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Sergey Pakhomenko,

*Assoc. Prof. Dr. of international relations and foreign policy
Mariupol State University, Ukraine*

Maria Podybaylo,

*senior lecturer of international relations and foreign policy
Mariupol State University, Ukraine*

**“UKRAINIAN NATIONALISM” VS “PATRIOTISM OF DONBAS”:
THE WITHSTAND OF THE MEDIA IMAGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY
INFORMATION SPACE OF DONETSK DISTRICT**

From the point of view of geography, Donbass (the Donets Coal-Mining Fields) is an industrial region in East Ukraine. It includes Donetsk District, a part of Dnepropetrovsk and Lugansk Districts.

In the Ukrainian socio-cultural, social and political contexts, Donbass is an area that includes Donetsk and Lugansk Districts.

Taking into consideration the economic role of Donetsk District, the local media often mean just Donetsk District when they write about Donbass.

Donbass is one of the most industrialized and urbanized regions of Ukraine.

About one sixth of Ukraine’s population lives there. One fourth of the country’s industrial products are made in Donbass as well. In particular, there are more than 2000 industrial businesses of the coal-mining, the iron & steel and the chemical industries as well as businesses involved in power engineering, machine-building and production of structural materials. There are also more than 300 deposits of mineral resources¹.

The ethnic content of Donbass as well as that of Donetsk District presents a great interest. It is one of the districts where most of the population is ethnic Russians. The number of the Russian population in the district (one million 844 thousand people, which equals 38 per cent of the entire population of Donbass) is just a little bit lower than that of the Ukrainians (2 744, 56, 9 %). Besides, the region is also inhabited by Greeks (1, 61) Byelorussians (0, 92 %), Tatars, Armenians, Jews, Azeri and others. In spite of the dominance of the Ukrainians, most of the population is Russian-speaking people (75 %)².

Historically, Donbass is a very influential region of Ukraine. Its influence is very great, which gives us every reason to speak about the regional identity of Donbass.

¹ Загальні відомості про Донеччину /Офіційний веб-сайт Донецької обласної державної адміністрації [online]. [Цит. 30.9.2012]. - <http://www.donoda.gov.ua/main/ua/185.htm>

² Національний склад та рідна мова населення Донецької області. За даними Всеукраїнського перепису населення 2001 року. Статистичний збірник // Відповідальні за випуск В. Шабанова, С. Нарушевич. – Донецьк, Донецьке обласне управління статистики. – 23 с.

The main markers of that identity, if viewed concentrically, look as follows: the Ukrainian-Russian bi-ethnicity (the dual nature of identification, vagueness of the barrier between the Ukrainian and the Russian identities), dominance of the Russian language, the industrial type of culture, sincere respect for the Soviet past and its symbols (it was in the Soviet times that the economic and the cultural potentials of Donbass were being formed. Before the Soviet rule, Donetsk, the capital of the region, was a dirty settlement inhabited by factory workers. Under the Soviet rule, it became one the USSR's biggest industrial, scientific and cultural centers.), complementarities for the Russian history and state. Further interpretation of these key peculiarities and explanations to them lead to the following three major cultural discourses, in the framework of which attempts are made to explain the regional identity of Donbass and the prospects of its development.

1. The region-centric discourse

Donbass is a specific region of Ukraine with a well-affirmed regional identity. Life under the Ukrainian rule is a brand new “starting” social practice, which has no analogs in history. The specificity of Donbass cannot be understood as hostility towards Ukraine. One should understand that it is the natural product of the complicated process of the region's development. One should never ignore the natural character of that product. Nor should anyone try to “re-adjust” Donbass to the general cultural pattern. Instead, one should carefully treat the region's specificity and reject the very idea of imposing such irritating symbols as OUN (The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists)³, Bandera⁴, the Ukrainian Rebellion Army⁵, etc. One should look for the uniting factors in the present time instead of looking for them in the past.

Vulgarization of the region's specificity brings about affirmation in the regional consciousness of the notorious feeling of regional patriotism, belief in its dominance, unchangeability and un-arguable belief in the slogan “Donbass feeds the whole Ukraine”.

2. The Russia-centric discourse.

Donbass is alien to Ukraine. Donbass is a part of the Great Russian world captivated by the trap made by the Ukrainian state. Donbass will always resist the imposition of foreign values and symbols. There is no future for Donbass in the state that has been built in Ukraine since 1991, and the prospects of finding solution to the problem of the collision of the Ukrainian and the Russian cultures lies in a drastic change of the vector of the Ukrainian governance towards integration with Russia as well as in the resolute rejection of such ideas as “Ukrainianization”, “autonomization” of the region or separation from Ukraine.

³ The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. Formed in 1929. Fought against Polish authorities in Western Ukraine, during the World War II against German occupation, then against the Soviet authorities in Western Ukraine. Has the unfavorable reputation in Eastern Ukraine.

⁴ Stepan Bandera (1909 – 1959) – The OUN leader

⁵ The Ukrainian Rebellion Army (UPA)- the armed band of The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists during the World War II and the first postwar decade.

3. The Ukraine-centric discourse

Donbass is a “Russified” region with a great number of rudimentary Soviet views and values. Among them are the Soviet view of the history, the role of the Russian language in the social life and the qualities of “Homo Sovieticus”: national paternalism, un-arguable belief in the government and imposition on the government of such functions as ensuring the public welfare and social benefits. Besides, Donbass is the region where the pro-Russian separatist ideas are very much popular. It is the region which hinders the national construction in Ukraine and where the Ukraine-conscious forces are the marginal elements. In this discourse, the solution to the problem of Donbass fluctuates from the insistence on a stricter “Ukrainianization” of the region and its accession to the cultural field of the Ukrainian state to the recently verbalized suggestion that Donbass be given an opportunity to separate itself from Ukraine⁶.

Having the concept of the regional specificity as well as the concept of the variants of interpretation, one can consider the way the withstand of such ideological trends as the Ukrainian nationalism and the patriotism of Donbass emerged. One of the greatest roles in the formation and in the dissemination of this ideological withstand were played by mass media.

In the post-Soviet scientific and lingual trend, the term “nation” often contains an “ethnic” shade of meaning. This causes a nation to be interpreted as a cultural rather than a purely political community united by its ethnic origin. Accordingly, “nationalism” is understood as an ideology and as a practice, which determines priority of one ethnic nation over all others. As regards to typology, this brings the term closer to such concepts as “xenophobia” or “chauvinism”. To a certain extent, this understanding of a nation dates back to the scientific and ideological doctrines of the Soviet period.

In the Soviet Ukraine, the term “Ukrainian nationalism” was the central one in the pantheon of anti-Soviet images used as a political label meant to typify the ethno-national movements as well as to characterize any manifestations of opposition to the policy carried out by the Communist party in the field of national issues⁷. It was “Soviet internationalism” that was contrasted to “Ukrainian nationalism”.

In analyzing the media space of Donetsk District of 1990-2000, we found out that during the first decade of Ukraine’s independence, cherishing the image of Ukrainian nationalism in Donbas had primarily been the prerogative of marginal pro-Russian or communist mass media who denied the very idea of Ukraine’s independence.

⁶ Андрухович виступає за відокремлення Криму і Донбасу / Інтернет-видання «Українська правда» [online]. [Цит. 30.9.2012]. - <http://life.pravda.com.ua/technology/2010/07/23/55089/>

⁷ Касьянов Г. Теорії нації та націоналізму / Нарис 9. Український націоналізм. [online]. [Цит. 30.9.2012]. - <http://litopys.org.ua/kasian/kas14.htm>

As the regional economic and the political elites of Donbas were becoming stronger, the image of “Ukrainian nationalism” was becoming a tool meant to mobilize the electorate and to discredit the political opponents. This predetermined a much wider use of the image as well as its appearance in the district’s most respected periodicals controlled by the local political community. In the conditions of the regional split of the country’s political and ideological forces, “Ukrainian nationalism” was reanimated as a merely negative image linked with ethnic and cultural disgust. It also became the basic element in the set of views and values existing in West Ukraine, which are presented by the Donetsk elite’s propagandists as inadequate for (or even hostile to) the country’s east. Among them are such manifestations as Ukraine-centric interpretation of history, recognition of the Ukrainian Nationalist Association, the Ukrainian Rebellion Army and S. Bandera as heroes, attachment of priority to the Ukrainian language, criticism of the Soviet heritage and creation of an artificial precipice between Ukraine and Russia.

In the course of the pre-election campaign of 2004, these markers of nationalism were for the first time united into a pattern of political technology, into a chain of associations connecting the political opponent with a certain region and, at the same time, in the way inadequate for Donbass: West Ukraine – the Ukrainian Nationalist Association and the Ukrainian Rebellion Army (pro-Bandera NGOs) – Ukrainian nationalism – fascism – President Yushenko.

The main role in the dissemination of that image of the Ukrainian nationalism was played by the Russia-centric and by a number of the region-centric mass media. The Ukraine-centric discourse is presented very partially/ it constitutes just a small fraction of the entire informational space.

There are some quotes of the Pro-Russian Donetsk region media of this period.

“The nationalist propaganda very well prints in Galitchina⁸ residents’ mentality, which hates half-carved hints, in the mentality which sees things black and white: the friends are all here and the enemies are all there. It is They who is to blame for our poor living standards. Eliminate them! And your life will become better»⁹. “Galitchina residents direct their energy towards “national upbringing” of the Ukrainians. They want to see Ukraine as “a big Galitsia”. They convince others that hate for the Muscovites and

⁸ Galitsia (Galitchina) – historical and geographical region in the Western Ukraine. Today it unite 3 administrative units – Lvov, Ivano-Frankovsk and Ternopol Regions. Since the end of the 19th century Galicia played thy distinguished and important part in the articulation of Ukrainian independence idea, and during the World War II was the principal action territory for the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and The Ukrainian Insurgent Army. In the awareness of substantive part of the Eastern Ukraine residents the Galicia is interpreted as the stronghold of the Ukrainian nationalism, peculiar socio-cultural antagonist of Donbass.

⁹ Ivanon A. „Galician variant of „democracy”. (The interview with the resident of Lvov Andrey Nikonov)/ A. Ivanov/ - *Donetsk Kryazh*, Nov 19–25 (2004).

for the Russians is the distinctive feature of “the truly Ukrainian citizen”. They explain to “the eastern pseudo-Ukrainians” that they are also Ukrainian, spoilt by Russification.”¹⁰

The Donetsk mass media have no doubt that the attempts to impart the nationalistic views on history to Donetsk will have no success.

«That is the way our country is built. Roman Shuhevitch¹¹ will never become a hero in Lugansk or in Donetsk. Nor will the members of “the Young Guard” ever become heroes in Lvov or in Ivano-Frankovsk” – says “Ostrov”, a web-portal¹². «All this is doomed to die due to a different format of the culture typical of the residents of Donbass or the Crimea, for example” – says “Don and Bas Saloon”, a newspaper¹³. M. Litvinov, a correspondent of the aforementioned newspaper, expresses this idea in a more simple and straightforward manner: “the nationalists will never understand that the east of Ukraine has a truth of its own”¹⁴.

The main «sin» the Ukrainian nationalists are accused of is the imposition of their view of the country’s development and ignorance of the pro-Russian peculiarities of the culture in South-East Ukraine. In a number of mass media, the policy pursued by the nationalists is presented in more detail. Thus, the nationalists do not make it possible for the world to hear Donbass speak up and demonstrate the image of “an alternative Ukraine”. Here is the pattern of the extremely primitive reasons on this subject.

“The nationalists are keeping a watchful eye. Every day they carry out their activities and achieve a greater success than we do. As long as we pride ourselves in telling others about the purity of Donbass people, they are learning English and, in speaking it fluently, telling their foreign interlocutors about their Ukraine. (???? What the purity of Donbass people IS... is known only to the author of this article- author's note.) As long we are using our body language, unable to make even three words come easy, to explain that they are wrong, they procure for internships with foreign mass media as well as with foreign foundations and other agencies just in order to tell them about their country and about the

¹⁰ Nikitin N. „The peculiarity of Galician messianism ”/N. Nikitin/ *Priazovskiy Rabachiy*, Nov 9 (2004).

¹¹ Роман Шухевич (1907- 1950) – командир Украинской повстанческой армии

¹² Гусаков В. В Луганске прошла презентация «Очерков истории Украины»: Добро пожаловать в Малороссию?, *ОстроВ* [online]. [Цит. 20.9.2010]. – <http://www.ostro.org/articles/article-123786/>

¹³ Миркин С. Исторические сказки апельсинового режима, *Салон Дона и Баса* [online]. [Цит. 17.2.2009]. – <http://www.salon.donetsk.ua/rubrics/8643.php>

¹⁴ Литвинов В. «Свобода» без инакомыслия, *Салон Дона и Баса* [online] . [Цит. 24.4.2008]. – <http://www.salon.donetsk.ua/rubrics/5068.php>

walk of life to be chosen on a qualitatively higher level. As long as we are working, they are walking down the streets of New York and tell every person they meet in the middle of the street about the heroic warriors of the Ukrainian Rebellion Army or about the starving lives of the Ukrainian martyrs”¹⁵.

Sometimes an interview seems to be just an excuse to show the journalists their views or even to boast of having firm grounds. Thus, while interviewing Academician S. Tolochko, I. Rebrov was very straightforward and impartial:

*“The residents of West Ukraine differ from us. They are people whose values are hostile to ours. Those who killed the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian nations, those who killed our grandfathers are their heroes. They consider the Soviet soldiers, the winners, our ancestors, who annihilated various “Suchevitches”, “Banderas” and other “fuhrers” as if they were wild beasts to be just a stupid herd of cattle that was brought by Stalin to the slaughter farm. They erect monuments to commemorate Bandera bandits who killed Orthodox priests, doctors and teachers. They impose ban on our language and destroy our religion. Meanwhile, they live on the subsidies South-East Ukraine earns for them. Should Ukraine, as a result of a crisis – political, economic or military – appear to be about to split into two parts, could it be possible to preserve the country, where one part hates, humiliates and burgles the other?”*¹⁶

This pattern of political technology, like West Ukraine – the Ukrainian Nationalist Association and the Ukrainian Rebellion Army (pro-Bandera NGOs) – Ukrainian nationalism – fascism – President Yuschenko.) was used in mass media and in the following pre-election campaigns. The difference lay only in the person nominated as the political opponent.

“A woman born in Dnepropetrovsk became a sincere follower of those who had committed crimes against the mankind, members of the Ukrainian Nationalist Organization and the Ukrainian Rebellion Army. She also became an opponent to the federal arrangement of Ukraine. Although there is also another aspect, which compels her to support the given basic nationalist ideologemmes not only through the purely tactical observations. Making heroes of the Ukrainian Nationalist Organization and the Ukrainian Rebellion Army makes it possible to insert into the public consciousness the reliable practice of totalitarian behavior tested by Bandera followers as a mode of political

¹⁵ Противный В. Почему они нас когда-нибудь победят, или Исключительно субъективный взгляд на украинский национализм, Комитет избирателей Донбасса [online]. [Цит. 2. 02. 2009]. - http://zadonbass.org/news/hot/message_110?sphrase_id=22773

¹⁶ Ребров И. Петр ТОЛОЧКО: Из Украины делают Великую Галичину [online]. [13.11. 2009] - <http://dkr.com.ua/index.php?new=14085>.

regime. It also makes it possible to introduce repressions justified by the necessity of “protecting the nation”¹⁷.

At the same time, the antipode image, opposed to Ukrainian nationalism and endowed with the opponent strategy, adequate for and clear to Donbas, was being molded. Thus the image of the regional patriotism of Donbas emerged. Its design was based on such peculiarities of the regional identity as Russian-Ukrainian bi-ethnicity (dual identification, vague and obscure boundary between the Russian and the Ukrainian ethnicities), dominance of the Russian language, the industrial type of culture, the sincere cherishing of the Soviet past and its symbols, complementarities towards the Russian history and the Russian state.

The delicate method of introducing the image of Donbas patriotism into the public consciousness reveals itself in emphasizing the uniqueness of the region, its economic might and sport records as well as in criticizing the attempts of disseminating the Ukraine-centric matrix there.

“Really, we are different, both the young and the old, men and women, those believing in God and the atheists, the Russian-speaking and the Ukrainian-speaking ones. But we are united just by one thing – we are the people of Donbass. We were born here and we are living here. This is the way the whole Ukraine as well as the CIS countries understand us. This is the way the whole world understands us. In spite of all our achievements, they despised us, thinking they had the right to make decisions instead of us: to decide on who should be our friend, what language we shall speak and to what church we must go.... We are the residents of Donbass and the patriots. We are the people of Donbass-shaped character and strong will. We have every right to be proud of our region, where there is everything for it to become the capital of the informal culture”¹⁸.

The Honor Consul of Armenia in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions Suren Asatryan underlines the internationalism of Donbass

«This is a wonderful region, where representatives of various nations live in peace and harmony. It seems to me that a brand new ethnos has recently emerged in Donbass – the ethnos of Donbass. By the way, I am also a representative of this ethnos. I have been living here already for 27 years. Ukraine has become my next motherland. Victor Yanukovitch, your compatriot, is a strong and bright personality, a true ingot who has brought himself up; he is a wise leader. He is the Man. He was brought up inside the nation. He is very complimentary to the Armenians...»¹⁹.

¹⁷ Жаров А. Диктатура матки, КИД (Комитет избирателей Донбасса [online]. [Цит. 1.2.2010]. – http://zadonbass.org/news/hot/message_6734?sphrase_id=23024

¹⁸ Иванов А. „Не подведем Донбасс”/ А. Иванов/ - Донецкий краж. 2004, 19-25 ноября.

¹⁹ Корец Я. . Сурен Асатрян: Все любят коньяк «Арапат», а вот саму гору мало кто видел. (Интервью с почетным консулом Республики Армения в Донецкой и Луганской областях Суреном Асатряном) / Я. Корец / 2004, с. 25.

Vulgarization of Donbas's specificity caused the hypertrophic feeling of the regional patriotism to creep into the public consciousness. It brought about the belief in dominance and uniqueness, the belief in the slogan "Donbas feeds the entire Ukraine", especially the backward "nationalist" West.

"According to the Finance Ministry, Ivano-Frankovsk District spends 43,6 per cent more than it earns, Ternopol District spends 41,1 per cent more than it earns, and Chernovtsy District spends 26,7 per cent more than it earns. It is the donor districts that provide for the dependants: Donetsk, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhe, Kharkov and Odessa Districts. This means that the residents of East Ukraine rob themselves of huge funds in order to help the pensioners and the teachers in West Ukraine governed by "our dear nationalist friends". Meanwhile, the local propagandists allot these funds for the expensive provocations. Maybe, it makes no sense to distribute the money earned as a result of hard work? Maybe, it will cause the wages of a coal-miner living in Donbass to become much higher than the wages of an official living in Kiev or than those of a loafer living in Halytchina."²⁰

In summing up the results of the "orange" rule²¹ Rima Fil, Editor-in-Chief of "News from Donetsk", was sincere enough to quote the contemporary myths of Donbass. She writes that in the eyes of state power, *"The «criminal» Donbass was always viewed as a «criminal» region, though it always fed everyone very regularly to be left with nothing at all: with no budget, with no underground tube in the district's capital, with no bonus pays added to the wages for hard work and health hazard. And once again the region's people are doomed to suffer from cancer and tuberculosis. At the same time, others were rewriting the history, ruling out the existing heroes and inserting others in order to make heroes out of them. Those heroes were not ours. But we were keeping silent. And now our teachers are telling our children the truth in a low voice: the truth about the War, the truth about Stalingrad and the truth about the blockade of Leningrad. Besides our teachers ask our children never to give answers of the sort at the time of the State Independent Testing of School-Leavers. Though in fact, education is not very much valued nowadays"*²².

The right-wing version of the "the patriotism of Donbass" is concentrically contained in the ideology of Donbass Rus Association. This association has no official connections with the leading political forces or with the clergy. But it is very well

²⁰ Ребров И. Берег левый, берег правый / И. Ребров/. – Донецкий кряж, 2004, 12–18 января.

²¹ Orange rule – the period of Viktor Jushenko's presidency (2005-2009), when Donetsk regional elite was in opposition.

Ребров И. Берег левый, берег правый.... Ibid.

²² Филь Р. Моя особиста «опінія» или Когда так сильно хочется власти, *Донецкие новости* [online]. [Цит. 12.2.2010]. <http://dnews.donetsk.ua/blogs/16/2010/02/12/89.html>

represented in the local governments of Ukraine. And reveals the great political activity, relying on the developed informational infrastructure. The attempt to formulate a kind of ideology of Donbass patriotism that has contradictory and partly speculative features.

«Like some other regions of Ukraine, Donbass is alien to Ukraine. Therefore all the attempts of adapting it to the patterns developed in Kiev or in Lvov are doomed to fall flat. Moreover, those attempts would cause irreparable damage. That is where the trap is: on the one hand, no attempts of political separation will lead to any good; on the other hand, the destruction of our regional identity as well as the attempts of making us economic slaves (I deem it noteworthy to remind people of the notorious principles of distribution of the revenues in favor of the nation's capital) are going on very successfully. If it goes on this way, we will soon disappear both as the holder of the culture and as the maker of the politics. We will turn into "an eastern territory", whose population will have no pride of its own. Therefore, until it is too late, let us recall such a concept as "the patriotism of Donbass". What does it mean to be a patriot of Donbass today? First of all, it means to play things straight. To play things straight means to understand that Donbass has the Russian sou as well as to understand that the history of Donbass is the Russian history. It is not that the region's history is of "the imperialistic Russian' character. The thing is that the regions' history dates back directly to the Kievan Rus times. Like the Crimea, Donbass was once made a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic exactly due to the administrative, rather than due to the historical or the cultural observations. This does not mean that we bring any claims on Ukraine. It is just a true fact that Donbass is a Russian region, which must be understood and taken into consideration. - Besides in spite of the common parlance concerned with the "multinational character" of Ukraine, it is the Russian population of the country that is sure enough to integrate itself into the Ukrainian culture (into the West-Ukrainian culture, if we speak more precisely). They do it by means of uprooting the historical memory, by means of swapping the language and by cultural falsifications. Every Russian-speaking person living in Ukraine is understood by the state power as a potential Ukrainian citizen. Therefore our efforts aimed at preservation of our national identity are becoming the priority target. We are Russian. Donbass is a multinational Russian-speaking region (the Greeks, the Tatars and other nationalities also live here). There is no controversy about that, because there must always be a nationally-based backbone.

We are not "the fifth column" of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Our patriotism is not "commercially based". Our patriotism is natural, sincere and very local. For us to be Russian means to be the ones we are and never to accede to the Russian Federation. The politics are not very much important here. Yet, it is no longer a secret to anyone that it is always difficult to be Russian in Russia...

To crown it all, our targets are as follows:

- *to restore and preserve the Russian principles, namely the principles pertaining to Donbass residents, such as*
 - *Orthodoxy;*
 - *Russian culture from the pre-Kievan Rus until nowadays;*
 - *Russian language as the language of communication and cultural life;*
 - *Economic justice towards the revenues earned by the region;*
 - *protection of the interests of Donbass, our motherland, for ever and ever;*
- *Donbass is Russian forever!*
*Donbass is ours forever!*²³

Thus, in following the political ambitions of the regional elite and in appreciating the values of Donbas's population, the local mass media promote preservation and development of "the Soviet pattern" of the ideological image of Ukrainian nationalism. The main elements of that image, such as xenophobia and disgust, as well as the trend based on identifying certain manifestations of national identity which have nothing to do with right-wing ethno-nationalist views (recognition of the Great Famine in Ukraine as genocide towards the Ukrainian nation, for example) as nationalist ones are being reanimated. A brand new manifestation, hitherto unknown in the Soviet era, is emphasis laid on attributing nationalism to West Ukraine. The role of antipode to Ukrainian nationalism is now played by "Donbas patriotism", not by "Soviet internationalism".

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²³ Официальный сайт общественной организации «Донбасская Русь». <http://donbassrus.dn.ua/about.php>