Total	227.449	171.425	398.864

Fig. 17 Financing of cross-border programs concerning Ukraine 2007-2013 (Million Euros)

Moreover, with a limited budget, Ukraine does not participate to the allocation of cross-border cooperation programs as it seems that it has other priorities of development[32]. Not all the boundaries carry the same importance and functions (Moisio, 2002). According to the different interpretations posed upon them. Consequently, European concerns about the Russian/Ukrainian border can be resumed to their geopolitical developments: the zero-sum game, the competition of influence over Ukraine and migrations. Therefore, only the new agreement with Russia about the ENPI could bring European support to Eastern regions of Ukraine. But, according to Russian and Ukrainian experts of these regions (Donetsk, Kharkov, Belgorod), it seems unlikely to happen.

2.4 EUROPEAN REGIONALIZATION: A TRANSCENDING OPPORTUNITY?

The work of the EU to promote its borders as network is interrelated to the other framework. Indeed, it must be incorporated into a wider political line that is the process of regionalization. This type of policy is set following new socio-economic patterns of the world economy.

According to Swyngedouw (2000), the globalization is a process through which economic and social interactions have been de-territorialized and re-territorialized. As a consequence, political institutions have followed the trend while keeping their particular traditions in their governing system. As an example: many decisions are now taken at supra-national levels (World Bank, IMF, WTO, European Union, etc) as well as sub-national levels (Federated governments, Regional governments, provincial governments, municipalities) with the participation of various actors (private associations, NGOs, lobbies …).

Storey (2001) presents the national state as an entity that provides a legal framework, infrastructures and services in order to: regulate the economy, provide public goods & services, regulate behaviors and defend the

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[32] Conference Economic institute Chernivsti, May 12th, 13th 2011

territory. Several components are pressuring these competencies such as international trade, capital flows, mobility of investment, the increase of communication technologies, transnational & international organizations, regional economic blocs, military alliance and cultural diffusion. These examples are made to present how the power of the national state is being eroded and re-scaled within the hands of sub-national actors. This explains why the conduct of international politics increasingly requires considering local aspects in order to develop specific frame of foreign policy.

However Brenner (1998) explains how national states remain central pivots of this process. The power of the state is, thus, not being eroded but re-territorialized as well. They play of de-territorializing medium a role in the process of globalization. But the exact characteristics of this role remain undefined. In fact, it largely depends on its external situation (regarding supra-national institutions) and its internal functioning.

According to Delanty and Rumford, the process of regionalization can be interpreted as a method of development used by the EU to bring cohesion within the union though the diminution of disparities in (transnational) regions and developing solidarity. These objectives require softening the role of borders which mark the ambivalence of European politics at its external frontier.

> *Enlargement offers the opportunity for the EU and Ukraine to develop an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation, to gradual economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation. The European Union and Ukraine are determined to enhance their relations and to promote stability, security and well-being. The approach is founded on shared values, joint ownership and differentiation. It will contribute to the further stepping up of our strategic partnership. The European Union and Ukraine are determined to work together, through the implementation of this European Neighbourhood Action Plan, to help ensure that no new dividing lines are drawn in Europe. […] The pace of progress of the relationship will acknowledge fully Ukraine's efforts and concrete achievements in meeting commitments to common values. (Former Action plan for the association agreement)*

The European regionalism carries ideas of the world-society evolution and Brussels is trying to use it as an effective model of governance. The analysis of the main documents uniting the EU and Ukraine through the Neighborhood Policy allows pointing out two different logics:

The "Up-scaling decisional process". It includes alignments of Ukrainian values on European ones (European audits, expertise, etc) and legal harmonization of the two legal systems (Rule of law, Trade association, common framework for international politics). And the "Down-scaling process" which relates to transfers such as competencies from the Ukrainian government to regional and local government. The EU is using the process of globalization (which implies a re-territorializing process) for making its attempt of interpenetration effective.

Therefore, the European regionalism is also a system of management. If one is familiar with the development of this policy, one could witness the increasing role of local governments in European politics. One of the core doctrines of the EU is the principle of subsidiary. Even if the EU disposes only of few measures to influence the local collectivities, several mechanisms were established to counter this problem.

The most effective is certainly the mechanism of financing introduced in the previous section. The vertical integration of the European Union allows Brussels to have certain controls on the projects implemented within the regions. Funds such as Interreg, Phare, Tacis, Meda, Cards are allocated to support projects that fit in the requirements conditioned by the EU. The idea is to develop contractual allowance of economic relations to formalize the relations with the regional structures and to specialized and precisely localized the regional funding.

As a correlation, the development of European democratization follows the same path. As an attempt to re-scale power of politics in the hand of the population (and to balance the undemocratic bureaucratic development of the Union), the EU seeks at developing local democracy. The process is not new and can be

traced back to 1988. The European charter on local autonomy (reinforced by its protocol adopted in 2008 by the council of Europe) urges the national instances to protect, allow and create effective instruments for local collectivities to dispose of their own measures of decisions as well as to increase their range of actions in the participation of politics concerning them. Finally, this action allows two comments.

First, it provides the EU a greater ascendancy with its relations to regional governments which, if the decentralization if efficiently implemented, become more likely to welcome the European attractiveness as it represents an additional support to their autonomy regarding the center. Second, it assures the EU to be a source of democratization in its neighborhood through the diffusion of norms such as self-decisions within the local communities. This is a topic often quoted when it comes to the authoritarian nature of the Ukrainian regimes.

Finally, the last point constitutes another dimension in the in geopolitical game between the EU and Russia. The Ukrainian democratization and de-centralization could become the European "Trojan horse" in the former states of the Soviet Union. In a long term perspective, the EU could through this process establish harmonization of the Russian and European values on this topic. Indeed, the criteria's of democratization are often rejected by the Russian elites as being a subversive critique from its Western neighbor. But the combination of economic relations in the economic regionalization brings hope in the field of cooperation through process of influences. As we will see in the next section, Russian *macro* geopolitical projects of integrations failed to produce the expected outcomes with Ukraine. Consequently, European regionalization might be the path to bring Russia "closer" to the "European family".

2. THE RUSSIAN/UKRAINIAN RELATIONS THROUGH RUSSIAN APPROACHES

After witnessing the influence of the European Union in Ukraine, we will try to engage Russian/Ukrainian geopolitical relations. One of the shortcomings of the previous section as well as many western works on Russian/European relations is that explanations remain Euro-centered (Atlantic-centered). Thus, if the previous parts gave insights for the understanding of the EU and Russian competitions and for the choices that Ukraine is facing, the European understanding of the situation was dominant. Hence this fragment provides an analytical framework based on the Russian schools of geopolitics. This will allow having another approach on the construction of the Russian/Ukrainian border which has different meanings according to the point of view considered. Through main streams of the classical school developed in Russia, Ukrainian and Russian relations will be presented with the emphasis on Slav and Eurasian approaches.

3.1 RUSSIAN GEOPOLITICS – BASES FOR RUSSIAN DISCOURSES

3.1.1 BACKGROUND IDEAS

For Russian thinkers, geopolitics is the relationship between human society and natural environment which has shaped the entire ideological and political life of the Russian society. Slavophil theories and Eurasian understandings can be considered the approaches most commonly used in Russia for explaining this relationship. Nature and society are subjects and objects of competition and rivalry in world politics which determine the path of human life; they are the pre-conditions for civilizational development. The perceptions of the world are structured by these conditions which form the boundaries for Gumilov's concept of "super-ethnos" and create bifurcations in the development of states. Consequently, traditional Russian approaches are a structural semi-deterministic view of geopolitics as the ground for civilizational progress.

One of the particularities of this school is its co-reference to the concept of state and civilizations. Thus, if one refers to the notion of civilization as super-ethnos, one would induce an approach stepping out of the stato-centered paradigm but at the same time, the international realist stream remains the main factor of analysis. The state is seen the supreme human alliance over which no higher authority exists. The idea of one global state is perceived as a utopia because of the military nature of power although the pursuit of peace remains

highly desirable. Consequently, military factors and security issues have always shaped Russian minds since the first geopolitical theories. This is why the achievement of civilizational progress must be ensured after making Russian lands secure.

Even if it has been previously the case in the history of Russia, the perspective explained in the last paragraph must not be understood as exclusively a ground for political expansionism, since the association of the diverse populations as a super- ethnos respects the idea of the existence of several states. It is rather an issue of security that is dominant. This has had repercussions for the whole Russian system. For instance, according to Chicherin, the need for centralized authority in Russia is justified by its vast territory, and its small population, the monotony and simplicity of the employed population and the constant threat of external attacks that the country had to face throughout history. This idea is backed by Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov (1853 - 1900) who presents the Russian unification as following the establishment of a strong centralized state in Moscow due to the peculiarities of the city's geography and nature. Moscow was the "focus point", the junction of the north and the south, located directly between the Slavic and Finnish tribes.

This idea of central positioning is very important to understand Russian views of the rest of the world. Central does not mean that Russia refers to itself as being the center of the world *per se,* but as being located between Europe and Asia, or in other words in the crossroads between civilizations.

From this point, the development of Russia has always been balanced between opposition and analogy of these two orientations. For example, an important idea for Russia's geopolitical thinkers is that, after the fall of Constantinople, Moscow has inherited the "will" of the Roman Empire and became a center of Christianity. In that conception, Solovyov saw that the destiny of Russia was to help the European reformation form a single and comprehensive church for the support of a Christian civilization. But for Danilevsky, this event is the starting point in the construction of the Slavic civilization. Moscow becomes the patriarch of the Orthodox religion, carrying messianic ideas that should be spread to all Slavic people. According to the classic formula: "Moscow is the third Rome but a fourth shall never be". In fact, Danilevsky opposes Orthodox civilization to the Catholic Germanic continuity that shaped Western Europe and formed the ideological foundations of the Russian Pan-Slavism policy. The Slavic idea has thus become a recurrent theme in Russian foreign policy seeking the establishment of a "federation of the Slavic states".

But the main contribution Danilevsky brought to Russian geopolitics is to pose the question of the location of Russia as a country that belongs neither to the European nor Asia civilizations and the need to correlate the policy of the country with this statement. Thus, Russia does not fit into de European political framework; Russia follows a special path of civilization and the condition of the Russian state is not aggressive or colonial in nature. Consequently, Russia's foreign policy should be built on this orientation knowing that for centuries the balance of forces in Europe has absolutely nothing to do with Russia.

3.1.2 PAN-SLAVISM AND EURASIA
The last section draws general lines that can be observed in recent geopolitical thoughts in Russia. Danilevsky's foundations of Pan-Slavism are prevalent in the understanding of the concept of Eurasia and their different variations. Based on the civilizational approaches (inspired by the continuation of Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Samuel Huntington's writings), many Russians thinkers interpret the role of the Russian state and the Slavic culture as the center of geopolitical approaches. Thus, the development of Eurasia was influenced by authors such as Trubetskoy, Savitsky, Vernadsky, Florovsky, Karsavin etc. It is defined as "a unique geographic environment containing the formation and the development of individuals as well as large human communities (Muntean 2007)"

For Berdyaev, the "Eurasia" was an emotional reaction to the October Revolution of 1917. However he incorrectly estimated the direction of public opinion that he interpreted as "a rehash of old Slavophil ideas, including quite complete covers of Danilevsky (*ibid)*".

Eurasia must be understood as a physical and spiritual concept. But it takes distances from the stereotype is primarily and exclusively constructing Russia's spirit on Orthodox motifs. Under that approach, it is impossible to explain and identify the past, the present and the future cultural identity of Russia solely with the reference to Slavs. Savitsky identifies geographical elements, running from the continent to the ocean, which influenced the development of the Russian specificity. The Mongol invasion, the proximity with the Turks and the numerous ethnic minorities that could access this territory have created a mixed identity.

It is the physical location of the Eurasian territory which created the Russian specificity; a" third world" different from of Europe or Asia but which is at the same time [their ensuing]. Hence, for the question "Is Russia a part of Europe?", the answer is: "Despite its political and cultural affinities, Russia must be considered as a third-Europe

This implies that the concept of Eurasia is an attempt to get rid of Eurocentric thoughts. Following this idea, the relations with the EU are structured to make Russia's cultural tradition independent from the one of its European neighbors. Furthermore, the Russian Eurasian geopolitical doctrine sees the Russian state as natural unifier of the Eurasian continental space, with the main task to preserve the historical destiny, unity and integrity of its civilization. As a consequence, the defense of this territory against European or Asian invasions remains a priority of state objectives.

> *The Russian people will never have such freedoms as those enjoyed by people in the U.S. and England because their security is guaranteed by oceans and straits, while Russia can only ensured its own by military service, which is the first of non-freedoms.* Ivan Lukyanovich Solonevich (1891-1953)

The Soviet era has shown that a sustainable security for the Russian nation can only be ensured if most of the territory in Russia's orbit of the geopolitical influence before the revolution 1917 is included. It is no coincidence that during the Soviet era new areas were added to the USSR (Muntean 2007). The analysis of the chronology of Russia's territorial expansion shows that the state has only achieved geopolitical influence when its frontiers reached the Arctic Ocean, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the North Caucasus, the Eurasian steppe and the Pacific Ocean.

Fig. 18 Soviet administrative divisions – 1984 – Overview of the Russian frontiers

Questions of Eurasian borders are of the first importance when it comes to the question of Ukraine. The name "Ukraine" in itself means "at the border" which express the ambiguity that gravitates around the geopolitical position of the country. "It was the proto-choice realized by Ukraine which attributed the defensive feature of the Eurasian territory" (Zhurzhenko, 2010). But this orientation is subject to re-invention, which poses the question: how do the borders of Ukraine correlate with the Eurasian concept? For Russian nationalists, the fact that this notion transcends the Pan-Slavic stream is fundamental. Eurasia is considered as being more than a

culture, language, ethnicity and religion, but a shared territory that implies the common destination of the civilization. As a counterpart of the European origins of Kievan Rus, Eastern Ukraine is considered as being integrated into Eurasia since the day Catherine II gave her protection against the Mongols' raids. Nevertheless, this part of land as always been recognized as a zone of contact that extends beyond its natural internal division (the Dnieper). Eurasia is therefore greater than solely "Russia" which implicitly denies the independent character of Ukraine as the country constitutes the defensive part of Eurasia's territory.

Nowadays, the best representation of such a doctrine is to be found in Alexander Dugin's writings on Eurasia that includes much of anti-Atlanticist ideas. The neo-Eurasianist approach reflects well the one developed in the 1920's but is adapted to situation of Russia's new borders. Thus, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Central Asian states and Baltic States were integrated into the Soviet Union. But the situation for Russia does not reflect the same reality, since it has never experienced the current border configuration before.

Many states were included within the CIS. But Baltic States are now integrated in the EU and the Russian federation has still to face competition in its near abroad. The orange revolution stressed that the international power status desired by Russia is challenged by these new circumstances. For Zhurzhenko, the last two Russian presidencies were tainted by this doctrine. The realist approach adopted under Putin had thus repercussions on the Ukrainian/Russian relations. Moscow fears that Ukraine could become Europe and USA's Trojan horse to harm Russia's interests. The Kremlin needs to prevent its neighbor from becoming NATO's outpost and to maintain control of the Black Sea in order to secure an entry to the Mediterranean Sea and to preserve the country of being isolated and contained on its European borders. Consequently, the only acceptable solutions for a shared influence on Ukraine in the Neo-Eurasianist approach would be: a protectorate of Russia over its neighbor or the partition of the country according to its cleavage East/West in order to fit the civilizational approach (e.g.the federalization of Ukraine following to the East Slavic Unity).

This also explains why Ukrainian nation building is deeply influenced by Russia's Eurasian idea. Ukrainian nationalism cannot afford to adopt a direct anti-western attitude (Zhurzhenko, 2010). The status of independent Ukraine is specified through the proportion between centrifugal forces from Russia and centripetal forces toward Europe. For instance, the political position of "Our Ukraine" was aligned on anti-Eurasian projects (with Pro-European electoral programs, closer collaboration with NATO and the emphasis on the demarcation with myths of the Soviet Period). Nevertheless, nuances have to be noted. Europe, as synonym of democratization and wellness is well accepted by the whole country but for Ukrainian elites who are opposed to colonial invasion of any Russian or European power it also means more competition within the European framework. The Party of Regions' position testifies more of the ambivalence that the country faces in term of orientation. This ambivalence constitutes the source of the multi-vector policy that was primarily developed under Kuchma's administration (Korduban, 2010).

Interestingly, Tatiana Zhurzhenko argues that there has been a re-appropriation of the Eurasian concept by Ukrainian nationalism. In this context, Eurasia is the place where the transition between Europe and Russia operates. This perspective sets grounds on which combination between both Russian and European integration could be initiated. The Ukrainian-Russian relations are often associated to the way Ukrainian nation building and cultural identities influence each other. The nature of the relationship is likely to influence many issues that concern not only Russia and Ukraine but also the European Union and the United States.

3.1.3 RUSSIAN APPROACH ON BORDERS: GEOPOLITICAL EXTENSIONS AND REALIST FOREIGN POLICY

After reviewing the basis of the Russian geopolitics, it seems important to see how Russia deals with the surrounding world through its borders. This section provides a complement to the geopolitical approach presented above and analyses Russia's general behavior based on its actual projects of foreign policy. In order to do so, the following paragraphs constitutes in argumentations between the different objectives, methods

and restrictions set by Russia on border issues according to the different concepts of foreign and security policies. Accordingly, it takes some distance from considerations Russian geopolitical doctrines and focus on pragmatic ideas developed by the federation. The purposes are to identify the actual position of Russia in regards to its borders and to elaborate a map that will be used further for comparing European and Russian approaches. Moreover, this section serves as an introduction to the next chapter, which will provide an analysis of the current situation at the Russian/Ukrainian border regarding the ways the European Union, Ukraine and the Russian federation are dealing with it.

The Russian approaches on borders rely on several principles set to coordinate the different entities which concern border issues. Thus, the federal and federated administrative divisions have to rely on these recommendations to conduct their border policies.

The first point concerns the mutual respect and the territorial integrity of the states. Based on international conventions, the Russian Federation seeks to promote cross-border contacts with its neighbors through the framework of the 1980 Madrid convention and its two first protocols. But it is worth mentioning that the frame set by this convention remains weakly implemented within Russia as it sticks to the idea of borders as a foreign policy concept that has to be decided in Moscow. Therefore, the economic interests of border regions are often placed behind the general interests of the Russian federation.

As a consequence, the principal objectives of cross-border relations are limited to prospects reinforcing security within the Russian territory (military, cross-border criminality, etc). In addition to the creation of economic, cultural and humanitarians ties with neighbors in the attempt to construct comprehensive relations based on trust and understanding, the objectives considered of border policies are tied to the different ethnic and political problems encountered by Russia which sometimes differ from local needs. Therefore, cross-border programs are implemented for state purposes.

Some are worth mentioning such as the need to create favorable environment to avoid population exodus, to facilitate the integration of systems to the Russian territory in case of catastrophes and to oppose any attempt of national, religious, ethnic, manifestations in the border areas. Borders are seen as a tool for supporting national interests and security where decentralized organs are the executor of the policies. Consequently, the conduct of border politics is mainly related to the relations Russia has with the concerned country. The establishment of cross-border cooperation is conducted regarding politico-military issues, historical and cultural relations, the exercise of national interests in the management of bordering natural resources and the level of security desired at the border.

The repartition of competences between the federal states and federations testifies to this configuration. The process of cross-border relation is decided in Moscow, which has complete control over the regulations of economic entities and activities with any foreign partner. The decentralized entities end up with the sole power to coordinate and to execute orders of the federation through the establishment of programs and the adaptation of cross-border agreements for national use. Nevertheless, it worth mentioning that the Russian system already allows its federations some room to conduct cross-border policies through the implementation of specific budgets (which is not the case in Ukraine since the council does not have this competence).

The particular limitations expressed by Russia for cross-border programs and the extensive utilization of border politics for national purposes can be explained through the realist stream of its policy towards other countries. As expressed in its geopolitical conceptions, Russia sees security, sovereignty and territorial integrity as the principal objectives of its foreign policy. Russia's ambitions, as a great world power, are driven by multipolar aspirations seeking to generate a center of gravity for Eurasian questions. Russia is thus using borders as projections over its neighborhood for sustaining objectives answering: to politico-military situations, the regional disintegrations, the vulgarization of Russian culture and to (Euro-Atlantic) process of integration. In addition, the Russian concept of foreign policy clearly states as a fundamental element in the conduct of its

border policies that it will fight any attempts to weaken the competences of the central state Russia perceives this procedure as an inference in the domestic affair opposed to the sovereignty of the state.

This outline appears to be rather limited to the static-centered approach previously depicted. However, these principles reveal quite well how the pragmatic approach of Russian regional priorities are constructed from the geopolitical doctrine. The following section deals specifically on the different processes led by Russia to achieve its geopolitical ambitions.

3.2 UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN RELATIONS

> *Russian-Ukrainian relations were complex and unstable since the first days of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ukrainians and Belarusians as - closely related to the Russian people for centuries lived in the same state with them. They share common collective memory, mentality and traditions, closely knit national culture inherited from the recent past, economic ties and, finally, at the individual level - the ties that exist between millions of people. (Kolosov, 2011)*

For Kolosov, the most important factors shaping the Russian and Ukrainian affairs are Ukraine's accession to NATO, the attempts to complicate the work of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, the rights of Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, attempts to revise the anti-Russian spirit in a common history, discriminations between Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate. But to keep the geopolitical approach prevailing, three themes are emerging in the overall relationship: Security issues, (political and cultural) integrative issues and economic issues. These three points will be analyzed through three organizations created by a Russian initiative: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Single Economic Area (SEA) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Thus, Ukraine's alignment will generate certain advantages and disadvantages that it worth balancing before the country actually takes a decision (the multi-vector policy). The geopolitical vision that will result from such a choice will imply the submission of the territory, a national orientation imposed upon certain ethnic, the determination of the border regimes between Ukraine's neighbored countries, the unacceptable models of government, etc…

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and Ukraine were bound by the prospect of integrating the "Common European House". But this feeling quickly disappeared to let room for divergences regarding that matter. Thus, as the time from the Soviet breakdown became bigger, Ukrainian elites welcomed the European plan as a desirable integration while Russian ones preferred to deal with the EU as an equal/strategic partner (Zhurzhenko, 2010).

Russia slowly developed projects of "post-soviet" integration to keep the link with the former republics and to set what looked like a civilized divorce. These projects were rather inert during Yeltsin's time. But under Putin, post-Soviet integration has become an instrument of regional power. Indeed the world regionalism has proved to be the tendency of new international relations (Santander, 2009). If Russia cannot compete in the world like it used to, the only way to assert its power is to focus its attention on its close neighborhood. This area is now the last part of land/sea which benefit from defensive connotations in the west of the country. Dominated by the realist school, this explains why Russia reacts extremely negatively to another presence into its traditional zone of influence.

3.2.1. THE CSTO: MILITARY INTEGRATION IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE
Created in 1992, the Collective security treaty (which became the Collective security treaty organization in 2003) is a structure that aims at ensuring military cooperation and to provide regional security.

For Ukraine, according to many politicians, the main threat to national sovereignty in Ukraine and prospects of nation-building come from the east. Therefore, the rapprochement with NATO can be perceived as an attempt

to strengthen territorial security. However, Russia sees NATO's approach to its borders as the main danger to the conservation of an independent role in the international arena. Events that occurred in Kosovo or in Libya has re-enforced this feeling. As the new "National Security Strategy of Russia" induces: as far as the presence of NATO closer to the Russian territory is the determining factor in the relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it will be unacceptable in Russian future to remove its military infrastructure from its borders[33].

Russia's foreign minister made it clear that in case Ukraine or Georgia would actually be on the edge to join NATO, it would result in a clear deterioration of the relationships Moscow has with its neighbors. Therefore, the active propositions that Russian made to Ukraine about the CSTO appears *de facto* as an alternative to NATO. During his recent visit to Kyiv, Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, said that he would be "happy" if Ukraine joined the CSTO (Interfax-Ukraine, May 18 cited in Korduban, 2010). However, Yanukovitch has declined participation to the two organizations. Regarding the military association with Russia, several officials stated after the opening made by Medvedev that Kiev will keep its neutral status. This position was clear as well to NATO. While Kuchma and Yushchenko saw in NATO the key for independence, Yanukovitch's administration mentioned the sufficiency of the relations Ukraine maintains with the Atlantic organization. But, the balance showed by the actual president denotes with past manifestations as he allowed international troops to cross Ukraine's territory for military exercises.

This move has a strong symbolical effect since it is clearly stated by the Ukrainian constitution that no foreign troops are allowed to station on the Ukrainian soil. It links immediately to the problem of the Russian Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol.

In 2008, a huge conflict arose between Moscow and Kiev regarding the withdrawal of the fleet in 2017. Several procedures were added to the military movements in this area and a plan for socio-economic development was issued with the intention to use the military infrastructures for civil purposes. For nation-building Ukraine, Sevastopol represents a high risk of being drawn into an armed conflict (Kolosov, 2011).

Since Yanukovitch's legislature, a solution has been advanced for solving this issue. The Kharkov agreements legally extended the lease of the Sevastopol base for the Russian Black Sea Fleet until 2042 thus eliminating an important factor aggravating the bilateral relations. But this action has not been without internal repercussion in Ukraine as let seen the parliament bawl that has been broadcasted by many foreign media.

However, Kharkov agreement raised a number of fundamental issues broader than the Black Sea Fleet. Kharkov agreement means a rejection of market principles and pragmatism with partners of the former Soviet Union. It represents the return to old policies of concessions (e.g. energy prices) in exchange for an ephemeral and largely declarative "friendship" backed by no recognized international agreements (Kolosov, 2011). Indeed, the discount in gas tariffs in 2010 is equivalent of subsidizing the Ukrainian economy $ 3 billion (*Ibid*). Moreover, the pro-European statesmen have made it clear that the Kharkov agreement will not be an obstacle to Ukraine's integration into Western structures (Stanovaya, 2010).

3.2.2 THE SINGLE ECONOMIC AREA: ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

The Single Economic Area is an economic association which aims at creating a custom union between the former Soviet Republics and at coordinating common policies on trade, migration, currency exchanges and infrastructure developments.

The first attempt to create such a bloc in this part of world has been realized in 2000 with the Eurasian Economic Commonwealth which included Russia, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In 2003, the EEC evolved into the SEA with the ambition to produce a similar bloc than the European one. It worth mentioning that the modification in the structure of the organization was not made coincidentally but as an anticipation of the EU enlargement that was under already under work. However, the semi-participation of

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[33] Approved from 2009 to 2020 on presidential decree, May 12, 2009

Ukraine as an observer represents a failure for this organization that presented itself as a project of Eurasian economic integration.

Unlike his predecessor (Viktor Yushchenko) who prioritized culture, history and geopolitical considerations, Yanukovitch sees economic pragmatism as the cornerstone of his foreign policy (Korduban, 2010). Indeed, during his speech in Lviv he insisted on the fact that the determination of Ukrainian foreign policy would be divided equally between military considerations and economic interests. Ukraine would deal with business and security issues with the same attention. For instance in April, Yanukovitch authorized the closure of trade missions in foreign embassies and set up economic departments within embassies instead, which will presumably enjoy a higher status (*ibid*). This position fed many hopes regarding to whether or not Ukraine would finally join the SEA promoted by Moscow.

According to Kolosov, Ukraine's economy remains dependent on Russian imports, but in its commodity structure dominated by energy (in 2008: 42,8%) and raw products. At the same time, the Ukrainian export products are dominated by medium and high value-added products and services. In 2008, the share of total exports to Russia was expressed by 31,7% for engineering products, 19,6% for metallurgy and 19.6% services. Russia in 2008 accounted for 23,5% of Ukrainian exports and 22,7% of imports. Russia's share in all of Ukraine's trade turnover amounted to 23,3%. This is significantly higher than the share of Ukraine's foreign trade with Russia (5,4%). Ukraine was in the same year, the fifth largest trading partner of Russia (39,8 billion dollars) after Germany (67.3 billion dollars), the Netherlands (61.8 billion), China (55.9 billion) and Italy (52.9 billion) and the first in the CIS (Tsvetkov, 2009 cited in Kolosov,2011).Russia consistently ranked sixth and seventh place among the major investing countries in Ukraine[34].

Even if Mykola Azarov reacts positively to the possibility of integration within the SEA in the Ukrainian media, Yanukovitch declined by two times propositions made by Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev for integrating the common market. The offer made by Russia is far from being unattractive for Ukraine which would enjoy a free trade zone and could have started an ambitious plan for regional economic integration (Zhurzhenko, 2010). However, Yanukovitch underlines that Ukraine economic orientation would be firstly determined by national interest. The common positions of the Ukrainian president and prime minister mostly signify that Ukraine will seek at special relations with its Russian partner but the integration will certainly continue to the West.

3.2.3 THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES: FAILURE OF POLITICAL INTEGRATION

The Commonwealth of Independent States is an organization created in 1991 by Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Its goals were to provide a platform for former Soviet States to discuss about common problems on security, economic and humanitarian issues. At first, this initiative has been perceived by the different capitals as a way to assure a "civilized divorce" between socialist states. But since the Putin's presidencies, Moscow seems to use this CIS as a way to build an integrated union in the post-soviet space.

The CIS is the roof supporting all type of integrations and represents the oldest form of political coordination in the post-soviet space. As additional evidence, the semi-participation of Ukraine to this structure is particularly relevant. While Kiev was primarily a creating member of the organization, it has always preserved the status of observer within the latter. In some ways, it shows the failure of Russian projects of integration regarding little Russia. By this attitude, Ukraine indicates its ambivalent position between West and East.

In fact, since its independence, the country is confronted to difficult choices balanced between short term and long term interests. The benefits of businessmen and oligarchs who took advantage of the Ukrainian privatization are driving the country east. At the same time, they represent the principal wellness of the

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[34] Translated from Russian: Kolosov, 2011 – Russian Ukrainian borderlands- twenty years of division, Scientific Council of the Institute of Geography, Moscow

Ukraine and it is difficult not to take their opinions in considerations. Nevertheless, as presented above political and ideological factors, associated with the tasks of nation-building are pushing the country to the west. In other words, these contradictions can be seen as a conflict between the objectives of the national and state-building and the limitations of immediate economic sustainability. Moreover, the European integration requires an extreme caution when it comes to contacts between Ukraine and Russia because of the danger of a split in Ukrainian regional "faults" (Kolosov, 2011)[35].

According to Zhurzhenko, Eurasian projects of integration aimed at building up a European East that was not conceived as an anti-European force. It was the answer to avoid isolation and exclusion of the "Europe". Even though Russia considers itself as being non-European, the rejection of Ukraine in the Eastern integration *de facto* denies the Eurasian identity of Russia. In a long term perspective, the threat for Russian foreign policy is to be cut off from the Eurasian sphere where Moscow considers that it has a specific zone of responsibility played in world politics. If Russia acknowledged quickly Ukrainian independence, it was assumed that Kiev had to show loyalty toward its natural Slavic brother. During the 2000's Moscow managed to guarantee this allegiance through low gas prices and trade preferences (Zhurzhenko, 2010). Nevertheless, even if the orange legislature had to deal with the regional businesses' interests that practically maintained Ukrainian economy attached to Russia, the year 2004 has really marked a turning point in Ukraine's position between European and Eurasian space.

It is interesting to note that the idea of containment led by American initiative during the cold war is reappearing slowly in Russian intellectual minds and policy concepts. Ukraine "betrayal" has principally been interpreted as backed by the US and as a step further for NATO. Consequently, it has brought the Russian policy back to pure realist components which can be witness regarding the federation's border concept. From 2004 to 2010, Moscow had no other choice than to adopt a stance of patience which degraded the relations between the two countries (eg: the gas conflict, the Russo-Georgian war where Moscow accused Kiev for having supplied weapons and diplomatic tensions (NATO, the Russian fleet, etc))

The arrival of Viktor Yanukovitch has contributed to change significantly the political situation and some problems in bilateral relations were resolved in short order. However, some limitations in the relations between Russia and Ukraine remain from the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko.

Since 1991, the consequence of the failure of Eurasian integration, the growing importance of security and the revival of Russia as an international player have slowly pushed Russia away from the imperial paradigm of border and have stressed the conduct of territorial policies of sovereignty in the use of its border politics.

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[35] As it will be shown later, it is of an extreme importance to make a distinction between officials' positions and individuals' opinions. See appendix: "Survey"

PART 3: FROM MESO TO MICRO-ANALYSIS

1. MESO-ANALYSIS .

As mentioned in the precedent chapters, different geopolitical projects are implemented within the post-soviet space. As a consequence, different interpretations, paradigms are actively shaping the reality of Ukrainian borders. While the European literature has written extensively about the European external (Schengen) border, a little attention has been given to the Ukrainian/Russian boundary as the principal object of research. The role of borders in the Ukrainian nationalism has been approached by authors such as Kuzio and Prizel. But the principal and most recent realizations are to be attributed to Tatiana Zhurzhenko and Vladimir Kolosov. Zhurzhenko has broadly contributed to cover the issues of identities in the post soviet space and Kolosov exposed precisely the most important geopolitical transformations that occurred at the Russian/Ukrainian borders through issues of transportation, morphologies, gradients, migrations. However, it seems that little attention has been paid to the relation between social and political institutions that have been developing at the border in the past years.

The goal of this chapter is to create a transition between the geopolitical perspectives depicted above, regional issues and individual opinions of the people living in Ukraine Russia's borderland.

1.2 THE UKRAINIAN/RUSSIAN BORDER

1.2.1 THE UKRAINIAN BORDERS AS GEO-STRATEGIC PLACES.

According to Tatiano Zhurzhenko (2004):

> *Ukraine in particular, due to its large migration potential, the impoverishment of the population, its position as a transit country, and its ecological situation, is a subject of EU interest mainly in this "barrier" function.* […] *Among the various risks connected to Ukraine as a neighbor, the issue of illegal migration is one of the most urgent: Ukraine is the biggest transit country on the route of many migrant flows from the Middle East, China, and the NIS countries to the West, mainly to countries of Western Europe. Due to its geographic location Ukraine is bound to be the eastern cordon sanitaire of the enlarged EU in the near future. No wonder that the issue of Ukraine's borders is of primary interest for the EU.*

This statement is full of truth. Since the enlargement, a great increase in attention has been paid to Ukrainian borders. At the western extremity of Ukraine, the EU has been investing significant amounts of money; on the one hand, this has been invested in hardening the border to mitigate the risk of soft threats (migration, contraband, etc), on the other hand, funding has been used as a softening tool, through a series of local initiatives such as Euroregions.

These structures have several goals. First, they were thought to be an instrument for weakening the dividing role of the border. They are supposed to diffuse the European wellness in the neighborhood in order to concretely avoid the new "dividing lines" created by the EU enlargement. By encouraging contacts with and between the populations living on either side of a border, they integrate, little by little, the civil society of border zones closer to the European Union. ENP actively seeks to develop those regions because they represent the model of the European attractiveness and at the same time, they are zones of security for the transit toward the EU.

The European Union is, therefore, an important player in the making of Ukrainian borders - Western and Eastern. Indeed, despite the fact that the Ukrainian–Russian border has geographically hardly anything to do

with the EU, it has become the subject of growing concern to the EU, mainly in its role as a filter of illegal migrants (*Ibid*, 2004). But in this regard, the principal stake holders are the national governments of Ukraine and Russia.

1.2.2 THE RUSSIAN/UKRAINIAN BORDER AS A CASE STUDY

The non-contiguous geographical connection combined with the indirect influence of the EU may explain the little interest given by the European literature to this particular border. It does not mean that the attention in this matter has been skipped from the intellectual circles, but the subject constitutes a relatively new field of research in term of European studies. Geopolitically speaking, the border is at the intersection of different projects which makes it a place of real importance. However, although it constitutes a matter of concern for the European Union, it must be said that the EU has relatively no direct involvement regarding the regulations of this space.

Again, Tatiano Zhurzhenko presents the main characteristics of the logics at stake:

> *Both Ukrainian and Russian border regions experience today two different, or even contradictory Processes: nationalizing the borderlands in the process of state building, incorporating them into the national territory, investing the new state borders with real and symbolic power, and at the same time (re)establishing economic and social contacts between the neighboring regions on the new institutional basis of cross-border cooperation, reinterpreting regional histories, and constructing new borderland identities. The two tendencies (which can be called "construction" and "deconstruction" of the national borders) not only coincide chronologically but also affect each other. Not only do the processes of border building create new conditions (if not obstacles) for cross-border cooperation, but the new regional initiatives and integration projects also influence the concepts of the national border and of a desirable border regime.* (*Ibid,* 2004)

As we can see, this process is directly tied to our question. It presents the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion created by the inter-relations between national/regional/local policies. The place presents the ideal research material for studying the geographical relationship provoked by the border.

1.2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UKRAINIAN/RUSSIAN BORDER

The Ukrainian/Russian "border" is relatively new since it has officially been institutionalized as an independent state border in 1991. Although there has always been a "border" between the two states since the distinction of Russia and Ukraine, during the Soviet Period, it mainly constituted more an "administrative line". Therefore, for the people living in the borderlands, the border has never really been a physical or mental fact. It did not represent a distinctive marker of education, labor market or social provisions. However, it is also wrong to affirm that the border has not been used by the local populations. According to Valera Vasilenka[36], the division between Ukraine and Russia has always brought small differentiations between the territories that were an unconsciously exploited by locals' habits (such as the borrowings of construction techniques, materials, legal factors (the age of marriage)).

Thus, instead of affirming that the border between Russia and Ukraine relies on exclusively news factors of differentiation is maybe inaccurate: the border as a frontier has always been present in people but it is the boundary that represents a new challenge for the states and the inhabitants. This has a relative importance when one deals with the new contributions the construction of the Russian/Ukrainian border has brought to the actual situation.

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[36] Author's interview with Valera Vasilenka

The Ukrainian border with Russia is 2,246 km long including 1,976 km of land. On the Ukrainian side, the border starts in the vicinity of Khrynivka village, where the frontiers of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus meet. It crosses the Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk Oblasts, cuts the Sea of Aziz and ends in the Strait of Kerch. On the Russian side, the border touches the Bryansk, Kursk, Belgorod, Voronezh regions as well as the coastal areas of Krasnodar[37]. The size of borderlands varies from regions to regions and the intensity of contacts depends on the respective developments of each administrative entity. Yet, it is good to mention that through history, the border has not always been following the same path. For instance, the historic region of Slobozhanschyna or, more recently, environmental programs that have emerged during the Soviet era and that have been associated with environmental activities and issues of water use in the headwaters of the rivers. This has created institutional structure of systematic contacts, working on cross-border cooperation (Kolosov, 2011).
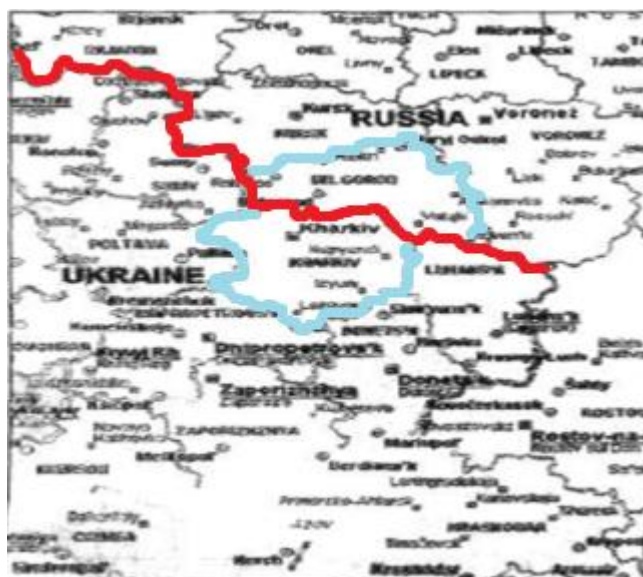
Fig. 19 The Ukrainian/Russian border (in red) and the Euroregion Slobozhanschyna (in blue)

Yet, from the Ukrainian independence, Ukraine and Russia had to face a totally new context in their relations. The two countries had to find an agreement on the border demarcation (e.g. the issue over Sea of Azov for instance has not been solved yet) and to built the infrastructure from zero and to create different environments for two populations tied by family, friendship and common culture on both side of the border. Zhurzhenko explains that the education over the new border reality is one of the biggest challenges of the post soviet era. The issue is even bigger for Kiev in the attempt of nationalization of Ukraine.

The regions crossed by the border are densely populated and are of crucial importance for both economies. Moreover, these regions have historically been interdependent on each other. Nowadays, the nature of the interaction between the regions across the border is primarily determined by social and economic differences[38]:

The level of development of Russian regions is far below the country's average and the main developed city (Belgorod) does not even reach it. As for Ukraine, the most developed region (Donetsk) is one third above the average GRP per capita. Eastern regions of Ukraine produces 30% of the total Ukrainian GNP while the Ukrainian border regions are accountable for only 6.4% of Russia's. Nevertheless, the per comparison, Russian regions can be seen as having a GRP per capita 1.5 times higher than their Ukrainian neighbors. However, the Ukrainian industries are far more developed in term of production outputs than the sector is in Russia. Consequently, the economies of cities such as Kharkov, for instance, are turned deeply into the Russian market. The developed industrial areas on both sides of the border are roughly the same. But while Ukrainian regions are more advanced in industrial developments, Russian border regions have key and leading positions in the agricultural sector. These regions produce for 20% of the total agricultural outputs although their territory covers only 2% of the total Russia's area. The Ukrainian border territories account for 25% of the country agricultural outputs while occupying 27.5% of Ukraine's territory.

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[37]According to the ISIG's SWOT analysis realized for the Council of Europe, 2004
[38] *Ibidem*

Social indicators show differences between the regions on both sides of the borders. Russian wages and salaries are 1.5 times higher than regions on Ukraine. But comparatively, Russian regions are "poorer" in term of incomes with around 70% of the national average while Ukrainian regions are characterized by medium to high salaries. However, it is important to mention that the "richest" border regions of Ukraine have a comparable wages than the "poorest" Russian border regions. This gives rationales for cross-border working migrants.

In term of migration, the border is also the busiest of Ukraine with 20 millions of crossing per year. The border is located on the "road to the south" (the road from Moscow to the Black Sea and Southern regions of Russia). Comparatively, it represents more than the entire population of the border territories in Ukraine (14.4 million people) and Russia (15.7 million people). The infrastructure capacities are well developed with 52 permanent international freight and passenger checkpoints which operate on the border. However, it worth mentioning that the road infrastructure is not adapted to the new situation and remains based on the Soviet Situation. As an example, it is comparatively quicker in time for people starting from Kharkov/Belgorod to join Belgorod/Kharkov than for someone living closer to the border. This shows that the road infrastructure is not adapted to the border route. Moreover, according to the International Migration Organization, the border is also a transit area for migrants coming from China, Afghanistan, South Asia and that are mainly stopped at the Schengen border. The border is considered as rather porous because of the flat landscape of the borderland which makes the task of border guards difficult.

1.3 BUILDING THE BORDER: FROM GEOPOLITICAL APPROACHES TO REGIONAL ISSUES

According to Zhurzhenko and Kolosov, there is a common distinction between two types of border narratives: Those that relates to hard politics (high geopolitics) and those which relates to soft politics (low geopolitics). Although these two approaches are distinctive, they represent the sides of a same coin: thus soft politics are often part of the legitimate construction of a border, the justification of hard politics. Therefore, although both can be addressed alternatively, it is interesting to see how the different concerns of political views are influencing the construction of the border.

Blanchard (2005) presents the principal functions of a border:

1) Military-strategic functions, including the protection and safety, access to the sea and transit control
2) Constituent functions (maintaining state sovereignty and its legal environment, regulation of its relations with the outside world),
3) The functions of national identity (the legitimization of the state in the eyes of citizens and the international community with the simultaneous separation of kindred groups living on different sides of the border), the state construction on the basis of socialization, the national iconography, historical myths and regulation of the use of languages, religions and cultures.
4) Economic functions (control over capital flows, resource use, trade and national market)
5) The domestic political functions: the boundaries contribute to the formation of a definite structure of the economy, education, transport, energy, government standards, etc

It worth mentioning that the Ukrainian/Russian borderlands are now facing two opposed dynamics which consists at the same time in strengthening and weakening the border. These two logics are triggered by the desire of "nationalizing the borderlands in the process of state building, incorporating them into the national territory, investing the new state borders with real and symbolic power, and at the same time (re)establishing economic and social contacts between the neighboring regions on the new institutional basis of cross-border cooperation, reinterpreting regional histories, and constructing new borderland identities" (Zhurzhenko, 2010). But it is important not to forget regional aspirations that influence as well the construction of the border. Hence, according to the discourse in use, the level (macro, meso, micro) of analysis and the degree of interest,

the border will be interpreted as a product of integration, protection and/or differentiation. Consequently, each entity has its desire and concerns that, according to its priorities, do not relate primarily to the big picture.

1.3.1 MILITARY, CONSTITUENT FUNCTIONS AND FUNCTIONS ON NATIONAL IDENTITY AS STATE INTERESTS

Balanced between these points, this section tries to address narratives derived from geopolitical points of views defended above. Some variations regarding the approaches can be found in the following lines. Indeed, as we previously showed it, the Eurasian and Pan-Slav integrative projects have not been successful so far. Therefore, one must take into consideration the constructed differences between Russian's doctrines of geopolitical extensions and the neo-realists who are inspired by geopolitical projects but who remained primarily focused on state-sovereignty. Hence the following lines express the macro-concerns of politics which are active in the political centers.

It is military speaking that the border has really changed of function. On its land part, the Ukrainian/Russian border has been recognized by international treaties. Thus, the so called "Big Treaty[39]" fixed for the first time the territorial integrity of Ukraine within the former soviet boundaries. It also included an agreement on Crimea as a Ukrainian territory with a special status for Sebastopol. At the beginning, this was seen as the consecration of the "civilized divorce" between Ukraine and Russia although in the following years, the concessions made in the treaty was perceived as a political mistake made by Russia at the time.

On its maritime part (the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait), the dispute between Russian and Ukraine showed how important for territorial integration the function of the border is. Geopolitically, the Sea of Azov represents an area rich in petroleum and the Kerch strait is an access to the Blacks Sea. Kiev decided that the sea would be divided according to the old administrative lines while Moscow opted for a common use of the water. The Tuzla conflict turned out to be one highly sensitive point of disagreement. Moscow claimed the Russian character of the land while Kiev affirmed that the island was originally a part of Crimea and therefore became a part of Ukraine in 1954. The differences of perspectives because derived from different interpretations of a same fact are irreconcilable and had therefore to be approached pragmatically. This conflict even turns into military demonstration before being solved by the two countries in 2004 in the Kerch agreement.

The Kerch agreement described the Sea of Azov as inland waters for both countries which, in fact, refer to the first treaty of friendship and partnership. Tatiana Zhurzhenko correctly concluded that the outcome of this situation is beneficial to Russia. Indeed, it means that no other ship than Ukrainian and Russian can access these water which is a strategic issue in case of further contact between NATO and Ukraine. Ukraine, for instance, already collaborates with the alliance in terms of border management. From the Russian point of views, NATO is perceived as an organization designed for containing the capacity of action of the country. Therefore, its presence in Ukraine risks compromising the "safe" western Russian border. Thus, the military base of Sevastopol is a source of tensions which is, according to some fringes of the population violating the constitution stating the fact that "Ukraine cannot welcome other military forces on its territory[40]". But the base is also perceived as the symbol of the *cooperation and friendship* between Russian and Ukraine (which attributes a specific territorial status to the territory). Even if it is also a way to assure pragmatic relations between the two partners, the presence of Russian military power near regions that once played cards of independence remains a delicate issue. Hence it appears unlikely that the issue of water demarcation is going to be solved in a recent future. Moscow considers this process as a violation of the Kerch treaty which eventually shows the ambiguous partnership of Russia and Ukraine on border issues. Some authors introduced

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[39] Treaty of cooperation, friendship and partnership between Ukraine and Russia – Signed in 1997 by Yeltsin and Kuchma

[40]"L'opposition se manifeste" translated by *Le courier international* from *The Kiev Post*, edition of May 15th 2011

the idea that the final delimitation could be used for bargaining in the overall balance of Russia/Ukraine's relations.

In fact, it was already the case for the delimitation of the land border. Thus, one implicit pre-condition to this delimitation was the participation to the Eurasian economic community. Russian projects of integration let appear Russia's approach on borders before the election of Vladimir Putin. Thus, the disintegration of the Soviet Union should have let room for friendly state of which the borders should have remained "open" . But following the Ukrainian nationalist logic, the borders of Ukraine had to be equipped according to international standard to guarantee the territorial sovereignty of the country. Thus, although the shift in the "multi-vector policies" that differed from one presidency to another, the consolidation of Ukrainian borders has always been a continuity in Ukrainian politics. This shows as well that the issue of the border has a great symbolism as the territorial status of the Ukrainian border shows the relation between the quest for Ukrainian national identity and the attempt to built cultural and economic independence from Russia. Thus, agreement on borders and their status are likely to represent the attitude of Russia and Ukraine in regard to the "strategic partnership". In general, the Ukrainian government shows how the border serves at integrating territories in the nation. Thus, one of the first preoccupations of the Kravchuk's government was to maintain controls on border regions to avoid incontrollable centrifugal forces. As a consequence, many of the competences are now held in the center and the level of decision in the regional executives is tied to the presidency and not to the individuals. As for Russia, the election of Vladimir Putin brought the stato-centered stream of politics back to the front scene. Although it is not correct to affirm that Russia has give up integrative process on Ukraine to recover significant influence on its "former" borders, the realist showed during the past legislatures in the Kremlin have contribute to identification of the "Russian way" within the boundaries of the actual country. The danger of ethnic groups seeking for independence has probably thought Moscow to consider the message of separatist demonstration within its neighboring countries.

1.3.2 ECONOMIC AND DOMESTIC FUNCTIONS

Beyond military and constituent functions, education, culture, trade and infrastructure are issues that find their concerns directly in regional politics. Although the previous sections already showed how the language has acquired a real importance for Russia and Ukraine, as well as how trade has been used as instrument of integration within the CIS, only a little has been said so far about the regional and local interests of these functions.

At first, it worth mentioning that for Eastern Ukrainian regions, the fact that Russian is not considered as an official language of Ukraine is rather irrelevant. Russian remains *de facto* the principal language of higher education, work and social life. It has thus become a political claim that was even put to its paroxysm when Kushnar'ov, former governor of the Kharkov region used it as a separatist pressure to support Yanukovitch during the elections. Nevertheless, for regional governments out of an electoral frame, the preoccupations are different.

Thus, as presented above, regions at the Ukrainian/Russian border were highly interconnected in term of labor market, trade and trade outputs. But for Ukraine and Russia, the border has become a place of economic differentiation. Negotiations between Medvedev and Yanukovitch about officially joining the CIS or the Eurasian Economic Space has demonstrated the willingness of Russia to integrate Ukraine into a bigger economic space that would remove the burdens of customs, taxations and asymmetric legal systems that reduce the economic flows between the two countries. From the Ukrainian point of view, this is perceived as being an impossible step regarding its European orientation (compatibility regarding legislation).

This opinion is highly nuanced according to regional opinions. Practically speaking, both are possible according to Ukrainian economic experts if the integration is strategically treated according to the structure of the

Ukrainian economy[41]. However, there are disparities regarding this topic in the political implication that would result of such a choice. The integration in one of the following economic zone has more consequences than adapting legislation. The structure of production would also be affected to match the needs of the economic zone. The weak influence of Ukraine in this matters which would finally make a double orientation contradictory[42]. It is generally accepted that the European Union has more attractiveness than the Russian Federation in terms of economic prospects. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian economy was highly integrated with its Russian neighbors and some Ukrainian experts believe that the European adaptation should be realized while keeping an important foot in the Russian market in order to reduce the cost of the European transition[43].

Hence, the disagreement over tax, customs and legislation between Kiev and Moscow has highly penalized the economic development of the borderland. Thus, one of the priorities of regional development is to strengthen regional market strategies, to set a filter in legal movements of goods, support exporters of agricultural machinery, creating facilities, etc. The establishment of horizontal links with the border neighbors through projects of joint ventures, business incubators, economic projects (such as the common airport between Kharkov and Belgorod), common ecologic solutions for the management of natural areas such as the main water resource (The Severskyi Donets River). The creation of the consortium of higher education between Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia was designed following the same idea.

Fig. 20 Consideration and interests of officials for programs of cooperation between border regions of Ukraine and Russia[44]	
Ecology and Environment	19.48%
Social Programs	18.18%
Cultural and historical preservation	18.18%
Economic cooperation	12.99%
Touristic development	9.09%
Development of infrastructures	5.19%
Young exchanges	1.3%
Legislation	1.3%

But as the situation proves it, concerns of national policies are not always compatible with regional concerns. As we presented before, the level of migration occurring at the border and the preoccupations of Kiev regarding security, visa and national sovereignty have built the border as an active filter of goods and people. The lack of money and modern equipments do not allow the opening of additional checkpoints. Moreover, political measures (e.g. opening of Nekhoteevka-Hoptivka) have proved so far to be unable to solve the transport overload on the Kharkov-Belgorod cross-border link. The variation between salaries and wages in Russia has accentuated this problem for the Ukrainian workers seeking for jobs in the adjacent regions.

1.3.3 INADEQUACY BETWEEN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL INTERESTS: THE LEGAL VACUUM

> *The approach of the boundary problem is determined by attempts to strike a balance between the need of regulating migration flows, the need of attracting foreign labor, the necessity of promoting regional economic development, the variety of natural and social conditions in the border areas and the lack of a single and developed legislation in all situations* (Kolossov, 2011).

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[41] Conference at Institute of Economic –Chernivsti Ukraine – May 12th and 13th 2011
42 Ibid
43 Conference: "The Ukrainian-Russian contiguous: status and prospects of cooperation" – Kharkov University VN Karazin – April 16th 2011
44 From: Sapryka V, Process of implementation and elaboration of cross-border projects – Spring School of cross-border cooperation – Belgorod, 2011 - http://forum.euroregion.ru/index.php?topic=1439.0 (in Russian)

Finally, it can be said that the border between Russia and Ukraine does not really constitute a problem in itself but it is rather the political connotations it carries. Although agreements exist between the two countries on border cooperation (from international agreement such as the Madrid convention to bilateral treaties (the agreement on cooperation between border regions of Ukraine and Russia, 1995) or internal concepts (the concept of cross-border cooperation of the Russian Federation), their implementations is highly slowed down by considerations based on geopolitical orientations, economic integration, security issues, etc. The Euro-Atlantic integration has therefore a critical influence on border agreements and the realization of cross-border programs. Consequently, cooperation in matter of high technologies and defense, that would be highly profitable for border regions such as Kharkov and Belgorod, faces periodic turnover that render its commissioning hardly impossible.

One of the points which support this situation is the legal configurations in both countries. Thus, the various international conventions and internal documents about cross-border cooperation for Ukrainian and Russian regions only refer to "encouraging cross-border contacts". As for practical implementation, realization seems to be far ahead. The Russian reaction to Ukrainian geopolitical choice restructured the statico-centered paradigm in Moscow's politics. Consequently, while the members of the council of the Russian Federation have been trying since 2004 (reviewed in 2008 and 2009) to pass a law that would allow the border regions to dispose of significant competences to engage cross-border relations, they had to perpetually face the opposition of hard politics partisans more concerned about security issues such as supported by the ministry of defense or the Federal service of Security (Marin, 2009). Moreover, Oblasts in the center perceive this law rather negatively as they see in it an unfair disposition given to the peripheral regions. Therefore, no legal framework has been so far instituted in Russia to promote cross-border relations beyond regional laws that are rather inefficient in term of transnational agreement.

Nevertheless, it has to be noted that Russian Oblasts enjoy more freedom in that matter than their Ukrainian neighbors. Indeed, the regional Duma in Belgorod has the capacity to pass its own laws and enjoys some freedom in the conduct of its policy. It has the power to vote a motion of defiance against its governor for instance.

As a consequence of Ukrainian politics, regions are incapable to pass their own laws for cross-border programs and are therefore limited in term of practical implementations. Indeed, According to paragraph 2 of Article 143 of the Constitution of Ukraine and article 43 of the Law of Ukraine "On Local Self-Government in Ukraine" to the authority of the Kharkov Regional Council only includes the rights to hear, pass or reject a regulation proposed by the executive over socio-economic programs, Budget and redistribution of budget. Thus the council only disposes of the right of initiative in matter of land management and cultural preservation.

The principal focus for regions are mainly executives and do not correspond to cross-border criteria's. The direct appointment of governors by the Ukrainian president has created a dynamics that makes the cross-border relations with Russia highly dependent on political activities in the center.

As for a recent example due to the "Yanukovitch presidency", the migrations cards that were needed previously for inhabitants of Belgorod and Kharkov are likely to be removed by the end of August. This decision is supported by the opening of two additional crossing points (that were originally reserved for other individuals) for the inhabitant of these regions. Although this agreement has limited repercussion this shows well that steps toward cooperation are only possible when the political conjuncture in the center is favorable.

2. THE GEOPOLITICAL DEAD END AND LOCALS' NARRATIVES ABOUT THE BORDER

2.1 THE GEOPOLITICAL DEAD END

For the European Union, the principal concern about the Russian/Ukrainian border is the relative openness which represents a threat for its migration policies. This can be analyzed through the political game that is played around the visa question. Consequently, the Eastern border of Ukraine is slowly built as an additional protection against undesirables menaces. This statement is reinforced by the European activities of border networking theoretically designed to avoid creating new dividing lines. Although available for the whole territory of Ukraine and that only finds an echo near the European borders. The state-centered side of Schengen is thus pushed further to the various approaches characterizing the Ukrainian/Russian border. However, the attention given to security politics is not innocent. Learning from its own power, the European Union has certainly understood the consequences of its action in the west. Kiev has now anchored his geopolitical orientation toward the Union as let see the growing dependences of Ukraine to European investments and technology. Although the choice is rationally justified, it was balanced by thee defenders of the Russian way. Consequently, and as a continuation of its work of influence, the EU might see the rapprochement between Russian and Ukrainian regions as an additional opposition in and has thus not show any interest to promote these relations.

The failure of Russian project of integration has pushed Russia to reconsider its ideas of political influence over its neighbor. Although Ukraine remains extremely dependant on Russian market and importations, the former rapprochement with NATO constituted a direct threat to Russian visions of territorial sovereignty. The center-periphery approach in Russia has conducted Moscow to adopt a stance that perceives cross-border relations as potential threat for domestic policies. The Kremlin's hard liners have thus focused Russian political projects through bilateral agreements instead than Eurasian integration which has the implication that the partnership of cooperation between the two "sister nations" take place exclusively through Kiev and Moscow. Moreover, under the influence of Vladimir Putin, Russian has come back to the use of hard power in the realization of these agreements (territorial bargain over the maritime border of Ukraine, gas policies, ect).

Politics in Ukraine are characterized by various components of Ukrainian nationalism. Therefore, due to internal political power, the construction of the border as a spiritual and concrete reality has been preoccupying every Ukrainian presidency no matter their orientation in the multi-vectored balance between the EU and Russia. Through the Ukrainian political system, the cleavage West/East has become one of the key element in the determination of the presidential elections. The consequence of the centralization of Ukrainian politics and the reinforcement of presidential powers over mechanisms of decisions is that the principal orientation chosen by the Kiev affects the whole country without taking into account its cultural or economic disparities. Cross-border regional interests are subordinated to the realization of the macro political game played over the Ukrainian territory. The beneficiaries are, in final, oligarchs fighting to impact Ukrainian choice according to their interests.

As a result of this situation, geopolitical approaches over Ukraine are calculated according a "winner takes all" key. But the democratization of Ukraine might bring a solution to this dead end. Thus, the diffusion of the political power in the hands of its population pushes to consider the opinions of individuals over the Ukrainian/Russian border. The hope relies on the idea that the expression of stato-centered combined with the attitudes of Ukrainian individuals might contribute to reposition the geopolitical approaches to a win-win situation.

2.2 LOCALS' NARRATIVES[45]

According to Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "there are dramatic differences the behaviors of Ukrainian elites and ordinary citizens concerning the status of the Ukrainian–Russian border". She based her conclusion on the materials produced by a survey realized by the Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine (CPCFPU) and a survey realized in 2002 by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology. Thus, friendly relations with Russia and open border status for the Eastern boundary of Ukraine correspond to the political choices expressed by the majority of Ukrainian citizens even among those who supported the independence of Ukraine.

However, as we have previously observed, the Ukrainian politics consider that the open status asked by the population would constitute a weakness in regard to Russia. Hence the main political approaches are focused on the "harder" issues as a way to legitimize the border in people's minds. But it seems that this conclusion is inaccurate.

First of all, it worth mentioning that even when rooted to historical developments, the similarities in the Russian and Ukrainian culture has always been separated by a border[46]. In fact, even if the location of this border has shifted through time, it is more correct to deal with regional evolutions than to refer to Ukrainian and Russian cultures that appeared much later. As we introduced it in a previous section, the border must not be seen as constructed out of nothing for Ukraine as it does not constitute an irrelevant fact of history. It has been through different periods a constituting fact of the regional life, a catalyst of the cross-border identity.

What is interesting to observe is that twenty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union where the border was purely "administrative", the idea of the border as being a "constituting" element the population's life emerges again. It is important here to precise what the word "constituting" signifies. The border is now a reality for the borderland population and as a consequence, it has shaped the lifestyle of the individuals.

> "The border is now a reality that we have to deal with. The border is there and we have to find solutions not to remove it, but to transcend it" (Discussion with Viktor Sapryka)

> "Ukrainian wanted to be independent and there is now an international border between the two countries. That is the consequence of their choice". (Discussion with a Russian manager)

> "To me, Belgorod is not interesting because it is a small city and I do not have family across it. The prices are also higher so I have little interest to cross the border" (Answer given to the survey by a Ukrainian youngster)

> "The border is annoying for us because during the Soviet Union, we could cross it freely to see our family, friends. Now we have to wait a long time, but the border is important because it represents Ukrainian independence with Russia". (Discussion a Ukrainian lawyer)

However, as we shows in the next section, the particular meaning attributed to this word has to be related to the way the borderland population "exploits" the externalities generated by the border.

2.2.1 A LEGITIMATE BORDER?
In the survey realized by the CPCFPU, one of the main points that were underlined is the inadequacy between the expectations of individuals concerning the border regime and the line of conduct chosen by the central

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[45] The contributions to this section are brought by the survey realized for the research. For more details and precisions, please refer to the methodology section of the survey.
[46] Interview with Valera Vasilenka

government. Thus, according to this research, Ukrainian populations in the borderland wish that the status of border to be more open as it would represent the symbol of the friendly relations Ukraine has with Russia. However, it worth mentioning that it does not mean that they question the legitimacy of the border. The quest for Ukrainian economic and political independence from Russia has pushed Kiev to strengthen its border regime and to "nationalize" its borderland that shares several similarities with its neighbor. Nevertheless, there seems to have a miscomprehension of the individual's narrative about the border. Complains over the border have to be analyzed and nuanced.

At first, it might seem obvious that in an environment composed by cultural affinities and economic relations, the new border has not yet made its way in the mind the people. Thus, the primary approaches might push to consider the individuals' aspirations concerning the border as negative. This is indeed how it appears at first sign. For instance, the population of Belgorod and Kharkov all refer to the border as illegitimate regarding its time-consuming component. Mostly, they refer to it as the physical marker between friends and family. This is particularly visible in Belgorod's "elder" population.

For them, the border between Ukraine and Russia is not legitimate. Indeed, the population does not accept the fact they must wait so long at the custom while they used not to face that sort of situation before; and it does not accept the fact that many Russians live abroad. For them, this situation is unfair regarding their location that was not determined by the erection of the Ukraine state. But it is also interesting to note that most of the "elders" did not refer to the border as a symbolic fact and contested more the pragmatic repercussions generated by the border. Russian and Ukrainian individuals refer to the two states as friendly nations that should adopt a convenient border regime.

The border's political character is more visible on the Ukrainian side than the Russian one. Thus, the border for Russian people living in Belgorod mainly represent the annoyance (social, economic) and the time lost and when dealing with Ukraine. It is fascinating to observe this population referring to the border under such approach knowing that another very important reason of crossing is that Kharkov now represents for them a center of leisure and a market place at "low cost" and that this situation was made possible only by the differentiation between the two states.

Hence one might think political claims to be more present in the Ukrainian regions. Indeed, the evolution structured by the border has clearly advantaged Russian regions that now enjoy a better way of life than their neighbors. Due to the relative low cost of Ukrainian products, Russian border regions represent potential markets of exportation. But the externalities generated by the borders render cross-border trade more expensive. Furthermore, the border has also divided families and friendships as it has in Russia.

Undeniably, it is in the Ukrainian regions that the references to political are the more common in the sense that the border represents for these individuals the symbolic and physical marker of the independence. The boundary is perceived as needed for ensuring national security and for reasons of sovereignty. Thus the legitimacy of the border is generally not contested among Ukrainians who recognize it as the consequence of the collapse of the USSR. Thus, the border as a designation of the state not opposed and on the contrary required for showing that both countries have established a normal mode of interaction without territorial claims.

Thus, it appears clear that in people's mind, the border is not contested in its legal or symbolic components but simply challenged when it comes to the "side effects" of the boundary. Therefore, the consequences of militarization, the growing importance of security, the economic burden are likely to be the main cause of "de-legitimating" of the border. The border is not seen as a barrier as long as the population is not affected by its heavy process. It is indeed the most sensitive topic. The borderland population seems to be more affected by the "economical burden" of the time-consuming course of actions they have to face at the border with an efficiency far below to what people are ready to accept in the ratio time/security. According to a recent

communiqué of Alexandre Skylarov, the social tensions is high at the border because of that fact which confirms Nikolaï Patrouchev's note that there is a total lack of human approaches. It is not by coincidence that local experts advice the development of the border infrastructure, join control patrols between Ukraine and Russia, and more advanced technological procedure (Chernomaz, 2011).

As additional evidence, the feelings of identity expressed among borderland populations reflect the paradox existing between national intentions and regional realities. When responding to the question of their belonging, the individuals reveal to have several, mixed and superposed answers. It is thus totally possible to find people considering themselves "Ukrainian" and "from Belgorod" as well as "Russian" from "Khrakov". The Slavic, Soviet components were present as well but not predominant in the sense that they were additional to the other identities. This confirms the previous studies that were realized on borderland identities in that has become, because of the industrialization of the territories and the attraction of the labor force (Kolosov, Glezer, Petrov, 1992), mixed and Compound (Newman and Paasi, 1998).

Therefore, the fear of Russian revival in these regions is not founded as it does not constitute the dominant sphere of the public opinion. Other elements are worth mentioning to support this statement. In these regions, it is more common to refer to cities rather than the country. Thus, if Ukraine is sensibly less economically developed, Kharkov remains the "dynamic" city in the mind of the young population. Although Belgorod remains the favorite working place in the borderland population due to better expectation of salaries and wages, Kharkov has not stopped to be a pole of attraction as it represents more varied possibilities than its Russian neighbors in sectors such as job, entertainment and education. Therefore, it is wrong to affirm that the interests of the population are exclusively oriented toward Russia.

Thus explains why it is also inappropriate for a borderland situational analysis to refer solely to macro-politics as justification for better controlling the peripheries. Ukrainian and Russian are global trends that are respected and affirmed by the acknowledged legitimacy of the border. The references to the differences between regions are principally made in the various gradients distinguishing the socio-economic situations of the regions. Hence, the swings between the individual's identifications are realized locally

Consequently, without the harmful developments previously exposed, the Ukrainian/Russian border could be the frontier between two friendly communities without opposing to goals set by Ukraine and Russia. However, as we witnessed, the geopolitical dynamic makes this outcome highly dependent on the political situation in Ukraine, the military development of NATO and Russia and the European integration of Ukraine. Hence, in order to advance in the resolution of border issues at a geopolitical level, it is interesting to see if solutions could not be found through local structures of cooperation that would represent the several levels of power involved.

3. THE POTENTIAL OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

3.1 CROSS-BORDER ORGANIZATION AND MULTI-LEVEL INTERESTS

> *The one of the main term for the better understanding of the cross-border cooperation ideology is the term "border". This term has not only the meaning of the state border but the meaning of the economic and social space homogeneity border. The borderline of two systems (integration/unions/countries/regions/local areas) is the place of the contiguity of two systems. Each of them has the different features, characteristics, ideology and identity.*
> (Zhuk, 2011)

Cross border cooperation are processes at the intersection between geopolitical aspirations, regional interests and individual's expectations. In order to be successful, they have to be simultaneously in accordance with the three. The border is the junction between two systems through which the divisions are made but through which systems are exported, integrated within another or transcended to become a third space both inside and

outside the original frame. Hence borderlands are often seen as being strategic areas the duality of "geopolitical picture of the state" being "at one moment the state peripheries and the center of cross-border interactions" (Zhuk, 2011)

Cross-border relations are matters of integration, security, social and economic developments, domestic structures. In other words, they are matter of inclusion and exclusion and reflect the intentions of the different forces concerning the neighborhood. Consequently, their institutionalization has great potential for finding the balance between different expectations in order to establish local grounds in the solving of geopolitical issues.

 The idea of cross-border relations, applicable to the Ukrainian/Russian border, is derived from the European one. Most of the time, it refers to the European development of Euroregions as the "highest structure of cooperation across border". Hence the analysis of European regionalism can bring a lot to the cooperative cross border process between Russian and Ukraine although many differences can be noted.

In the European Union, cross-border cooperation is the institutional translation of several intentions such as political cooperation through high economic integration and sustainable political union. Thus, it aims at diffusing political and institutional values in the organization of relations. Therefore, the support of political will with socio-economic cooperation (Standardized practices, legal harmonization) seeks at promoting socio-cultural interaction for diminishing external effects of border and at integrating territories in the "European space".

In theory, political allocations are decided through cross-cutting levels agreements. Cross-border institutions become activators of a system in charge of approximating various interests between different stake holders. The idea is based on plurality, fragmentations and involvement of the multitude into grass-root activities. These institutions are entitled to develop a strategy which enables people to participate in public life in order to reformulate the idea of citizenship between individual's and politics. If the last point is shared by "Eastern" cross-border organizations, the goals and the vision about the civil society differ. Indeed, Euroregions across the Ukrainian/Russian border seek mainly to renew the trust of social actors for political elites. Hence they are established on the basis of ethical standards and unity around values to weaken the negative perception individuals carry about politics (Joassin & Sapryka, 2011).

Hence it approaches from the discourse of « post-soviet integration » defended by Zhurzhenko and Kolosov. Under this paradigm, cross-border organizations at the Russian/Ukrainian border seek at restoring the daily habits of individuals as it used to be during the soviet time. The unity of individuals was brought back in front of the regional scene through narratives of common history (Slobozhanschyna). Russian legislative initiative and economic ascendancy introduced this project as the restoration of a unique economic space strengthening the interdependency of Ukrainian regions to Russian ones. Ukrainian regions could thus benefit of Russian resources and market to assure their prosperity.

But as it could have been expected in the frame set by Ukrainian nationalism, the disintegration of the territory pushed Yushchenko to avoid drastically cooperation with Russia in the periphery by keeping centralized process of decision prevalent in Eastern Regions. Bilingualism, revival of common history and economic affinities were carefully avoided in the Orange program. For instance, the former governor of Kharkov cautiously established that cross-border relations with Belgorod were not its priority and never officially visited the Russian city. This stance had repercussion as well on people that declare the relations with the Russian neighbors as too complicated for maintaining trade. Thus, cross-border relations for them were conditioned by the new situation of Ukraine and declared impossible by the population. This situation is exposed by the insignificant economic impact of Euroregions across the Ukrainian-Russian border (Kolosov, 2011).

The development of Euroregions in the Ukrainian-Russian borderland has to face other complications which constrain it within the official straitjacket. First of all, Russia and Ukraine remain in the legacy of what can be called the "Russian system of governance". According to Jean Robert Ravio (2006), centralization is not only a

fact of post-soviet state, but is present as well in post-soviet regions. Although Russian and Ukrainian oblasts dispose of a parliament (the regional Duma or the Head of region) the initiative and the implementation of policies rely mainly of the regional governors. In Russia, this position is attributed by the president with approbation of the regional Duma. Nevertheless, federated entities in Russia enjoy their own fiscal revenues and are able to produce legislative norms that are not in opposition to the Russian constitution. In Ukraine, the situation is even more accentuated because governors are not approbated by the head council of regions. It worth mentioning that governors dispose of certain pressures on centers. Indeed, the relationships between political, economic and social actors are still governed by clientelist relations, linked to a political culture that favors the personalization of power rather than abstract norms (Ravio, 2006). As a consequence, governors represent the local connection with main socio-economic influents actors that are determinant in the presidential elections (Zhurzhenko, 2011). Hence the executive chiefs of Russian and Ukrainian oblasts keep enjoying high privileges in the execution of their tasks.

Furthermore, cross-border organizations, as sub-national entities, are a product of this re-scaling dynamic where the state remains a central actor. As explained above, the contemporary political paradigms of Russian and Ukraine perceive negatively a structure that could act as alternatives of State foreign policies. There is fringe the resistance of some Russian intellectuals to the development of Euroregions on the Russian territory because of the fear of an Europeanization of the Russian territory[47]. In Ukraine, these regions are also perceived as a measure of hypocrisy, established as a compensation for the slow procedure of the Ukrainian's candidature. Thus, central governments remain very keen to adopt legislation/measures hindering the development of sub-national structures as they appear to be contradictory with the state-centered logics.

3.2 THE EUROREGION OF SLOBOZHANSCHYNA

The creation of the cross-border structure was designed to weaken the negative effects of the border. Thus, the structure *aims* at re-configuring contacts between the two sides of the border. Slobozhanschyna is the first Euroregion created exclusively on a Slavic territory. Its creation was triggered by the will of 're-establishing a social link across a border judged as artificial, since the dividing space created divides culturally homogenous communities, most of whom speak Russian (Marin, 2009).

Slobozhanschyna is a name that recalls to the historical memory of the territory[48]. The actual border zone, the wild land, had for a long time been a territory that served as a barrier against Tatar raids. Military operations triggered the first round of colonization of the land. Aside from the purpose of security, religious monasteries also claimed a place in the region. The second round was realized by the Ukrainian Cossacks that were attributed specific rights and privileges to defend the southern borders of the Russian empire. The real settlement of the land began with the following freedoms:

- The right to occupy the empty lands
- A special Cossack unit and governmental autonomy
- The freedom to develop diverse "métiers"
- A total control of the transport system, bridges
- Etc…

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[47] An example can be found at this address : http://www.rg.ru/2008/07/29/euro.html - Arsyuhin E., Chichkin A , *Plastic windows with view on Russia – Why the European Union creates its own enclaves on our territory,* The Journal of Russian issues, n°664, 29/09/2008

[48] For more information – See Chernomaz's piece available on http://euroregion.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109&Itemid=57 – In Russian

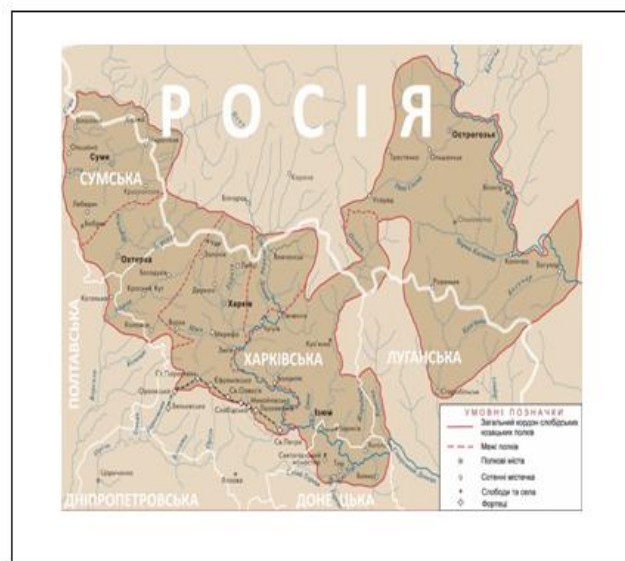Fig.21 The Belgorod Line – 1640   Fig.22 Historic figure of the Slobodan region

Although the goal of the section is not to redraw a full historical line of the territory, it is important, for further development, to establish a conclusion of this common history. According to Chernomaz, the individuals of the region have conserved ethnic specificities and similarities such as the bilingual attribute (Russian/Ukrainian) and a freedom of thoughts that is rooted in the Cossack heritance who benefited from more freedoms and more education than the adjacent territories. These statements propose interesting leads when placed next to the relatively young process of bordering that occurs between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

The development of the Euroregion started in at Kharkov Karazin University in the department of economic and geographic science where the first article over the region was published by Chernomaz and Golikov in 1997[49]. From then, it was supported by numerous works and scientific publications (Kiriukhin, Kolosov, Chernomaz, Korsunova cited in Kolossov, 2011). The name kept for the project, Slobozhanschyna, has many advantages as Zhurzhenko underlines it.

First, it refers to the Cossack period that generated myths and references to a past of proud actions. Cossacks were the gatekeeper of the regions and created a social system where individuals enjoyed more liberties and more education than their neighbors. Thus, the name carries flattering connotations for the population of the area. But it is also convenient as it draws to the social cohesion of the territory as a part of a common history and unity transcending the Ukrainian/Russian cleavage. Indeed, the predisposition for the Cossack era allows rooting the project with Ukrainian paternity while its presence of the Russian territory fits with an integrative role. But it also adapts the narrative to the composition of the regional space as it refers to the time were the two regions were united under their own institutional settings.

The cooperation between the two regional centers (Belgorod and Kharkov) started a long time ago. But, as explained by Zhurzhenko (2004), the years 2000 were decisive in developing new perspectives for cross-border cooperation. The main trigger for the creation of the Euroregion was the several meeting that took place between the business class of Kharkov and Belgorod. The ecological projects linked to water management of the Siversky Donets river basin (which is a vital interest for urbanized areas as well as for industrial and agricultural developments, represents also a great deal. Hence, "both regions are interested in using their

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[49] Chernomaz P, Golikov P. (1997), Slobozhanschyna as a form of trans-border cooperation of the adjacent regions of Ukraine and Russia, Region : problems and perspective, N°4, p52-54 (In Russian)

transit location and therefore cooperate on the improvement of border and customs controls, modernizing checkpoints and regulating transport flows" (*Ibid, 2004*). Thirdly, under the impulsion of regional Universities, common networks of knowledge were formed across the border.

The organization was created under the impulsion of the intellectual centers of Kharkov and Belgorod. After the propositions of the committee of border regions of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, the regional administrations of Belgorod and Kharkov settled the creation of the Euroregion in 2003 with the following competences[50]:

- Regional economic policy;
- Territorial development;
- Protecting the environment;
- Politics in the construction sector (including housing);
- Telecommunications infrastructure and transport;
- Energetic supply, agriculture and fisheries;
- Face urgencies, natural disasters;
- Favor contacts between inhabitants of border regions, favor cooperation between institutions and organizations, as well as commercial entities
- Education at all levels and scientific research;
- Culture and media;
- Health, tourism, recreation and sports;
- Public safety.

Fig. 23 Kharkov Oblast & Belgorod Oblast
Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna
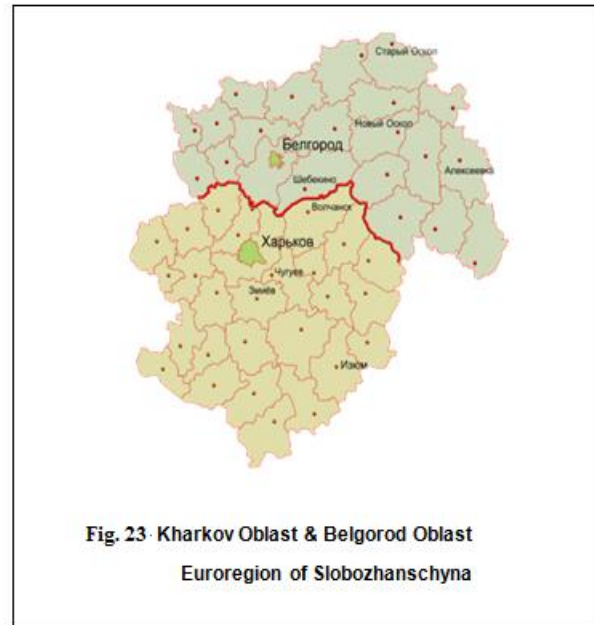
On paper, the Euroregion seems to be the perfect tool to solve problems caused by the border; however several experts pointed the relative inefficiency of the structure. Viktor Sapryka (2009) presents the principal shortcomings of the Euroregion:

- A lack of support, both at the legislative and executive levels, and by Ukraine and from Russia;
- Limitation of regional agreements by state or federal laws;
- Weak financial base, as well as the investment attractiveness of joint projects;
- A small initiative of regional business elites;
- Formalization of the process of creation, namely the absence of forms including people in the process Euroregionalization

the extention of these observations are that two essentials components are missing in the making of the Euroregional structure; namely that national authorities lack incentives as well as a lack of involvement within the population. Furthermore, several groups are arguing about the paternity of Slobozhanschyna which has limited the consolidation of the structure (Marin, 2009).

In fact, in the last few years, the emphasis has been put on the re-establishment of economic links, the weakening of custom barriers, the regulation of labor migration and the fight against criminality. Nevertheless, it becomes easy to see how those topics are interrelated to national policies that see the development of

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[50] Charter of the Euroregion Slobozhanschyna -
http://euroregion.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110&Itemid=34 – In Russian

regional cooperation as a threat for their foreign policies. For example, Ukraine has been slowing down the institutionalization of cross-border projects because they may hamper in its European objective (*Ibid, 2009)* and some Russian intellectuals perceive Euroregions as windows of the European integration which are a direct attack against the Russian sovereignty (Arsyuhin & Chichkin, 2008).

Nevertheless, Anaïs Marin, supported by some Russian experts[51], explains that the Euroregional model could allow the Russian federation to overcome the dilemma of opening/controls concerning its border regime (by providing the rationale for a better/intelligent management of the border). Yet it seems that the approach of Slobozhanschyna should be reviewed in order to fit in its own description. The release of this issue could help to bring an alternative perspective on the geographical issue that confronts Europe and Russia.

The hypothesis concerning this problem is that, although there is strong potential for a regional identity which conciliates Russian and Ukrainian views, the functioning of Slobozhanschyna is slowed down by the narratives that are structured around the border. As I will attempt to show, the organization of the Euroregion, which should represent the institutionalization of cross-border practices, is directly tied to multi-level decisions (Supra-national, national, regional and even local); and is designed at reproducing the dialectic Ukraine/Russia. This asks the question of knowing how is the project constituted.

3.2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS, PROBLEMS AND ORIENTATIONS
According to Sergey Chernov: Chairman of Kharkov regional council:

> *"Kharkov Regional council has traditionally considered one of its priorities the development and deepening of cooperation with our colleagues from neighboring Russian regions, promoting economic links and a rich cultural a spiritual dialogue between our regions. I believe that with our Russian colleagues we have developed excellent relationship based on principles of partnership and good neighborliness. Even coolness in the relation between Ukraine and Russia on high level, which took place in the recent past virtually no effect on cross-border cooperation with our partners (sic)". (*Europa Center, n°28, 2010, p65)

The position taken by the head of council in Kharkov expresses well the desire to establish and to sustain the association between Russian and Ukrainian regions. Culture and economy are the principal themes emerging from the association. From a regional point of view, Chernov shows that the long term priority is to develop a privileged partnership independently from the national orientations.

> *"On the contrary, we were able to prove that cross-border horizontal links at the regional level are not affected by a passing situation and ambitions of individual politicians, but are a solid foundation for deepening cooperation between the two countries". (*Europa Center, n°28, 2010, p65)

His point of view does not pay attention to policies established in the center for the construction of links between regions. But it seems his positions in term of institutional establishment are more in the register of wishful thinking or propaganda than their real implementation. First of all, the Ukrainian council has relatively little effect in the conduct of cross-border relations and is stuck to a validating role of the different agreements taken by the executives. Most of it, as we will witness, join political procedures between the two regions are very low and if the population is able to enjoy ties inherited from the past, the possibilities of this element are not contributing to the political rapprochement.

For Alexey Kiyriukhin who is in charge of the Council of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Border Regions, the different attempts triggered to increase economic and social advantages (such as the expo-center located between regions of Belgorod and Kharkov to reduce time and procedure for business meetings) are hampered

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[51] V. Kolosov, O. Vendina « Partnerstvo v obkhod bar'erov » [The Partnership bypassing the barriers], Rossiâ v globl'noj politike, tome 5, nº 1, 2007, pp. 142-153 (in Marin, 2009)

by the "big policies". Taxations over transports or regulation of social practices artificially create additional problems to the natural inconvenient a state border generates. Moreover, relations of clienteles within regions tend to unfairly favor some pole of the society as it was the case when the Kharkov's governor assigned the conduct of the overall cross-border negotiations to the NGO "Slobozhanschyna" of which the head is the represent of middle and small businesses.

These divergences arising from macro-level institutional positions are contradicting cross-border relations; it is interesting as well to compare how regional discourses are presented from both side of the border. Thus, for Yevgeny Sachenko, Governor of Belgorod, cross-border cooperation with Kharkov is characterized by several elements:

> "The passing 2010 turned out to be very rich on events, names, faces... Many of them arouse conflicting emotions, but certainly, this year will occupy a special place in the history of our countries. In the year of 65-year anniversary of our Great Victory we were able to defeat the distrust, disunity and opened a new milestone in relations between two sovereign states and brotherly nations- Russia and Ukraine" (Europa Center, n°28, 2010, p45)

For him, the cross-border relations are established on the basis of brotherhood between the two nations. He recalled to the "Great Victory" which commemorate the victory of the Soviet Union on Nazism. This refers to a time in which Ukraine and Russia were integrated within the same state. It has proved to be a sensitive theme in terms of cultural belonging as it was not celebrated in Eastern Ukraine as a sign of political independence. However it may appears to soft to consider that it goes really against the idea of Ukrainian affirmation since Ukraine is also seeking at friendly relations with its neighbors. Nevertheless, the lines presented in Russian integrative projects can still be found in his approach.

> "It is significant that the impetus of developing open, mutually beneficial and friendly relations was given at the highest level – by the President of our countries. This fact confirms the keen interest in versatile cooperation, deepening the political dialogue, economic and socio-cultural integration of our people. A lot of things unite us: the territorial proximity and Common Economic Space, common cooperative relations, resource and technological interdependency of certain industries and productions. But first of all, we are a united Slavic family with strong family ties." (Europa Center, n°28, 2010, p45)

The cross-border cooperation is thus subjected to presidential impulsions through diverse projects of integration such as the Common Economic Space and technological interdependency. But these topics are also highly sensitive because they refer to the goal of European Integration. Moreover, high rewarding technological cooperation has been slowed down since the rapprochement of NATO with Ukraine. But above all, the Slavic Unity is seen as being the most important factor of cooperation sought by the governor. Nevertheless, it is worthy to mention that Slobozhanschyna does not stress that point for the regional integration.

> "I am confident that the creation of mutually favorable conditions for unimpeded communication and effective cooperation will serve for the public good of Russians and Ukrainians. Our nations have divided the border, but they could not separate people with common roots and common faith. Like our common Slavic soul- Folk culture, based on orthodox values cannot be separated". (Europa Center, n°28, 2010, p45)

Hence if Sachenko seems to be concerned by the problem of families spread across the border and by the facilitation of its crossing system, the Euroregional process is principally engaged through the use of Orthodox values, culture as well as Slavic integration which have proved to be unsuccessful regarding the Ukrainian positions on post-soviet integration. Instead, Ukraine has shown to be more interested in economic partnership through trade exchanges. While Mikhail Dobkin , governor of Kharkov, is known for its pro-Russian orientation (Living in one state, we have never divided each other to the Ryssuans and Ukrainians"), it seems

that he follows the line of conduct adopted by the presidency and recalls to the Ukrainian foundations of the Euroregion.

> *"Kharkov and Belgorod regions are not only close on the map. Long since they are connected by a rich and cultural heritage in the formation of which the role of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples is equally significant. [...] Since 2003, there have (sic) been a Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna which includes two areas. The school of interregional cross-border cooperation has been actively working in Kharkov for several years [...] on "the image of the territory" [which has led to the foundation of Slobozhanschyna]".* (Europa Center, n°28, 2010, p59)

Thus, it is not in term of Slavic approach that he presents the cooperation but to the cultural heritage Ukrainian and Russian people have between Belgorod and Kharkov regions. In other words, he focuses its attention to myths where the two populations have equal participation such as Slobozhanschyna. But mainly, he insists on the economic sphere as the source of cooperation. This marks the priorities of Kharkov region but it fits as well as for national priorities

> *In recent years, and especially in recent month, another form of cooperation between Kharkov and Belgorod is gaining momentum – in the sphere of economy".* (Europa Center, n°28, 2010, p59)

The fact that he stresses the election of Yanukovitch as an economic trigger is no coincidence. It clearly opposes to the ideological integration offered by Russian and focuses on pragmatist relations. In addition to macro-positions which are highly dependent on West/East orientation, this clearly marks the different positions adopted by regional approaches through which cooperation should be conducted. As a result, attempts to find common grounds of cooperation have shown their inefficiency.

Indeed, while cross-border cooperation could provide benefits to the borderland individuals, by increasing their socio-economic wealth (Favor cross-border markets, unified system of crossing, favored procedures for regional necessities, cross-border social services (Fire soldiers, Police patrols, etc), co-financing of projects, and attract investments of international organizations for joint projects, the operation of the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna is extremely regionally (nationally) oriented.

Under the legislature of Yushchenko, projects related to tourism, science and education, environmental preservation, youth policy and tourism were implemented. But none of them managed to increase the quality of life of the population (Sapryka, 2011).

Most of them were short term oriented and did not succeed to address the population's expectations concerning border issues. The fact that no special body has been created by the regional administration within the Euroregional structure hampers the development of scientific methods of socio-economic programs and projects. The production of such studies are thus scattered in the diverse institutions on both sides of the border. An effective action of Project management including the interests of population, business, NGO's, governments, etc of the overall population is therefore extremely complicated. Additionally, the candidatures for applications and other sources of possible funds are supported by the regional administrations (and therefore aim specifically the regions) that do not dispose from adequate skills and competences (Discussion with Nathalya Bibik[52]).

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[52] Representative in the council of Kharkov involved in the development of Slobozhanschyna

Fig. 24 Projects and Programs of interregional cooperation within the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna[53]	
1.	Clustering (Including tourism, Building and Pharmaceutical clusters)
2.	The Russian-Ukrainian University Consortium
3.	Seminar "Methodology of Social and Economic Research"
4.	Belgorod Declaration on "Open access to scientific knowledge and cultural heritage
5.	School of cross-border cooperation
6.	Techno park Slobozhanschyna
7.	International conference of the Euroregion "Slobozhanschyna"
8.	Regional competition and Festival of pop songs
9.	Environmental program of joint actions for the protection and use of waters of the basin of the Seversky Donets
10.	The concept of Russian-Ukrainian border integrated logistics systems

Moreover, the lack of legislation in Russia and Ukraine regarding cross-border cooperation is far from being sufficient for the development of other projects. For instance, the administrations are hardly allowed to conduct their projects because the competences are not legally allocated. Moreover, currency exchanges, different tax legislations and customs decrease the attractiveness of joint projects. The finance of projects is terribly insufficient. The Ukrainian authorities hardly allocate 15% of the necessary funds for cross-border programs as it does not constitute a priority for a developing state[54]. As for Russian regions, they constantly have to face opposition in central councils between hard liners of state-politics and pro-cooperatives.

The problem is that the cooperation between Russia and Ukraine has been placed under the frame of cooperation such as Pan-Slavism and Eurasian integration.

However, Yanukovitch's orientation toward Russia has brought a new engine to the development of cross-border cooperation between Kharkov and Belgorod. While the level of interaction between the two regions has been extremely low between 2004-2010, Kharkov administration has mobilized on June 16th a budget of 9 million (2.58 million coming from the regional budget) . According to Pedeshko[55], the money should be allocated to the development of a sustainable strategy for Slobozhanschyna and the improvement of the quality of life for borderland populations through "the creation of vertical and horizontal links for cross-border cooperation". This should include the creation of trans-border tourism, the increase of cross-border trade, advanced environmental programs and the facilitation of "mobility" through the development of a platform along the Kharkov-Belgorod Axis.

Yet, it is likely that the relations engaged during this legislature will have to face a drastic break in case of presidential reversal. Hence it can be said that the development of the Euroregion is not build on the most sustainable framework.

3.2.2 ANALYSIS OF THE EUROREGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The idea of the Euroregion was positively received by Kharkov and Belgorod regions, but its realization became possible only after the State Duma ratified the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation in the summer of 2002 (Ukraine ratified it in 1993). The Euroregion Slobozhanschina was founded in November 2003 under Russian law. Following the works of the Council of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Border regions, the Euroregions was "effectively" implemented in 2004. Its structure was inspired from the study of other Euroregions developed in the European Union and among the CIS. But because of the vacuum in both

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[53] Sapryka V (2011), Implementation of projects and programs of interregional cooperation within the framework of Russian-Ukrainian Euro-regions. – realized after surveys
[54] Conference at Economic institute of Chernivsti, May 12th, 13th 2011
[55] Information portal of Slobozhanschyna,
http://euroregion.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=27, last consultation 15/08/2011

legislations, it does not benefit from a legal personality although it is a member of the Association of European Border Regions.

It is officially constituted by four bodies: The council of Euroregion, the presidium, the secretary and the committee of audit. If needed, the Presidium can set working groups composed by representatives of both regions.

The council is composed of twenty members with parity between Kharkov and Belgorod regions. The council is accountable for voting the budget and to appoint the presidium that constitutes the executive head of the Euroregion. This latter is responsible for appointing the members of the secretary of the Euroregion that have the task to follow the files and to present it to the presidium. The audit committee is accountable for reviewing the operation regarding the finance of the structure and the good operation of the procedures.

Normally, the council should be the most important body of the Euroregion as it should constitute the legislative branch of the decision making process. Indeed, the council is accountable for taking the final choice about whether or not adopting a decision. But the members of this council are directly appointed by Kharkov and Belgorod regions, or in other words by the final stance of each governors. As a consequence, governors remain the pivots of the Euroregional structure. Thus, they logically composed the presidium responsible for deposing the projects in front of the council and to appoint the working groups. Hence the works proposed within the Euroregional framework are highly dependent on the regional heads' priorities as exposed earlier. This explains as well why their meeting is often characterized by irregular presentations and conferences depending on the political processes taking place in their respective country.

The Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna lacks of vertical and horizontal dimensions caused by its bureaucratic organization. The cooperative process remains located in the regional administrations with no structural link of frequent contacts. Thus, there is a weak balance of the different structures and powers on both sides of the border as it relies mostly on the will of regional authorities. As evidence, since the creation of the Euroregion, no common working structure has been operating so far. The coordination of the work and the common projects are rather exclusively presented by the Council of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Border Regions which must conciliate and deal with the diverging interests of both regions.
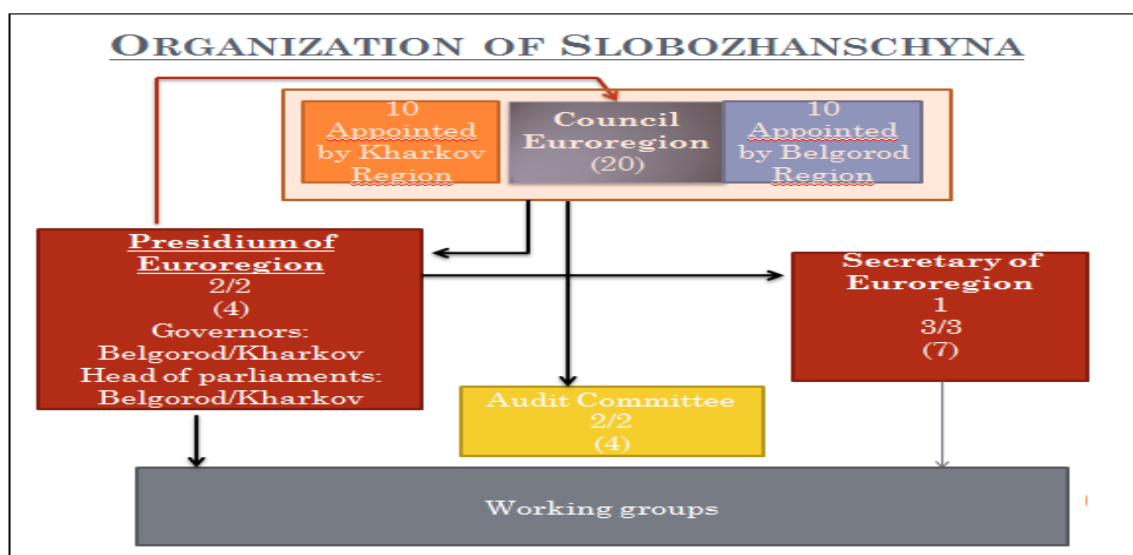

Fig. 25 Organization of Slobozhanschyna

In addition, the lack of binding legal structure does not assure of the implementation of the diverse projects. Indeed, the result of any kind of decisions taken within the Euroregion remains under the frame of agreements. Therefore, if an accord is reached between the two parties, they still have to face the obstacles in their own domestic structures and are not bind by a specific schedule in the implementation of the decided projects. Furthermore, loans and investment for cross-border entity without legal personality are unlikely to be produced. This lack of economic interest is reflected by a lack of interests at all.

In fact, in the Euroregional structure, no participation by the individuals is planned. In fact, the organization is entirely characterized by a top-down approach supported separately by regional administrations. The projects are launched by the top structure (the secretariat of the council of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian border regions) and even if the academics seek at settling grassroots activities (such as days of thinking by youngsters on environmental issues that was followed by a agreement signed by the two governors), the level of motion for such plans and the possibilities of participation within the Euroregional mechanisms are especially low.

3.2.3 LOCALS' NARRATIVES ABOUT THE EUROREGION[56]

The population of Kharkov and Belgorod hardly knows what Slobozhanschyna is. When they do, they refer to settlements in Ukraine or the historic region but rarely to the Euroregion.

As we could see, the Euroregional space is characterized by attempts of definition in discourses (economic, democratic and cultural) at higher level of politics for the rapprochement between Russia and Ukraine. But for the people living in that area the term does not mean anything particular.

Indeed, when asked about the Euroregion, the great majority of the people interviewed were unaware of its existence. Cross-border cooperation is personified through the governors on which people have diverse opinions. A similar problem can be attributed to Slobozhanschyna due to its lack of popularity and its several paternities. Thus, while the concept was mobilized remind the time where the region was united only a weak minority of people in Russia could associate the two ideas while the word was well-known in Ukraine. Moreover, the interviewed people who knew the name of Slobozhanschyna almost refer to the geographical area ("the historical name of the eastern region, which mainly includes Kharkov region and part of Sumy") rather than a period where both regions where united under Cossacks authority.

However, the geographical area of Slobozhanschyna is still far from behind defined for the people aware of it. For example, some people referred to it as "the new settlements installed near the border". There is this no risk to say that the Euroregional space is not united by the historical references in its population's minds.

Thus, the attempt of cultural identification fails to fulfill its role and the Euroregion as the institutional form of cross-border relation remains subjected to official relations conducted between Kharkov and Belgorod. Hence, following the discourses of the executives, the cooperation between the two regions is intrinsically tied to national entente of Ukraine and Russia.

Most of the people interviewed refer to Ukraine as being a closer to "Russia" due to a long common history and cultural affinities such as a common religion and shared language. In that sense, the integrative perceptions of Sachenko proved to touch the core of individual's feelings. As for the economic orientation, most of Eastern Ukrainians and Russian from the neighboring border regions, they expect the Ukrainian authorities to make a gesture toward Russia which would finally acknowledge from the existing inter-connections or the ones that used to be established between border cities. However, these topics are problematic as they draw the parallel between the desires to increase independence and the economic dependency.

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[56] The contributions to this section are brought by the survey realized for the research. For more details and precisions, please refer to the methodology section of the survey.

Hence European integration is used by national politics as an alternative in Ukraine for demarcating the country from the "East". Yet, it is acknowledge by the population in both border regions that the very meaning of Ukraine is to be at the frontier of Russia and Europe and the integration should be oriented between one and the other sides.

> *"This is a country for a long time was at the crossroads of two powerful cultures. But I think part of it develops the Russian culture, and some - the Polish-Lithuanian"* – *Ukrainian individual*

> *The problem is that the political orientation of Western Ukraine was perceived as being "anti-Russian." They hate "Russia" and Russian because it seems that it hampers their integration. For Eastern Ukraine, we sustain a good relationship because they are close to us"* – *Russian individual*

Interestingly, feelings of affiliation shared by the Euroregional population (who, paradoxically, is unaware of being in the Euroregional space) are mixing the concepts. In fact, identification between nationality, citizenship and belonging is influenced by three factors. First, the official document; second the felt identity and third the place of living which characterizes the belonging to a community. Thus, it is totally possible to witness individuals stating that they are "Kharkov fellows with a Russian passport tied to the people by Slavic culture" ,"Jewish's Russified", or "Russian European studying in Kharkov".

Therefore, in term of cross-border relation the population's feelings about Russia, Ukraine and Europe are not concepts that really matters in the first plan but that are background lines intercrossing together regarding their first needs: increasing of their quality of life. This is also what is stressed when they talk about the border and procedures of cooperation that should be augmented.

Hence, the European orientation of Ukraine is not considered as being necessarily a threat among the population (on the contrary to NATO accession). Both in the Russian Federation and in Ukraine, the individuals mostly claimed to belong more traditionally to "Russia" but significantly, it did not oppose to the concept of Europe as it is understood as "a geographical container which also includes the Russian Federation". Though, the expectations were not really ideological and most of the population in Kharkov and Belgorod regions welcomes the European orientation as long as it does not harm the relationships between Russian and Ukraine materialized by their border experience. Thus, it was possible in the local population to witness discourses referring to European criteria for border controls by improving the technology of checks as well as the positive effects of democratization on the scourge of corruption.

This pragmatic approach is finally the source of resistance to the border regime sought by macro-level politics. Following an in depth analysis of the answers given in the survey, the Euroregional space is thus composed by two axes: The difference between the negative externalities of the border and the desires of cross-border activities triggered by life expectations and affective links across the territory (see PART3 Section 2.2.1). The political sense of the border becomes thus contested from the point where the negative externalities are higher than the degree of mobility than the quality of life people can benefit from it.

3.3 SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE THROUGH EUROREGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS: A LOCAL SOLUTION IN THE GEOPOLITICAL PUZZLE

The exportation of the Euroregional model across the Ukrainian/Russian border has contributed to strengthen the relations between Russian and Ukraine. Nevertheless, as it was expressed in the previous sections, the geopolitical orientation of Ukraine influenced by the European Union and the process of nation-building have consequences on the development of cross-border cooperation between Ukrainian and Russian regions. The failure of Russian projects of integration has pushed Moscow to re-consider the role of the federation's borders and to balance them between attempts of diffusing its soft-power and re-enforcement of its security through

the affirmation of its territory. The competition of influence between European Union and the Russian Federation over Ukraine places the cross-border cooperation between Ukrainian and Russian regions as a strategic issue. The EU (worried about its internal security and the issue of migration) dispenses itself of supporting the development of cross-border processes at the Ukrainian Eastern border while promoting transfer of competences to localities to favor processes networking at Schengen. The dynamic triggered by the Orange legislature in has revealed the effectiveness of the multi-vector policy guarantee only by declarations as well as the centralist nature of the Ukrainian system. This can be considered as the source of tensions in the geopolitical game played between Russian and the European Union.

Yet, the Europreanization of Ukraine may have brought a middle ground between integration and differentiation; a mutli-vectored integrative process. The European regionalization of Ukraine and the concept of Euroregions project promising leads.

The concept of Euroregions implies the construction of relationships on the basis of equality built on all level of society including administration, business, social and cultural institutions, NGOs and the population (Kolosov, 2011). It is a local concept that allows building institutional links with regions according to specific needs. For that, it requires conditions under which local authorities enjoy the sufficient trust and competences to conduct the operation of the diverse projects with a relative independence from the political centers.

The decentralization introduced by the European regionalism in Ukraine would thus allow the Western regions to participate in the European integration and the Eastern ones to maintain harmonious relationships with Russia. This would imply to build trust between centers and peripheries that are often seen as potentially troublesome for the respect of national sovereignty. Although this stage seems to represent a complicated evolution to reach, it is not nonetheless impossible.

The goals aimed in Euroregional developments should be defined precisely and constrained in the improvement of the quality of life of the borderland population. Thus, Euroregions should no longer be associated as integrative processes *per se* in the political awareness but more as "attaches" making the junction between territories. But because of the structure of the Euroregion at the Ukrainian/Russian border, the geopolitical functions of such organizations remain as they contribute to represent the pro-Russian/Pro-European orientation in electoral periods. Thus the autonomy of cross-border structures in Ukraine is hampered by a *quasi* inexistent legal framework and the suspicion of center toward their developments. Indeed, the lack of local initiatives and the concentration of power in the hand of the executive branch in regions tie the orientation of the structures to the diverse "clients" that have interests in the geopolitical orientation of the country. Hence, the European democratization tied to processes of regionalization could bring openings in the resolution of these issues.

3.3.1 A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR EUROREGIONS: LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE THIRD PROTOCOL ATTACHED TO THE MADRID CONVENTION

The Madrid convention (1980) has set the basis for political cooperation between states for cross-border issues. However, one of the declared shortcomings of the convention was the fact that no real right for territorial collectivities was really recognized and that it did not provide sufficient juridical support in the national laws in order to embody the structures within a stable legal framework. In fact, it was solely designed for "encouraging" states to favor the trans-national cooperative dimension.

Several weaknesses arise when it comes to cross-border regional organization. Indeed, one of problem that we witnessed for cross-border incentives is that they constitute "*an important supplement to [national] foreign policies at people to people level*"(Katri-Liis, 2009) and that they risk challenging geopolitical views of states. Hence, the conduct of such processes between Russian and Ukraine is only framed by an international agreement outside of all legal frameworks and, therefore, they do not dispose of sufficient support for assuring its proper development.

Several mechanisms exist for keeping the regions subjected to the central authorities. During this research we mainly considered two of them: the socio-political control and the legislative control.

The best example is that in Ukraine and in Russian Federation, the constitutions give the duty to presidents to assure the integrity of territories. For the regional issues, this is translated by the fact that they both have the competence of appointing governors which are the supreme position for the regional executive power. But the ambivalence of this nomination lies in the fact that the governor becomes tied as well to the individuals composing the region of which the cross-border interests may differ from the national ones. Thus, the concern with cross-border operations through agreements was that they were conducted outside of any legal control and that they represent suspicious moves in term of foreign policy.

The solution proposed by the first additional protocol attached to the Madrid convetnion was to offer the possibility to such organisms to adopt the legal personality defined by national law (*Protocol n°1 attached to the Madrid Convention*, Art. 4 §1). This maneuver allowed more stability to cross-regional structures in order to solve problems such as the establishment of cross-border cooperation by the territorial authorities in the frame of public law, to address the problem of legal values of the acts accomplished in the frame of cross-border cooperation, the personality and the legal status (private/public) of organisms created by territorial or collective authorities.

In fact, we believe that the first protocol addresses a deeper problem that is tied to what was described in the first section. It provides several sources of control that were designed to frame the scope of actions of cross-border organizations. Indeed, while binding regional authorities to respect decisions taken within a cross-border structure by transposing them in the national legal order (Art 2), the protocol explicitly subjects the implementation of the agreements to the national legislations.

This security was re-affirmed by the protocol (art 6 §2) which place the acts taken by the cross-border structure under the control of the national state law where the organization was established and impose a mandatory process of coordination between national territories. Finally, the protocol (Art 6 §1) reminds that whatever the agreements taken by a cross-border structure, the act=s of territorial authorities are subjected to the same control that the ones planned by the law of the stakeholder.

As we can witness, the first protocol attached to the Madrid convention, in terms of juridical control, introduces strong lines that were especially designed to assure that the regional authorities are automatically subjected to national central corpus. For central governments, this presents a great security in term of territorial preservation.

Therefore, after one read the protocol carefully, it seems that the remaining issues, when it comes to the adaptation of national legislation, could have been addressed immediately by national agreements. However, in 2009, the council of Europe produced a third additional protocol. In the following section, we will analyze the lines and the political message that lies in the convention.

In the introductive part of the protocol, one can read that that although the Madrid convention and its protocols have set the path for cross-border cooperation, this process is still hampered by diverse factors related to the variety of political systems, functions and power of territorial collectivities and juridical traditions as well as linguistic problems (*Protocol 3 attached to the Madrid Convention*).

The third protocol was produced to bring a solution to these problems by seeking to address a harmonized common basis of applicable rules. For analyzing the third protocol, it is convenient to present some of its articles and to remind that it was created with the purpose of favoring cooperation by assuring juridical control and stability to the structures. However, the nature of the first protocol had already offered frameworks for the juridical development of cross-border cooperation. Therefore, as a non mandatory part of the Madrid

convention, it does not really offer new solutions but only practical adaptabilities. Hence its interest lies more in the political message through which it can be interpreted.

The first article plans the creation of Euroregional Groups of Cooperation (EGC) that are designed to let the maximum space of actions for cooperation. The only limitation of this structure was already present in the first protocol and states that the maximum scope of action is the already existing territorial competences. Hence, Euroregional structures gain no additional contractual capacities. This statement is re-affirmed in the articles 7 and 11 for example.

But in our concerns, the interesting part if this protocol lies in the article 4 (*establishment of an EGC*) which institutionalize the process of creation of this specific (namely, the largest organism in term of competences) cross-border organization by the formal authorization of the national authorities. This statement re-enforce once more mechanisms of control (Art 4 §4,5) and the necessity of transparency (Art 4 §7) for an EGC.

This over-verification in the establishment and the conduct of the Euroregional groups are especially designed to assure to national governments, the legal control that they lacked since the Madrid Convention. But, we believe than these protections must be seen as footsteps for political opportunities.

Although the third protocol is not a mandatory part of the Madrid Convention and that its implementation could be reached through the rules established in the first protocol, the establishment of a new juridical structures for allowing the maximum of space for the Euregional actions while assuring the best control over them by the national authorities must be interpreted as a political opportunity.

It has been demonstrated that the best practices for Euroregional groups are the amalgamation of local and regional authorities in the decision making process (Gabbe, 2008). The involvement of individuals through grassroots projects constitutes the best axis of development when it comes to the constitution of the political project by the public sphere.

Therefore, the decision making process is most of the time rooted in the hand of political personalities that were nominated by the central authorities. But it becomes clear that the third protocol indicates the march to follow in order to re-establish trust in national views. Indeed, it reinforces the control of competences over cross-border organisms, and moreover, it institutionalizes the mechanism of political authorization for the establishment of such groups. Hence, we argue that this legal check should be joined by a certain release in the mechanism of informal controlling that Euroregional groups have to face.

3.3.2 EUROREGIONS: INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF INDIVIDUALS' WILLS

Finally, we can say that the Euroregion is the institutionalization of the cross-border space as desired by the "controllers" of the political power; the reproduction of the interests and the wills of certain categories of people. This can be witnessed in the operation of the structure which reflects balance between Ukrainian shifting orientations, European interests over the border and the ambiguous Russian approach of border politics. As a result the lack of considerations and power allocated to Ukrainian regions is one of the principal sources of unproductive functioning of Euroregional organizations. But it worth stating that one very important actor is missing in the conduct of cross-border cooperation while the declared goal of Euroregions it seeks at improving their quality of life: namely its population.

Firstly, the awareness of the population about Euroregions is *quasi* inexistent which can be explained by the formal nature of Eastern cross-border relations and its weak production of outcomes efficiently affecting borderland individuals. Out of the answer collected in the survey, only a few mentioned to know what Slobozhanschyna is. When the answer was positive, the reference was most of the time made to the historic period or the name of new settlements conducted in Ukraine, an idea leading to the thought that attributing of the name of the Euroregion can challenge its visibility. For those who mentioned the Euroregion, their levels of

satisfaction regarding the authorities (local, regional or euroregional) were rather undecided due to a lack of information.

Local researchers have already attempted to fill the gap of information using the tools already mobilized such as the educational cooperation and internet technologies. Seminars, debates, simulation of projects management, opportunities of exchanges have taken place within the cross-border cooperation school between Belgorod State University and Kharkov Karazin University for instance.

Fig. 26 Simulation of cross-border project management for students taking place at Belgorod State University for the "Spring School of Cross-border Cooperation" – 25/04/2011.

This seems already to show its efficiency as it seems that youngsters in a *milieu universitaire* have more knowledge's over the activities of the Euroregions than their elders.

A website which regroups the different activities, news, studies, histories and key documents over the Euroregions has also been created (www.euroregion.ru). A forum is also present to launch debates, hold internet conferences, discuss about diverse projects, activities, etc…

Fig. 27 www.euroregion.ru – Information portal over Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian Euroregions

The expected consequences of these projects are to raise the individuals' expectations over the Euroregions. We believe, as well as Viktor Sapryka, that one of the methods to improve the efficiency and the quality of the

Euroregion is to involve the population within its construction. Indeed, the few times this method has been mobilized, it produced positive outcomes and concrete projects due to its high legitimacy. Hence we believe, secondly, that the European Union is a source of inspiration from which the project can benefit. Indeed, the requirement of democratization in the ENP calls for more regionalization and decentralization.

Recently, the minister of foreign affairs, Kostyantyn Gryshchenko[57] declared in Strasbourg that his party is trying to organize a forum on the autonomy of local authorities in Ukraine with the hope that the debate will lead to reinforce this autonomy, especially at a budgetary level. It has to be noted that it is part of the electoral promises made by the party of regions and that it will probably face an opposition in the parliament of which the leading coalition (the former orange bloc) sees the allocation of competences would increase the irregularities witnessed at the regional level. Even if allocating funds to regions already mark a first move for allowing more activity in border regions, further steps are still to be made.

Ukraine, by fear of regional disintegration, has always kept a predominant control over the executive power of its regions. This awarded the country the adjective of competitive "authoritarian" regime (Levitsky, 2002; Kuzio, 2005). Hence, following this logic, the conduct of cross-border will always remain monopolized by central orientations which do not allow any significant transfer of competences and legal bases. Yet, as the previous section demonstrates it, such frameworks exist and are waiting to be implemented.

However, as we also mentioned, this could only be effective and sustainable if central authorities allow the population to have a "voice" in the conduct of cross-border operations. Indeed, in the Ukrainian Eastern regions, some indicators tend to show that such an action could seriously contribute to the resolution of the European vs Russian equation.

Thus, to the question of the European orientation of Ukraine, people in the regions of Kharkov and Belgorod have provided the research of interesting answers. Generally, the European orientation is generally perceived it as fine or neutral. People in Kharkov regions do not seem to be affected by the European choice of Ukraine. But a distinction is to be made since many people underlined their positive attitude could change if it would harm the relationship between Ukraine and Russia. On the Russian side, a lot of people mentioned the divided nature of Ukraine which justifies a European approach. But it also underlines that if Western Ukraine seeks at a closer relationship with the EU, Eastern Ukraine has the right to favor the Russian choice. As we mentioned before, the border regime desired by the EU and Ukraine as a process of demarcation and European integration (e.g. the Visa issue) also find room for its implementation. The relative openness that Moscow shows for its Ukrainian border is principally made with the goal to maintain contacts with Ukraine that represents a big deal for Russia. But Russia's new approach geopolitics considers the security of its border as equally important.

In fact, the presence of NATO closer to Ukrainian deciding circles is perceived as a threat for the relationship at the border for the people of Russia and Ukraine because it has the potential to affect the normal relationship between "two friendly nations".

On the Ukrainian side, the balanced relationship is also represented. But the perception that Ukraine is not a "European" power was dominant among the Eastern younger people. Hence the Ukraine's geopolitical orientation should not forget the Russian vectors. Thus, it is widely acknowledge that the EU has the capacity to bring various benefits to Ukraine which is welcome positively by the Ukrainian youngsters. But by the culture, the feeling of belonging to a Russian culture is dominant. Again, the apparent division within the country is an element that must be taken into consideration making the European integration accepted as long as it does not hampered the relations with Russia. Hence the accession of Ukraine to NATO is also perceived negatively.

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[57] Question asked by Denis Badré in Strasbourg on Monday 20th 2011 -
http://www.denisbadre.eu/2011/06/ukraine.html

This opinion is also shared by elder Ukrainians in Eastern regions even though they perceives the European standards and values different than the customs that used to tie the Eastern Slavic people and the traditions inherited from the Soviet Union. But others underlined the European character of Ukraine as a natural factor of a country located between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, these people highlighted the higher benefits that Ukraine could gain by getting closer to the EU but it remains that relationships with Russia are perceived as required for the region of Kharkov which is tied by economic relations with Russia.

The responsibility of regional executives in front of the population to reflect its expectations and opinions appears to be a condition *sine qua non* to respect to cultural differences of Ukraine. It would thus allow the country to step out its "territorial trap" and to approach the European and Russian orientations simultaneously. Ukraine's border with Russia is now an accepted reality that is not challenged in term of legitimacy but because of its externalities that consented by the population. Although the leads open by the Euroregional governance at the Russian/Ukrainian border will not remove competition for the geopolitical orientation of the country that is subject because of attempts of influence engaged by its two neighbors, it already stops denying the ambiguous geography of the country defined differently according to the definitions in use. Indeed, a development of cross-border relations including populations' involvement will thus overcome the dialectic exclusion/inclusion in the development of pragmatic and sustainable ties while allowing central authorities to keep control of key elements regarding their objectives.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this research, we attempted to provide leads in order to answer the question to know if the Euroregional governance could constitute a bridge between Russia and Europe. To demonstrate our point, he has mainly focused our interest of the Ukrainian political system and its relations with the policies of integration proposed by Russia and the EU.

We began with the traditional cleavage East/West in Ukraine, symbol of the double orientation Ukraine has to face. We demonstrated that the Ukrainian State is characterized by a political system highly centralized. The consequences of this situation are to shift its foreign policy alternatively toward Europe and Russia. The first critique that was addressed was that this configuration already denied the divided nature of Ukraine.

Nevertheless, the multi-vectored policy developed under Kuchma was supposed to bring solutions to this situation by favoring contacts with Russia and the EU. But it did not take in account the meaning attached to the Russian/Ukrainian border for pro-European parties which are now dominant in the parliament. The process of nation building, re-enforced during the orange legislature by the European orientation has been considering the Eastern border of Ukraine as the symbol of the Ukrainian independence *vis à vis* of Russia. Moreover, the European economic attraction, migration and visa issues are pushing Kiev to increase the *hardness* of its Russian border. As a result, cross-border cooperation in period of *European* ascendancy on Ukrainian politics, were reduced to administrative operations.

However, regional disparities of Ukraine tend to indicate that the cooperation with Russian regions could improve the economic situation of the country. Indeed, the budget repartition is a exclusive competences of central authorities in Ukraine which are using the wealth of its eastern regions to support its western "poorer" regions. Nevertheless, the economic ties that maintained Oblasts such as Kharkov with its Russian neighbors have weakened drastically due to the fact that they have to face different customs and taxations in both countries. The lack of competences transferred to regions is mainly justified by the fear of disintegration. The cultural affinities of eastern regions with Russia, the common language and the shared history explain why the border with the Russian Federation has acquired such a political connotation.

Yet, there is a gap between population and elites' preoccupation in Ukraine. As exposed in the research, people do not contest the border in its legal and symbolic components. The border is a legitimate fact of life that was even present during the shared history that the country has with its big Slavic neighbor. Indeed, the fact that Ukraine and Russia are two different entities is well expressed by the population. It is the physical component of the border that is contested, especially in its time-consuming character. But it has been demonstrated that these opinions do not reach the central political circles which are assuring their control through their regional representations.

The fear of separatism must thus be attributed to regional governors who showed during the election of 2004 that chauvinistic attitudes had to be considered in the electoral game. But it must be acknowledge that governors constitute the relay between local economic powers. As a result, their decisions are mainly influenced by a relative small number of players that assure them electoral support.

In that sense, the European criteria of regionalism is well-suited to increase the delegation of competences toward decentralized entities. For instance, the possibility for Ukrainian regions to dispose of their own funds and to enjoy the possibility to pass their own laws (under constitutional control) could seriously increase the number of projects implemented in cooperation with Russian regions. Above all, the European criteria's of self-government favor the participation of individuals in the decision making process. The conduct of cross-border relation could thus benefits from the positive contribution individuals' narratives carry.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that the decentralization asked by the EU is made to shift the European concerns from a state-centered/imperial approach to network constructivism. The EU has not proven to be

really interested in the development of cross-border projects at the Ukrainian-Russian border. As we showed above, the EU presents is principal threats as migration and cross-border criminality. At the Western border of Ukraine, cross-border structures were used as an alternative method of integration to weaken the negative effects created by Schengen as well as to maintain the Euro-enthusiasm in its neighbor.

Although the European integration is still perceived as a long term objectives for Ukraine, the recent election of Yanukovitch proves that the EU also have to compete in the game of influence with Ukraine. Pro-Russian orientations and integration could mean a new border regime at the East of Ukraine on which the EU would have no control. Therefore, we argue that the European Union has also an interest to favor democratization through regionalization of its neighbor with the purpose to share influences with Russia according to the regional dispositions.

Actually, the logic of Euroregional governance as alternative method of integration has been adapted to the Eastern context. As we exposed in the chapter devoted to Russian geopolitics, Moscow is rather ambivalent regarding the status of its borders. On one hand, the relative failure of Russian led projects of integration and the rapprochement of NATO in its close neighborhood have pushed the Kremlin to redefine the status of its border. Russia is now back to an period where security concerns are dominant, especially after the war in Georgia and the Chechen attacks that the country had to face. Yet, under the impulsion of Vladimir Putin, Russia has not give up its ambition to re-construct a regional sphere of influence. The neo-Eurasian philosophy balances the need of national affirmation and the aspiration of geopolitical extension. But the methods mobilized did not convince the international scene which really perceived Russia as coming back to zero-sum games strategies.

However, as we attempt to demonstrate, Russia is more concerned by military than economic and cultural issues. The energetic dependence of Ukraine and the orientation of its market remain important factors in the relationship of Slavic nations. Moreover, the common language spoken by many Ukrainians have assured deep and solid Russia cultural affinities with its neighbor. The perception of the European integration of Ukraine does not constitute the peak of tensions between Brussels and Moscow. What the Kremlin is concerned about is that the European influence would trigger eventually an anti-Russian reaction in the political system that would accelerate the Atlantic integration of Ukraine. Therefore, the only condition that seems to emerge is for Russia to keep a footstep in the electoral world of Ukraine. Hence cross-border cooperation with Ukraine could bring an alternative to methods of hard politics. It would bring guarantee that economic and cultural ties with Eastern regions are preserved.

Still, it appears that the Russian domestic opinion considers doubtfully these structures. As a consequence, Russian regions lack of competences to engage sustainably joint programs with their Ukrainian neighbors. For instance, the law on self-government in Russia does not include the possibility to engage cross-border legislation which renders cross-border trade difficult and highly unsecure (for instance, what happen when a Ukrainian citizens having a Russian commerce is going bankrupt and have creditors in both countries?).

The legislative problem is even more present in Ukraine where we have shown that regional councils are limited to the approbation/rejection of executive programs. For instance in Kharkov the executive branch is clearly the key actors in the decision making process. Hence, the interests that are prevalent in the management of the region are highly dependent on the political conjuncture and industrial interests that assure his position to the governor since this latter is not elected.

These shortcomings are inevitably present in the Euroregional construction. Firstly, the composition of the Euroregion is clearly regional oriented. Projects arise according to regional interests when they are not proposed by other ways (scientific projects, Association of Ukrainian/Russian/Belarusian border regions, etc). Secondly, the preoccupation of Euroregional authorities and the diverse projects implemented have only few impacts on the regional economies. Furthermore, they do not provide enough visible services for the

population and remain constrained to inner circles of *insiders.* Thirdly, projects of the projects on the Ukrainian side needs to be validated by the Rada in Kiev which testifies well how the central authorities have the power to weaken the efficiency of the Euroregion. Fourthly, the lack of confidence for cross-border structures in Russia and the fear of contradictory foreign policy for Ukraine have contribute under-developing the legal framework surrounding cross-border cooperation. Indeed, no binding dispositions have been settled and the agreements taken between the two administrations remain exactly… agreements. Fifthly, as it is the case in the implementation of national policies, the individuals are poorly involved in the cross-border cooperative process which is drastically marked by the non-awareness of the Euroregion.

Yet, it appears that the accountability of borderland people's wills and their involvement could bring new possibilities to facilitate the situation. Their perceptions and interests regarding the border are far from the geopolitical considerations. Pragmatism dominates mainly their concerns and they only seek at improving their conditions of life. Indeed, when the people are asked to express their opinions, they refer to Kharkov and Belgorod to differences in term of socio-economic situation. They do not contest the very existence of the border which is the physical marker of differentiation between Russia and Ukraine but they seek at using this element as a factor of utility. Thus, if the borderland population is concerned about security, they react extremely negatively to the inefficiency of the border in this matter (Long files, random controls, little number of intersections, etc). It appears clear that the improvement of the technological infrastructure of the border is required. Belgorod attracts many works due to its better salary conditions but Kharkov remains the industrial and leisure center which characterized metropolis. However, with the actual border situation, the self-mutual interests of Belgorod and Kharkov are hampered by this border which makes the journey from one point to another unattractive.

Hence, from a geographical point of view, it is interesting to consider a bottom-up approach of Euroregional developments in the post-soviet area. Individuals could bring their geographical perception to connote the cross-border work differently. Thus, they associate themselves to local identities while at the same time remaining part of Ukraine and Russia. The closeness of Ukrainian culture to Russian culture there is not perceived as a threat but as an opportunity to enjoy mutual benefits of contacts and agreements with the other community. At the same time, they do not oppose to the European integration which is still perceived as beneficial as long as it does not harm the relations Eastern regions of Ukraine maintain with Russia. In fact, it is the lack of interests of the European Union in these regions that triggers the most apparent reactions.

For these reasons we argue that cross-border governance, as a part of the European logic of integration at the Ukrainian-Russian regions, could have benefic repercussions on several issues. First, it would allow improving economic multi-vectored policies for Ukraine that is not dependant of domestic characteristics. Second, it would constitute a step forward in the process of democratization of the country which is a European criterion of integration. For the EU, this would facilitate the targeting of regional markets in order to establish economic ties. Indeed, this cross-border governance, as we depicted it, calls for a decentralization of competences towards regions that would enjoy more freedom in the conduct of their policy. This would have the consequence to favor Eastern integration for regions such as Kharkov and to bring satisfaction to Russian interests in the regions. In order to preserve political threats of such a process, the involvement of individuals is required. For Ukraine, this could contribute to a policy of appeasement with its Slavic neighbor while remaining in the position to control the activities engaged (e.g. the third protocol attached to the Madrid Convention). Finally, it would allow the individuals to be more represented in the regional scene which could contribute to bring the confidence in politics back.

Therefore, if the Euroregional governance does not resolve all the issues at stake between Russia and the EU (NATO as a adjacent project of integration, the fear of European invasion of the Russian territory, the fight of influence on Ukrainian central authorities), it has the benefits to locate the debate on another platform where pragmatism allows concepts such as Europe, Ukraine and Russia to overlap rather than to oppose themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS & LEADS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. Delimitation of competences that can be transferred to Russian and Ukrainian regions in order to assure a proper system of check and balances that would assure the confidence of central authorities regarding possible territorial disintegration and that would provide the possibility to regions to enjoy fully their border status.
2. Investigation methods and techniques to increase the participation of the population in regional and euro-regional politics.
3. Investigate the possibility for municipalities to conduct their own cross-border relations

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- The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation

  http://www.mid.ru/ns-osndoc.nsf/1e5f0de28fe77fdcc32575d900298676/869c9d2b87ad8014c32575d9002b1c38?OpenDocument
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- Third Additional Protocol to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities - Council of Europe 2009 - n ° 20

Website

www.kremlin.ru – Official website of the Russian Federation

www.mid.ru – Official website of Russian foreign affairs

www.euroregion.ru – Official website of the Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna

www.europa.eu – Official website of the European Union

www.aebr.eu – Official Website of the Association of European Border Regions

http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en - Official Website of the Ukrainian government

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Survey

THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN BORDER AMONG THE POPULATION IN THE BORDERLAND OF KHARKOV AND BELGOROD.

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1.1 Introduction

In the framework of the research: "Geopolitics of inclusion and exclusion: the Euroregional governance as a possible bridge between Europe and Russia ?" A survey has been realized in order to determine the perceptions the population have about the border.

The survey has been realized after a period of literature studies, informal talks with officials, academics and experts as well as regular contacts with the population of Belgorod. The border-crossing has been experienced as well in order to give some ground to the analytical knowledge of the practical experience.

1.2 Methodology

In order to support empirically the research, a survey has been realized among the population living in Kharkov and Belgorod. The survey has been conducted after a period of literature studies, informal talks with officials, academics and experts mentioned above. In total, 54 people were interviewed. The number of people interviewed was decided by the amount information newly provided to the questions. Hence, in term of statistical inferences, the survey suffers from methodological shortcomings. But since the objectives a the qualitative process were not its generalization but a collect of opinions and general trends, it supports efficiently the research's empirical findings.

The goals of the survey were:

- To explore the overall perception of the border by the population in the borderland of Kharkov and Belgorod (hereafter: the population).
- To explore the perception of the population regarding the legitimacy of the border
- To explore the main reasons of crossing for the population
- To explore the possibility of an instrumental use of the border by the population
- To explore the level of awareness in the population of the Euroregion Slobozhanschyna
- To approach the level of connection between the population and the cross-border authorities (Euroregion Slobozhanschyna – Kharkov Oblast – Belgorod Oblast – Municipalities)
- To explore the perception of the European orientation of Ukraine
- To explore the perception of the geographical imaginaries of the Ukrainian space

- To explore the question of identities in the borderland
- To explore the evolution of the tendencies from one generation to another
- To explore the tendencies on both sides of the border

The survey was firstly drafted in English and translated into Russian by a native speaker with English proficiency. The nuances regarding the meanings of the words used were discussed between the drafter and the translator in order to reach the closest translation to the original ideas.

The interviewees were asked in Russian to participate to a survey after the explaining of the reasons of that triggered its conduct. Information about the individual who answered the survey was asked on the survey itself while assuring them to keep their anonymity.

Interviewees were asked to answer themselves to the survey through a computer directly in their native language. The translation of the answers was realized later on.

The data collected are structured in four groups of respondents:

- Individuals born before 1986
- Individuals born after 1986
- Individuals residing in Ukraine (Kharkov Oblast)
- Individuals residing in Russia (Belgorod Oblast)

To conduct the investigation on people born after 1986, an investigator was asked to present the survey to student at Belgorod State University (for people residing in Russia) and at Kharkov Karazin University (for people residing in Ukraine). The place of residence is not the legal address but the address people considered they spend the most of time.

The choice of asking randomly students is justified by three reasons.

1. This target potentially constitutes the future elites in the regional development. This probably socio-economic ascendancy opens more possibilities regarding their involvement in cross-border activities.
2. The student population is generally born after 1986. They were still relatively young when Ukraine became an independent country. Thus, it was possible to determinate their relatively new live experiences regarding the border. More importantly, we consider that the education of these people started around the same moment.
3. The lack of financing for conducting the research, the lack of access to officials' lists or any other administrative documents pushed the investigator to focus the survey on an accessible source.

To conduct the investigation on people born before 1986, an investigator was asked to contact the target population according to their place of residence (The place of residence is not the legal address but the address people considered they spend the most of time) through computer technologies because of the practical difficulties to conduct the survey (language, distance, time, finance). Only the people corresponding to the criteria's determined were chosen.

The choice of asking randomly people through computer technologies was to assure a better control on the selection process. For instance, people with significant experience in the administrative cross-border cooperation were not chosen for answering the questions. Other reasons justify the target of this population.

1. This target constitutes the socio-economic population that experienced the border through its different administrative forms.
2. This population is generally born before 1986. They are considered as living a significant amount of time with Ukraine as a part the Soviet Union. Thus, it was possible to determinate their relatively live

experiences regarding the border. More importantly, we consider that the education of these people had already started reasonably before the independence of Ukraine.

3. The lack of financing for conducting the research, the lack of access to officials' lists or any other administrative documents pushed the investigator to focus the survey on an accessible source.

1.3 Sample of the survey

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Survey/ Анкета

The perception of the Ukrainian-Russian border / Понимание российско-украинской границы

Belgorod Russia/Kharkov Ukraine

Белгород РФ/Харьков Украина

Date of Birth/Дата рождени :

Legal Nationality/Гражданство :

Nationality/Национальность :

Country of living/Страна проживания :

Occupation/Профессия :

Questions

1) **What does the border between Ukraine and Russia represent for you in your everyday life? (Hints: Do you have relatives living across the border? Do you cross the border from time to time? For what purposes do you cross the border? Do you perceive it as a measure of security? A barrier in your life?)**

Значение границы между РФ и Украиной в Вашей повседневной жизни?

Подсказка: У вас есть родственники, живущие за границей? Вы пересекаете границу время от времени? Для каких целей вы пересекаете границу? Считаете ли что граница нужна для безопасности? Является ли это барьером для Вас?

2) **Do you feel that the location of the border between Ukraine and Russia is legitimate?**

Why?

Считаете ли вы, что граница между Украиной и Россией отвечает реальности и легитимна? Почему?

3) **What is more advantageous in Kharkov, what is more interesting in Belgorod?**
   Examples: prices, services, infrastructures, entrainements, etc.

   Каковы преимущества Харькова? Что Вы находите более интересным в Белгороде?) (Пример: цены, услуги, инфраструктура, досуг и т.д.

4) **For what reasons do you cross the border between Ukraine and Russia?**

   По каким причинам Вы пересекаете границу между Украиной и Россией?

5) **How connected do you feel with your municipal/regional and Euroregional authorities?**

   Как Вы воспринимаете муниципальные / региональные или Еврорегиональные органы власти?

6) **Do you know what Slobozhanschyna is?**

   Знаете ли Вы что такое Слобожанщина?

7) **How do you perceive the European orientation of Ukraine?**

   Как Вы относитесь к Европейской ориентации Украины?

8) **Is Ukraine in Europe, in Russia, both, somewhere else? Why this answer?**
   Что ближе для Украины Европа или Россия, или что-то другое? Обоснуйте ответ

9) **Do you feel European?; Soviet?; Russian?; Ukrainian?; From Belgorod?; From Kharkov?; something else?; a mixed identity?**
   Считаете ли вы, себя европейцем, гражданином Советского союза, русским, украинцем, белгородцем, харьковчанином, или другим, может смешанной идентичности?

Summaries of answers

1) **What does the border between Ukraine and Russia represent for you in your everyday life? (Hints: Do you have relatives living across the border? Do you cross the border from time to time? For what purposes do you cross the border? Do you perceive it as a measure of security? A barrier in your life?)**

The border mainly represents a physical marker that divides geographically relatives and friendships. Thus, it is generally accepted that the border is important in this population social life but is not over-deterministic because not everyone cross the border at all time.

The border is also perceived in other terms such as the ratio efficiency-control of which the negative impacts is expressed by all the individuals. This population is divided about the security issue. A small part did perceive the border as an important tool of security but all seemed to agree that the time-consuming ("*Over 8 hours in summer")* character of the border exceeds its efficiency ("*They don't even open our trunks")*.   This population claims to suffer from this situation particularly during their journey during summer (in Direction to Kiev or Crimea)

This population seems not to be really connected to the political significance of the border. They mainly perceive Russia and Ukraine as friendly nations which should adapt a proper border regime. But among the people that mentioned this fact, they all refer to the border as the physical between Russia and Ukraine.

Another interesting point is that this population perceives the border as a marker for leisure and purchases. Very often, the border is seen as a place of differentiation between prices and lifestyle. Nevertheless, the economic differences between the Ukrainian borderlands and Russian borderlands did not generate the perception of a dividing factor in the answers collected.

2) **Do you feel that the location of the border between Ukraine and Russia is legitimate?**

   Why?

Regarding that question, one tendency is dominant: The border between Ukraine and Russia is legitimate. A minority of answers however mentioned that the border is not because of the illegality is implies *(Cross-border purchases)* and the weak effective security it represents.

But the reason of the legitimacy and the intensity of the presence of the border differ from one answer to another. Some claim that the border should be more transparent because of the special relationship between the regions of Ukraine and Russia. Some mentioned the fact that the border is the mark to defend Russia from aggressive actions in Western Ukraine. Although they claimed that the border is legitimate, the relation between the efficiency of controls and time-spent at the border is not. Only a very weak minority claimed that the border was illegitimate in its symbolic component but that they should physically be open.

All people seem to agree that the border is legitimate for reason of historical past (*the border is inherited by the Soviet Union)* and of sovereignty even though they recognized that it would be much more convenient without it.

3) **What is more advantageous in Kharkov, what is more interesting in Belgorod?**
   Examples: prices, services, infrastructures, entrainements, etc.

One interesting part of the answers given to this question is that people's opinion did not oppose the two cities. Thus, Kharkov is seen as an attractive place for shopping and leisure (night life). The size of the city, the history (*architecture and*

monuments) and its dynamic (*Jobs and personal achievement)* were interesting answers given by this population. Kharkov is also seen as an attractive place for making purchases.

Belgorod is seen as having better life standards (but with higher prices). The cleanliness, the infrastructures (Sport centers, recreation centers) of the city is highly appreciated by the youngster.

4) **For what reasons do you cross the border between Ukraine and Russia?**

The main reasons of crossing are leisure, visiting relatives and friends, departure to holidays and purchases (*Duty free zone, and low prices in Kharkov)*.

5) **How connected do you feel with your municipal/regional and Euroregional authorities?**

The general tendency of the answer was to show the low connection of this population to the governmental authorities (*I have low political activity; I have a neutral feeling regarding the policies implemented, etc)*. Some answers pointed out that it was because they have the feeling that their opinion is not taken in consideration and that the decisions are taken without a small circle of people). This represents the main negative point regarding the perception of the policies.

The opinions that expressed their support with the regional authorities mentioned that they were satisfied to see that regional policies were in adequacy with the national lines.

Regarding the Euroregional authorities, most of this population is not aware of its existence. However, those who mentioned their awareness of the Euroregion stated that they were not aware or did not feel the effect of their actions.

6) **Do you know what Slobozhanschyna is?**

In correlation with the question n°5, most of the responses indicated that this population is not aware of Slobozhanschyna. A minority however did answer positively. However, a distinction must be made within this fringe.

First, a minority did answer that Slobozhanschyna was the Euroregion uniting Kharkov and Belgorod Oblast.

Second, Slobozhanschyna evokes a geographical or an historical regions referring to the past of Belgorod and Kharkov Oblast. But when these answers were stated, the word "Euroregion" did not appear.

7) **How do you perceive the European orientation of Ukraine?**

The answers given to this question were rather divided. In the overall tendency, the opinions of the population are neutral. A few answers presented this orientation as negative (*They are not European, negative since it harms the relation with Russia).*

Interesting elements were pointed out such as the difference between the governmental approach and the approach of the people. But this population rather perceives that the European orientation should be made adjacently to a Russian orientation.

The distinction between Western and Eastern Ukraine was mentioned several times when stated that Ukraine should be able to combine both Russian orientation and European one. The general trends seem to be that as long as this relationship does not harm the day-to-day life of this population, the European orientation is accepted.

8) **Is Ukraine in Europe, in Russia, both, somewhere else? Why this answer?**

The majority of the answers given to the question indicate that Ukraine, in people's minds, is considered as being closer from Russia than from Europe because of the cultural similarities and the historical past (*for more than 300 years, most of Ukraine was a part of, first, the Russian Empire and then - the Soviet Union which defined the close cultural and economic ties).* For those who raised economic matters, Ukraine is perceived as having more connections with Russia but did mention the European attractiveness. A significant number of answers stated the division of Ukraine between East and West (*This is a country for a long time was at the crossroads of two powerful cultures. But I think part of it develops the Russian culture, and some - the Polish-Lithuanian).* The ambivalence of the country seemed to be respected in these opinions although they were

marked by the perception of a distance between politics and the population (*Traditionally, Ukraine is closer to Russia, but Ukrainian authorities and the radical part of the public, persist in trying to prove otherwise*).

9) **Do you feel European?; Soviet?; Russian?; Ukrainian?; From Belgorod?; From Kharkov?; something else?; a mixed identity?**

This question generated various answers such as: *Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish russified, Cosmopolitan, From Belgorod, Russian from Belgorod, Ukrainian Polish, Slav, Russian born in Ukraine* and *Russian European*. This confirms what several studies have established. It is difficult to associate the population with one identity. However, Russian and Belgorod were stated the most.

1) **What does the border between Ukraine and Russia represent for you in your everyday life? (Hints: Do you have relatives living across the border? Do you cross the border from time to time? For what purposes do you cross the border? Do you perceive it as a measure of security? A barrier in your life?)**

According to this population, the border mainly represents a barrier in life practices. The border is perceived as an inconvenient element between relatives, friends and leisure. This population refers especially to the time spent in line required to cross the border.

This population seems not to be really connected to the political significance of the border. It is the practical approach that is dominant when one deals with this issue. This pragmatic point of view is supported by the fact that the border is seen as a step on the *"Road to Crimea"*. Nevertheless, it seems that this population crosses the border for other reasons than vacation. As for youngsters, the border is perceived as a marker between, different set of prices and lifestyle. Again, the economic differences between the Ukrainian borderlands and Russian borderlands did not generate the perception of a dividing factor in the answers collected.

2) **Do you feel that the location of the border between Ukraine and Russia is legitimate?**

Why?

Regarding that question, one tendency is dominant: The border between Ukraine and Russia is not legitimate. For two reasons: first, the population does not accept the fact they must wait so long at the custom while they used not to face that sort of situation before; second, the population mentioned the fact that many Russians live abroad and that this situation is unfair regarding their location that was not determined by the erection of Ukraine and Russia. Only a small minority referred to the border as the marker of two different states.

Another point mentioned was that the border is against the overall will of the population concerned.

3) **What is more advantageous in Kharkov, what is more interesting in Belgorod?**
Examples: prices, services, infrastructures, entrainements, etc.

A great distinction was given to the difference of prices between Khrakov and Belgorod. Kharkov is seen as having cheaper products and services with a large selection of public transportation as well as a broader choice of entertainments (*Opera, Theater*) and a better selection of industrial products. Price and leisure are the mains advantages of Khrakov for this population. But the cleanness of Belgorod, the quality of its services (The medical sector was stated several times), housing and the quality of infrastructure are perceived as being higher than in Kharkov.

4) **For what reasons do you cross the border between Ukraine and Russia?**

The main reasons of crossing are tourism, visiting relatives and friends, departure to holidays, purchases but also to enjoy recreation such as the Zoo and the circus with children.

5) **How connected do you feel with your municipal/regional and Euroregional authorities?**

Most of the people interviewed answer that they felt rather connected to the regional authorities describing a normal relationship between the government and themselves. In the overall, the population interviewed showed that they perceive the work accomplished by the Belgorod administration positively.

Only a very weak minority expressed an opposition because it perceives that the administration does not fulfill all its duties

Regarding the Euroregional authorities, most of this population is not aware of its existence, or of the existence of the Euroregion.

6) **Do you know what Slobozhanschyna is?**

The general answer to this question is « no ».

7) **How do you perceive the European orientation of Ukraine?**

Interestingly, this population is rather indifferent to the European orientation of Ukraine. (*In general, I perceive this orientation fine…)* But it remains clear that the population would like to have Ukraine oriented toward Russia (… but *I would like Ukraine to be oriented towards Russia)*. The ignorance regarding this question is dominant within the people that do not have an interest on such issues. Thus, this population does not have a clear opinion regarding the "European orientation" while claiming that Russia still needs to be a general orientation of Ukraine. However, older people referred several time to the presence of Nato which is perceive negatively. For older people interviewed, the European orientation of Ukraine is associated to an "American" orientation which could arm the relation between Russian and Ukraine.

8) **Is Ukraine in Europe, in Russia, both, somewhere else? Why this answer?**

The majority of the answers given to the question indicate that Ukraine, in people's minds, is considered as being closer from Russia than from Europe because of the cultural similarities and the historical past

A significant number of answers stated the division of Ukraine between East and West. Within these answers, the political orientation of Western Ukraine was perceived as being "anti-Russian" (*because they hate either Russia or Russian*) while the Eastern part is considered as being Russian friendly (*for instance, the residents of the Donetsk region, closer to Russia because most of the inhabitants are Russian and support the policy of our state.)*

Among the people that answered, many references were made to the Soviet Past considering that Ukraine and Russia were part of one great nation which makes them belonging to the same geographical sphere.

9) **Do you feel European?; Soviet?; Russian?; Ukrainian?; From Belgorod?; From Kharkov?; something else?; a mixed identity?**

The main answers given to that question were: "Russian, from Belgorod, Russian nationalist and European". Once again, the mixed identity confirms several studies that were realized before.

1) **What does the border between Ukraine and Russia represent for you in your everyday life? (Hints: Do you have relatives living across the border? Do you cross the border from time to time? For what purposes do you cross the border? Do you perceive it as a measure of security? A barrier in your life?)**

The general tendency that came out of this question was that the border is not considered as a barrier by the youngster but a "natural" fact between two states. Even though relatives live across the border, this latter is not perceived as irrelevant. The main complain referred to the custom. However, it appears that beside family and tourism, this population does not cross the border very often.

2) **Do you feel that the location of the border between Ukraine and Russia is legitimate?**

   Why?

All the answers collected showed that the border is perceived as a legitimate fact resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Ukraine. It appears normal that two different states should be bound by a border which meets the reality of the situation. Some answers pointed the fact that this situation has implied different evolutions within the two cities which has an impact on the way of life of the population (*The people from Kharkov and Belgorod* differ from one another even though the distance between the two cities is only 70 km).

3) **What is more advantageous in Kharkov, what is more interesting in Belgorod?**
   Examples: prices, services, infrastructures, entrainements, etc.

From the point of view of this population, there is less attraction in Belgorod. Some did not see the interest to go to Belgorod. However, the city is perceived as a much cleaner city but is mainly perceive as a provincial town. Therefore, Khakov as the former capital of Ukraine is seen as much more "brutal", dirtier city. But it remains a pole of attraction, in the mind of this population, for scientific, cultural and industrial achievement. While Belgorod is seen as being more comfortable to live in, Kharkov is seen as presenting more opportunities for youngsters that seek at a dynamic and active life.

4) **For what reasons do you cross the border between Ukraine and Russia?**

The main reasons pointed out were tourism and visting relatives.

5) **How connected do you feel with your municipal/regional and Euroregional authorities?**

This population does not seem to be very connected to the political authorities. While some opinions are in favor to the policies conducted in Khrakov, some were very opposed underlying the contradictory character of certain policies. Some mentioned the September 2007 you tube video of M. Dobkin as a very unprofessional element. Among the elements mentioned by youngsters opposed to Dobkin, populism was seen as the main feature of his power. Clientelism and electoral suspicions were also stated.

This population is also not aware about the Euroregional authorities that remain an unknown word which provoked an interrogation to the people who answered.

6) **Do you know what Slobozhanschyna is?**

All the answers given showed that Slobozhanschyna is known-name among this population. It refers to a geographical and historical concept that ties regions of Russia and Ukraine together. However, the population agreed that this concept is more perceived as being *Ukrainian* than *Russian*. No reference was made to the Euroregion.

7) **How do you perceive the European orientation of Ukraine?**

The general answer given to this question is that this population is not opposed to the European orientation of Ukraine and welcomes it positively. However, there is also a strong vein that defends the idea that Ukraine is not a European power and should be closer to Russia. The European orientation was stated in parallel to the re-enforcement of NATO's position in Ukraine. The general feeling regarding this was the fear that the military orientation would arm the relation with Russia more badly that strictly the European one.

8) **Is Ukraine in Europe, in Russia, both, somewhere else? Why this answer?**

Ukraine is considered as being much closer to Russia by this population. Several reasons were invoked such as the historical ties, the Soviet past, the fact that people used to live together side by side for a long time. But at the same time, Russia was also depicted as being in time of troubles that could have very negative effects on Ukraine. Problems were pointed out such as the lack of democracy, the high dependence on oil incomes, the lack of freedom of speech, the corruption. From the point of view of this population, although Russia is culturally and economically closer to Ukraine, the European path could be seen as beneficial for improving these matters.

9) **Do you feel European?; Soviet?; Russian?; Ukrainian?; From Belgorod?; From Kharkov?; something else?; a mixed identity?**

Once again, several identities were highlighted simultaneously. Ukrainian with Russian roots, Jewish, Ukrainian, from Khrakov, Slav, European. The mixed identity was push forward in association to the activities of the people (*I am Ukrainian but because I study here, I feel that I come from Khrakov en if I am not born here*). One other very interesting answer was that the individual seek at becoming European while keeping Russian roots.

1) **What does the border between Ukraine and Russia represent for you in your everyday life? (Hints: Do you have relatives living across the border? Do you cross the border from time to time? For what purposes do you cross the border? Do you perceive it as a measure of security? A barrier in your life?)**

This population seems to be very concerned by the border. Crossing the border appears to be very relevant since most of the people interviewed have relatives across it. However, the border is seen as normal, needed and does not represent a barrier. But all of them expressed that controls at intersections do not represent the reality of socio-economic expectations. Interviewees especially made a distinction between private and economic (*work, services*) purposes. The exercise of an economic activity is thus hampered by the border process and is seen as a barrier. The boundary is perceived as needed for ensuring national security and for reasons of sovereignty but has nothing to do with the heavy process of controls on the population. Thus, the improvement of the quality of controls is seen as vital for this population. A clear distinction was therefore made about the need of the border and the annoyance that should not be supported by the citizens

2) **Do you feel that the location of the border between Ukraine and Russia is legitimate?**

   Why?

As suggested in the answers given to the first question, the legitimacy of the border is not contested (*The countries have established a normal mode of interaction without territorial claims*). The border as a designation of the state is required (*it* allows *adequate domestic policies to ensure public safety) (The boundary is the limit of sovereignty. In this case, it has been developed historically and does not pose any problems).* However, a strong feeling show that it does not meet the reality of the population' needs since the crossing appears to be opposed to the normal interaction of the population living in both states.

3) **What is more advantageous in Kharkov, what is more interesting in Belgorod?**
   Examples: prices, services, infrastructures, entrainements, etc.

This population perceives Kharkov as a metropolis offering wide range of prices and services. *The entertainment industry is generally more developed than in Belgorod.* Tourism in Kharkov is also seen as much more attractive than in Belgorod. Some answers pointed the fact that it is difficult to compare both cities because of the differences in age, organization of power and the location in different countries. The general acknowledgement is that although Kharkov is seen as an industrial, cultural and educational center; the Belgorod's level of development offers great possibilities in term of incomes and educational programs.

4) **For what reasons do you cross the border between Ukraine and Russia?**

The main reasons for crossing the border are visiting relatives and friends. Travel and tourism is seen as secondary. Other reasons mentioned were educational, scientific and commercial purposes.

5) **How connected do you feel with your municipal/regional and Euroregional authorities?**

The general perception of local and regional authorities is negative for several reasons. Despite the improvement of the city (new infrastructure), the system of check and balance was often underlined. The interaction with the electorate is seen as very weak with the over representation of wealthy people within the government on the contrary of a competences-based nomination. Some claims in favor of a self-governing system were mentioned because it would force the regional authorities to discharge themselves from public resopnsabities. The inability of the regions to take targeted decisions was underlines by several times.

For the Euroregion, only little information reached this population. One answer highlighted the difficulties for the Ukrainian regions to conduct policies in adequacy with the Russian ones because of the problematic of the attribution of competences within the regional authorities.

6) **Do you know what Slobozhanschyna is?**

Almost all the answers collected mention that Slobozhanschyna is a familiar term. For this population, it is a historical and cultural region. Some answers were more precise and defined the area as the settlement of the "free people". However, the term has never been associated to the Euroregion but it remains, in the mind of the people, a Ukrainian concept (*the historical name of the eastern region, which mainly includes Kharkov region and part of Sumy)* tied with some Russian components (*Kharkiv, Sumy, Belgorod*). The reference to the Cossack period was also stated often.

7) **How do you perceive the European orientation of Ukraine?**

In general, the orientation is perceived positively. But some divergences are worthy to be noted. Some answers claimed that Ukraine was already a European country by its spiritual and cultural indicators with only an economic catch up to realize. Other pointed that the European standards, even if they were perceived as higher in terms of economic wealth and way of life, did not fit to the Ukrainian ones that were still tied to the customs of Slavic people. Thus, a balanced approach is perceived as required for the Ukrainian orientation. For some, improvements are still to be realized in Ukraine but it does not mean that they must be done in a conflictive way with Russia.

8) **Is Ukraine in Europe, in Russia, both, somewhere else? Why this answer?**

From the point of view of mindset, the answers showed that this population considers being closer to Russia for several reasons. First the history (Soviet Union, Russian empire), the culture (East Slavic people), political and economic ties and because of the different relatives living in Russia. But a distinction was made about the actual interests of Ukraine that perceives Russia more as a raw energy supplier rather than a true ally (*The government keeps artificially distances with Russia).*

Interests are translated into desire: there *is a need to construct a nation that is equally in Europe and in Russia,* to develop relations in order *to take the best from both sides.* This relates to the way of life and the cultural legacy which are, for one respondent, to be dissociated from the geographical position of Ukraine.

9) **Do you feel European?; Soviet?; Russian?; Ukrainian?; From Belgorod?; From Kharkov?; something else?; a mixed identity?**

Here again, several different answers were given such as from Kharkov for the way of living, Ukrainian for the nationality, former citizen of the Soviet Union for the cultural legacy, Slav; … which indicates a great variety in this population's feelings

10) One extra question was given on four surveys. Normally, it would not have been integrated to the survey, but answers given revealed to be interesting.
If your had the choice, would be in favor of an integration of Kharkov Oblast in Russia ?

- I do not see the point; this will change the management, lifestyle, and infrastructure. Only a better cooperation is needed
- Of course, No !!!!!!! The country's sovereignty not be violated for the sake of economic gain.
- I believe that if it was the case, Ukraine's independence will be trampled. And the achievement of many generations of Ukrainians - my ancestors - will be reduced to zero.
- Kharkov is in Ukraine and we can talk only about cooperation.

Analysis

Note

The following analysis constitutes highlights of the recurrent ideas that appeared in the answers given to the survey. The analysis also attempts to see the relevant convergences and the divergences between the different groups such as the evolution of the different perceptions from one generation to another or the country based point of view. The analysis is realized with the purpose of supporting different ideas that seemed interesting to underline rather than being a comparative table. If one is interested purely in the comparative aspect, behind the statistical inference, one can dispose of the summary of answers presented above.

Questions

1) **What does the border between Ukraine and Russia represent for you in your everyday life? (Hints: Do you have relatives living across the border? Do you cross the border from time to time? For what purposes do you cross the border? Do you perceive it as a measure of security? A barrier in your life?)**

It is interesting to note that there is a difference of interpretation between the population of Belgorod and Kharkov. Thus, people from Belgorod tend to refer to the border as a physical marker with a strong element of pragmatism. On one hand, the border constitutes a barrier when it comes to the time-consuming character of the border. But on the other hand it is perceived rather as a crossing step between "two friendly nations". This feeling is re-enforced because the border marks the passage to the leisure, shopping areas (Especially on vacation periods).

This point is less experiences by the people of Kharkov that see less interest in Belgorod for these activities. The border is then lived as a step to family and friends. The Ukrainian youngsters showed fewer incentives to cross the border than their Russian siblings. But from the point of view of a "border as an attribute of the state", Ukrainian people are more willing to accept the border as natural and normal than people in Russia. Indeed, for them, the border represents the guarantee of Ukrainian independence and sovereignty which partly explains why they are more willing to accept the border regime. Therefore the Russian side seems to be less connected to the political symbolic of the border.

Consequently, on the topic of security, the controls are more contested by the Russian side. But a distinction has to be noted: for the overall population of the people interviewed it appears that the border does not represent the socio-economic aspiration of individuals. This suggests that a distinction and a clear improvement of the security measures with a differentiation for economic reasons of border crossing and private reasons.

2) **Do you feel that the location of the border between Ukraine and Russia is legitimate?**
   Why?

Because the different groups have different spontaneous approaches regarding the border, their perception of legitimacy has proven to be highly relying on their background experience.

Thus, the border between, Ukraine and Russia for the youngsters is legitimate as it represents the legacy given by the collapse of the Soviet Union even if the both sides acknowledge that it would be much more convenient without it because its contemporary physical experience goes against the will of the population.

When it comes to Russian people born before 1986, the approach is very different. They do not seem to perceive the border in a sovereignty matter but from the pragmatic point of view. This population does not accept the new conditions that arose from the erection of the border making the situation of people living on both sides unfair. Relatives, friends and business suffer from this fact.

But it is within the younger population on Kharkov that the border has marked minds the strongest. Showing less interest to cross the border than their Russian siblings, the idea that the border has increased the differences between inhabitants of Belgorod and Kharkov starts to grow. This is not the case for people born before 1986 in Ukraine for instance that perceives

the border as a legitimate attribute of Ukrainian independence but that does not accept its socio-economic repercussions on families and businesses.

3) What is more advantageous in Kharkov, what is more interesting in Belgorod?
Examples: prices, services, infrastructures, entrainements, etc.

While surveys often point out the differences of economic gradients between Belgorod and Kharkov, it seems that the perception of the individuals is different than the economic attractiveness. Generally, it is accepted and acknowledged that Belgorod has a higher standard in its quality of life, infrastructures and cleanness. But the younger population is clearly more attracted by Kharkov because it represents the dynamism of a metropolis with higher possibility of entertainment and personal achievement. For the Russian side, Kharkov clearly represents a market place much more interesting than in Belgorod.

For youngsters, Belgorod is appreciated mainly for its infrastructures but is also perceived as being more expensive than Kharkov. This probably explains why the Ukrainian youngsters have less incentive to cross the border other than for purposes of family visits and tourism further in Russia.

It is mainly the people born before 1986 who perceive advantages in Belgorod because of the rapidity of its development in the past decades. Even if Kharkov is mainly considered as the cultural and industrial center, Belgorod is perceived as more and more attractive in for economic relations by the "active" population in Ukraine.

All in all, the two cities are marked by a difference in the way of life they proposed. Thus, Kharkov's qualities are the dynamism, cheaper prices, and cultural development while Belgorod is comparatively seen as a country side town offering a more quiet way of life but rewarded with higher quality in the public services or in the incomes offered in the city.

4) **For what reasons do you cross the border between Ukraine and Russia?**

In general, one reason of crossing is for visiting friends and relatives which apply to all targeted groups. However, the border is used by the four targeted populations rather differently. For Russian youngsters, there is a great incentive to cross the border for enjoying the lower prices offered by Kharkov. This element is shared by the population born before 1986 on the Russian side as well while the commercial purpose is only shared by the Ukrainian people born before 1986. Thus, it shows that the younger Ukrainians have way less interest to cross the border and that they have to deal with a border that, not in its physical or psychic attributes, plays the role of a container of usages.

5) How connected do you feel with your municipal/regional and Euroregional authorities?

In general, the level of connection between the population and the Euroregional authorities is extremely low. Most of them are not aware of their existence and when they are, they do not know what they are doing.

Regarding the regional and local authorities, people in Russia seem to be happier regarding their situation which can be explained by the good development Belgorod is having for the past decades.

Younger people in Belgorod seem to be less critical to their local and regional authorities than in Kharkov. The feeling that their opinions is not taken into account is shared across the border for the youngsters but in Kharkov it is a fierce element of opposition that is raised against the governor. This distance with the people is also underlined by the people born before 1986 in Kharkov. Thus, the lack of competences and the presence of clientelism were stated in both populations.

6) Do you know what Slobozhanschyna is?

On the Russian side, the name Slobozhanschyna is not widely spread. Most of the population, youngsters and older people, is not aware of this term. Although some evolution can be seen among the youngsters that showed more knowledge about this concept (due to the Euroregion), the majority remains unaware of it.

It is not the case in Ukraine where the word evokes the historical and geographical area that covered regions of Ukraine and Russia. Most of the time, the reference to the Cossacks era was made to define the term. Thus, Slobozhanschyna is a term that is widely known in Ukraine but it appears that its association to the "Euroregion of Slobozhanschyna" is rather inconsistent.

7) How do you perceive the European orientation of Ukraine?

On this matter, the European orientation is generally perceived as fine or as neutral. People do not seem to be affected by the European choice of Ukraine. But a distinction is to be made since many people underlined their positive attitude could change if it would harm the relationship between Ukraine and Russia. On the Russian side, a lot of people mentioned the divided nature of Ukraine which justifies a European approach. But it also underlines that if Western Ukraine seeks at a closer relationship with the EU, Eastern Ukraine has the right to favor the Russian choice.

From another point of view the European choice is not contested but the Western approach is. The presence of NATO closer to Ukrainian deciding circles is perceived as a threat for the relationship at the border between the people of Russia and Ukraine because it has the potential to affect the normal relationship between "two friendly nations". Thus, it was important to make a distinction, from the military point of view, in the mind of the people when they were interviewed by what meant the European orientation.

On the Ukrainian side, the balance relationship is also represented. But the perception that Ukraine is not a European power was dominant among the younger people and that its orientation should not forget Russia. Thus, it is widely acknowledge that the EU has the capacity to bring various benefits to Ukraine which is welcome positively by the Ukrainian youngsters. But by the culture, feelings of cultural belonging to a Russia are dominant. Again, the apparent division within the country is an element that must be taken into consideration making the European integration accepted as long as it does not hampered the relations with Russia. Hence the accession of Ukraine to NATO is also perceived negatively.

This opinion was also shared by the Ukrainians born before 1986 that perceives the European standards and values different than the customs that used to tie the Eastern Slavic people and the traditions inherited from the Soviet Union. But others underlined the European character of Ukraine as a natural factor for a country located between Russia and Ukraine. These people highlighted the higher benefits that Ukraine could gain by getting closer to the EU but it remains that relationships with Russia are perceived as required for the region of Kharkov which is tied by economic relations with Russia.

8) Is Ukraine in Europe, in Russia, both, somewhere else? Why this answer?

The general tendencies of the answers given to the question indicate that Ukraine, in people's minds, is considered as being closer from Russia because of the cultural similarities and a common historical past. But on the Russian side, the division of Ukraine between West and East is an aspect that is strongly present in people's mind. Thus, the West part of Ukraine is widely perceived as opposed to Russia on one topic or another (one can think about the religious orientation for instance).

The closeness of Russia to Eastern Ukraine is strongly defended by the common culture (for example the same language) and the common traditions and way of life. The reference to the Soviet period is also an important factor for the people born before 1986 on both side of the border.

The long historical past and the Soviet Union were seen as determinant for considering the geographical position of Ukraine. But regarding the relationship at the country level, Ukrainian people are more willing to consider Ukraine on the path to Europe as a complement to the Russian dependences Ukraine had to face in its relationship with Russia. For the people of Kharkov, Europe is therefore a Ukrainian desire rather than a Ukrainian reality.

9) Do you feel European?; Soviet?; Russian?; Ukrainian?; From Belgorod?; From Kharkov?; something else?; a mixed identity?

A broad range of feelings are to be registered. As supported by precedent studies, the answers given to this questions are various on both sides of the border. The majority referred to Russian, Ukrainian ones according to their place of birth or living which demonstrates that an evolution is possible and that the question of identity is not fixed. Hence, according to their place of living, people identified themselves with the town of residence on the contrary of their "national" identity.

Some also referred to a broader identity such as Slav, European or a mixed identity with Russian roots. But no one mentioned a common identity combining Kharkov and Belgorod which are seen as different centers representing respectively Ukraine or Russia. This is interesting because it shows that the myth of a common past that bounds closely the two cities is not spread among the population. Thus, the conception of cross-border identity within the two oblasts must not be characterized as being borderless. This indicates that the border is a relevant fact in the constitution of the cross-border identity which must seek at integrating its use by its population in order to be successful.