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THE POLICY OF EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION AS A KEY FACTOR FOR UKRAINE'S TRANSFORMATION

Abstract. The article explores the practice perspectives of European and Euro-Atlantic integration for the West's Eastern neighbours with a focus on Ukraine in the main directions of cooperation: political, economic, security, and communication. It has been established that Eastern Partners show a dissimilar political interest in rapprochement with the EU and NATO due to the existence of different foreign policy goals. The EU's Association Agreements with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova are primarily aimed at defending the European integration, so the states are interested in developing close trade relations, and in achieving open and sustainable economic growth. The results have shown that Ukraine's deepening Euro-Atlantic ties are a continuation of the European course of the state's development, since the interaction with the EU and NATO aims to expand transatlantic relations and create updated security formats. The article also analyses the mechanisms of improving the efficiency of the communication between the EU, NATO and Ukraine by informing the public about the progress of Ukraine's integration into relevant structures, the reforms of the economic and security sectors of Ukraine, and its participation in the Alliance's non-military initiatives. The findings suggest that the improvement of public communication tools increases the involvement of governments in implementing integration policy goals and identifying issues that need a further response. Additionally, the Ukrainian government should strategically focus on ensuring and implementing practical measures aimed at shaping the image of Ukraine as an intent partner that adheres to its political commitments.

Key words: integration, media mentions, Eastern Partnership, EU, NATO, Ukraine.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The prospects for European and Euro-Atlantic integration are seen as a process of deepening transformations, which include the emergence of new leaders, new challenges for supranational governance, and new approaches to defining foreign and security policies, considering new threats to the regional peace and stability. Despite some issues, a united Europe seeks to achieve more viable economic and social foundations for its development, as well as demonstrates the ability of European states to find ways to overcome a crisis and promote further EU stability through strengthening interactions with European neighbours and security cooperation within NATO. The practices of European and Euro-Atlantic integrations are considered in the context of Ukraine's transformation through the state's involvement in security and defence, economy and energy, and science and innovation projects of the EU and NATO, as well as the inclusion in the European neighbourhood system.

The purpose of the paper is to explore the practice of European and Euro-Atlantic integration for the West's Eastern neighbours with a focus on Ukraine in such directions of cooperation as political, economic, security, and communication: the political direction includes the continued development of democracy and civil society in the Eastern neighbours, and the support of political dialogue and regional collaboration; the economic direction covers the consistent economic integration of the associate countries to the EU internal market and the creation of a common economic space; the security direction embraces the cooperation on defence issues, conflict prevention, the interaction in the field of counterterrorism, and the collaboration to prevent extremism and radicalisation; the communication direction relates to ensuring a positive perception of mutual initiatives and overcoming disinformation. However, the consensus on cooperation reached by the EU and NATO member states encompasses an individual approach to each partner country.

This paper is one of the systemic studies of European and Euro-Atlantic integration issues of Ukraine where we present our insights on the state's reform process. In the pages that follow, the political, economic, security, and communication backgrounds of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration for the Eastern neighbours and Ukraine are considered. In addition, the paper explores the efficiency of the government's actions to inform the public about the progress in Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations by analysing international and Ukrainian media space for the 2013–2020 period.

2. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH FINDINGS

The analysis of foreign and Ukrainian research findings has shown that the transformation of Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic policy in the 21st century has become a priority of the foreign policy doctrine of the Eastern Partnership countries, which

influenced the regional alignment of forces and interests. The current studies are devoted to examining the features of the development of Ukraine's cooperation with the EU and NATO in the framework of strengthening the country's international status, counteracting the spread of negative perceptions about Ukraine, and ensuring an appropriate information support of international initiatives.

Among the foreign studies on European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Eastern neighbours and Ukraine, most noteworthy were the studies by L. Brent (2019), N. Jennings (2019), U. Kühn (2018), and A. Mehta (2020) that analysed the political and security strategies in the context of integration, as well as the impact of European security imperatives on maintaining stability in the region. We also highlight a regional civil society platform "The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum" that created the Eastern Partnership Index (2017) for the presentation of the progress of six Eastern Partnership countries in the context of their European integration aspirations.

The attitudes of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and the expectations from the Eastern Partnership countries towards the issues of interaction within the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU and NATO Enlargement Policy have been presented in the research by M. Celewicz, M. Nizioł-Celewicz (2006), C. Williams, J. Round (2007), T. Shaban (2018), M. Barwiński (2019), K. Kakachia, B. Lebanidze and V. Dubovyk (2019), as well as in the publications of the Kosciuszko Institute (2011).

Among the Ukrainian research findings on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of the Eastern neighbours and Ukraine, the most significant have included the studies by S. Voitko and M. Kokoruz (2015) on the changes of the macroeconomic situation in the EU and Ukraine after 2014 and the military actions in eastern regions of the state; by O. Moskalenko and V. Streltsov (2015) on a historical aspect of the development of the EU-Ukraine relations; by O. Shnyrkov, O. Rogach and O. Chugaiev (2015) on the evidence of the economic and political impact of the EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas on the relations with Russia; and by V. Kopyika, M. Doroshko, O. Kondratenko *et al.* (2012) on the political, legal, economic, and information aspects of Ukraine's relations with the European Union.

The contemporary attitude of the population of Ukraine to the EU and NATO has been presented in the framework of the study "Security Passport of Ukraine: National and Regional Dimensions" (2020) prepared by the civil organisation Center for International Security and the National Institute for Strategic Studies with the support of the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Ukraine. The modern challenges and forecasts for 2020, as well as the public opinion trends on Ukraine's foreign policy activities, have been investigated by researchers of the Razumkov Centre (Yakymenko *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, the Government Office for the Coordination of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine prepared the publication "The European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine" (2019) which described the peculiarities of the implementation of the European and Euro-Atlantic course at the

level of Ukrainian authorities. Our research provides a valuable contribution to the study of the perception of Ukraine's Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic policy by foreign and Ukrainian public.

Thus, the expansion of research on the perception of Ukraine as a component of European civilization and the formation of its European identity is of great importance for Ukraine's integration into the international political space. The main approach to this study of Ukraine's EU-NATO cooperation has been to examine the awareness of threats, as well as the Western and Ukrainian public opinion trends with regard to the cooperation's development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper uses a descriptive and interpretative approach, which has enabled a documentary and institutional analysis and interpretation of the data within the study. Online tools such as Google Trends (2020) and Media Cloud (2020a) were used to establish the perception of Ukraine's Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic policy by residents of other countries and Ukrainians by analysing international and Ukrainian media space within the 2013–2020 period. The level of audience awareness, the main political and media actors, as well as the peculiarities of regional information dissemination were identified.

The main advantage of Google Trends is regular data updating according to political, economic, and social categories, which enables the identification of trends of a search query, and comparison of search volumes per criteria, as well as demonstration of the impact of new events on search popularity. The increased interest in the topics of "Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement" and "Ukraine-NATO relations" opens exploration into the related issues and ideas for further analysis in Media Cloud.

Media Cloud is an open platform for examining online media space that enables the analysis of the dissemination and content of thematic stories and ideas. To identify the specificities of informing the international and Ukrainian communities concerning Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic and Euro-integration policies, such indicators as time periods, news content, regional distribution and formed narratives have been explored, revealing the essence of event interpretation, the involvement of political leaders and organisations, as well as revealing tendencies of media space imbalance in informing the public. We analysed the selected topics with the help of English and Ukrainian news collections formed in Media Cloud, in particular Europe Media Monitor, including 3,605 international and European media sources; Ukraine-National, including 270 media sources and Global Voices Online, including 12,377 media sources that belonged to the international blogosphere.

The above-mentioned online tools enabled us to identify the global media tendencies, understand the evolution of communication, and analyse how the research ideas circulate in the information space. These platforms (Rogers, 2016; Media Cloud, 2020b) contribute to the easing of the acquisition of statistical data and information that could be compared with other statistics at different time periods. The absolute numbers, ratios and average indicators enable regional and international comparability of data. To study specific metrics of the target audiences and to evaluate an online campaign the other online tools are be used.

4. POSITIVE PRACTICE OF EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION FOR THE EASTERN NEIGHBOURS IN THE MAIN AREAS OF COOPERATION

The European and Euro-Atlantic integration process for the Eastern neighbours is considered through the analysis of the main political, economic, security, and communication directions of cooperation, since a common vision and a unified approach to regional interaction are needed for addressing European issues (see Table 1). The attractiveness of the European integration policy for Member States, candidate countries and associated countries was determined by the positions of supranational institutions on the necessity to develop a strong European Union. To achieve an ambitious goal, the EU Global Strategy “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe” (European External Action Service, 2016) considered the major human resource potential in Europe, a wide network of diplomatic missions, a factor of the third economy of the world, an important role of unification in global governance, as well as military power to maintain peace and security in the region. Nowadays, the EU institutions seek the ability to create jobs and increase employment, to develop open societies and respect for human rights, and to support stability of states and societies in Europe and EU’s neighbouring countries.

The priority political and economic directions for the integration process of the Eastern neighbours are as follows: implementing association agreements, covering political, trade, social, cultural and security sectors of cooperation with the EU; increasing the opportunities for political dialogue within the Eastern Partnership program; establishing new jointly agreed partnership priorities; introducing more effective modes of reforms in partner countries, including engagement with community, economic and social actors; utilising financial instruments operated by the European Neighbourhood Policy for responding to crises; and supporting the Three Seas Initiative that arises from the practical need to strengthen communication and economic cooperation on the North-South axis of the European Union (Association Agreement with Ukraine, 2014; ENP, 2016; Reinsalu, 2019).

Table 1. European and Euro-Atlantic integration directions for the Eastern neighbours

<p>POLITICAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increasing political dialogue; – creating common space for enhanced cooperation; – recognising the Eastern Partners’ European aspirations for the EU and NATO membership; – strengthening cooperation on the North-South axis. 	<p>ECONOMIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – achieving economic and social growth; – assisting industrial, environmental, energy, infrastructure, and tourism transformations; – reorganising businesses and rethinking the relationship between public and private sectors; – supporting financial instruments for responses crises.
<p>SECURITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – overcoming hybrid threats to regional peace and stability; – participating in security and defence projects; – upgrading the defence industry; – increasing measures in cybersecurity. 	<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ensuring a positive perception of initiatives; – implementing digital reforms; – counteracting destructive propaganda; – intensifying scientific research and innovations.

Source: own work.

The EU’s Eastern Partnership program, which involves the EU Member States and six Eastern European partners – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, is of particular importance. It aims to create a common space for general democracy, economic growth, stability, and enhanced cooperation. In addition, the declarations, signed within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, will help strengthen the state and public resilience of the neighbouring countries and allow the EU and its partners to solve internal and external issues more effectively. The most heated discussions between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries relate to Ukraine’s continued insistence that the EU should recognise the Eastern partners’ European aspirations for the EU and NATO membership. The European Parliament recommendation (2017) confirmed the legitimacy of the European aspirations and the possibility of EU membership in the long-term perspective for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, and proposed the creation of the “Eastern Partnership+” model for these countries with extensive European integration opportunities. Another opportunity for implementation of the Eastern partners’ European aspirations is the “The Eastern Partnership Policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all” program (European Commission, 2020a) that is aimed, above all, at strengthening political and economic relations between the EU and partner countries for increasing the stability, prosperity and resilience of EU neighbours, as well as achieving a dual environmental and digital transformation.

The security directions address the initiative on the creation of the Intermarium Alliance that could provide security guarantees to Eastern European countries, including Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. At the same time, the Intermarium Initiative has historically lost its relevance, as the EU and NATO address the major issues of security and interstate engagement for many Eastern European countries. In addition,

the Intermarium Initiative should not be seen as an effective security mechanism, since Turkey is economically related to the EU and is a NATO member, and Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltic states also position themselves as EU and NATO members. Instead, the EU backs the Three Seas Initiative launched in 2015 as an infrastructure project in the fields of economics, energy, transport, and communications, bringing together twelve member organisations located between the Baltic, the Adriatic and the Black Sea (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania), as well as outside actors supporting the initiative – the United States, China, and Germany as observers. The focus of the initiative is to enhance the economic competitiveness of the participants and strengthen infrastructural ties, which means reinforcing the economy and supporting a more cohesive and sustainable European Union. To that end, the Polish Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego and EximBank Romania have set up the Three Seas Investment Fund, which is open to all participating countries, partner countries, and institutional investors, such as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, for the first specific projects in the region to be implemented as soon as possible. It is worth noting that Estonia took the initiative with a view of sharing its experience in implementing e-governance, digital market, standardisation and data exchange between countries on different platforms, as such digital solutions, which can form the basis of future cross-border infrastructure (European Commission, 2018a; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

The EU experience in developing new strategies for economic growth, implementing new technologies (considering their social acceptability), reorganising businesses, rethinking the relationship between public and private sectors, as well as creating new forms of institutional activities are of paramount importance. This is particularly the case for the conclusion of the Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA) that the EU signed with the third countries to develop a strong and sustainable industrial base and support a free circulation of industrial goods. The European Commission intends to work with stakeholders to develop common principles of modern industrial policy to help businesses overcome existing challenges. At the EU level, the European Commission is developing a policy of creating favourable conditions for the competitiveness of the industry in Europe; improving business environment, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises; promoting the creation of a single EU digital market; supporting the use of technological and production tools that reduce energy consumption; and intensifying competition in the tourism sector of the EU economy. To conclude the Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products, Ukraine adapted its legislation to EU legislation standards in the field of technical regulation, standardisation, and the decrement of pressure on business by market surveillance authorities. The European community was informed about Ukraine's readiness for a preliminary assessment of its infrastructure quality (Kuleba, 2019; Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade and Agriculture, 2020).

The decisive characteristics of the European integration prospects are the digitalisation of European governance and the use of e-services in all spheres based on the cooperation of European countries in advanced digital technologies, the adaptation of European markets to new socio-economic conditions, and a further development of scientific innovation research. For supporting digital processes in Eastern Partner countries and shaping the digital community, the EU4Digital initiative was launched as several regional projects, namely “EU4Digital networks”, “EU4Digital Facility”, “EU4Digital – Broadband strategies in the EaP region”, and “EU programme on cyber” (European Commission, 2018b).

The establishment of NATO’ partnerships with non-member countries has become an important aspect of supporting regional security and deepening the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Eastern Partners aimed at improving interstate cooperation, counteracting hybrid threats, developing cybersecurity, and exchanging expert experience. In the context of promoting closer Euro-Atlantic integration, we should note such transformations within NATO as an updating strategy for counteracting hybrid threats, supporting the decision to strengthen EU-NATO cooperation, and identifying the parameters of a hybrid war and its threats to European security with attention to the war in Ukraine and further relations with Russia. The NATO cyber defence doctrine that is being implemented at the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, which operates in Estonia, is particularly noteworthy. Thus, NATO member states have become aware that cyber threats are becoming more complex, destructive and central, so the leadership of the organisation, the member states and allies are forced to create the conditions for collective cyber defence to fulfil the Alliance’s core tasks. The Alliance’s basic cybersecurity principles were enshrined in the 2019 provisions, which confirmed that cybersecurity is considered a component of NATO’s collective defence. Allies have reaffirmed NATO’s defence mandate and recognised cyberspace as an operational environment in which NATO must effectively defend itself as in the physical combat space. It also endorsed NATO’s recommendations to further strengthen the organisation’s ability to respond to aggressive cyberattacks, and to intensify cooperation with the business and private sectors in cyber industry (NATO, 2017, 2018, 2020).

An efficient instrument of European and Euro-Atlantic integration policy is public communication, which prioritises the formation and enhancement of reputation by disseminating EU and NATO information in the media, as well as tracking information to ensure a positive perception of organisations’ initiatives. In due course, the EU White Paper on European Communication Policy (European Commission, 2006) outlined the challenges of European integration and defined the strategy of European institutions, Member States, local and regional governments, non-governmental organisations, and the European community on the EU communication policy. Nowadays, the Communication Directorate of the European Commission (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, 2019; European Commission, 2020b) is

responsible for clarifying EU policies for various target audiences, informing supranational institutions of public opinion trends, coordinating communication image campaigns, and conducting reputational risks analysis in the EU, and associated or third countries. Communication measures on supporting Euro-Atlantic integration (NATO, 2019) involve holding press conferences and regular briefings on cooperation with NATO, preparation and coverage of non-military Alliance initiatives in the media, implementation of projects under NATO Trust Funds, as well as the security and defence sector reform of non-member countries. Communications instruments allow the EU and NATO to communicate purposefully with the public on updating the integration policy and security initiatives, to transform the technological and social infrastructure, as well as to cooperate with member states and partner countries in the fields of mutual interest.

We should note that the Eastern Partners show a dissimilar political interest in rapprochement with the EU and NATO due to the existence of different foreign policy goals, as well as their diverse political and economic states of development. Ukraine and Georgia in particular are promoting initiatives for maximum rapprochement with the EU and NATO to gain membership. Moldova has decided not to join NATO but the government supports the EU membership initiatives. Armenia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan develop their own individual political, economic, and security approaches to the interaction with the EU and NATO.

As a result, the involvement of the Eastern Partners in the EU and NATO activity concerning the European and Euro-Atlantic integration has enabled the stabilisation of the political and economic situation in these states, as well as ensuring the common security of Europe. The deepening of integration processes is conducted through participation in the European Neighbourhood initiatives and the development of partnerships with NATO. In this context, one important issue is to maintain an adequate level of public awareness on a states' participation in the integration processes and their role in supporting the political, economic, and security stability of Europe. Therefore, the improvement of public communication tools based on the study of international and regional media space enables people to realise the involvement of governments in implementing integration policy goals and identify the issues that need a further response because they are insufficiently covered or distorted.

5. UKRAINE'S PRIORITIES IN EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION

The study of the peculiarities of implementing European and Euro-Atlantic integration policies for the Eastern Neighbours has enabled the authors to express their viewpoint concerning Ukraine's course on rapprochement with the EU and NATO.

In the direction of European integration, the Association Agreement is a priority for Ukraine that is recognised as the main instrument for bringing Ukraine closer to the EU, deepening political relations, strengthening economic ties, and respecting common values. Therefore, the priority reforms include fight against corruption, the renewal of judiciary, constitutional and electoral systems, the improvement of the business climate and energy efficiency, as well as decentralisation within public administration reform. At the same time, Ukraine seeks to improve the text of the Association Agreement with the EU in the following thematic blocks: a revision of the tariffs that were set at the 2006–2007 negotiations with the EU and are now obsolete; an update to the provisions on non-tariff barriers in the “industrial visa waiver” format; development of the agreement itself and adapting it to the changes in the EU regulatory rules. The current task of the Ukrainian government is to complete all preparatory work to enter the stage of formal negotiations to improve the Agreement.

As regards the participation of the state in the Eastern Partnership program, Ukraine calls for closer economic cooperation within the “Eastern Partnership+” model. The signing of an agreement on the Common Aviation Area of Ukraine with the EU and the inclusion of Ukrainian transport arteries in the pan-European network could be an additional political and economic priority of the interaction of the Ukrainian government with the EU on the efficient usage of Ukraine’s transport capabilities. Among the economic priorities, we note the signing of the Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products, as well as recognising parity of the Ukrainian technical regulation system and conformity assessment with the European system. This “industrial visa waiver” will greatly simplify the export of industrial products to the EU through obtaining the necessary certificates in Ukraine. The signing of the new digital transformation program “Digital Agenda of Ukraine” could be an additional incentive for rapprochement of Ukraine with the EU.

The priorities also include such security issues that could be addressed jointly with the EU, as combating hybrid threats and ensuring cybersecurity, overcoming migration challenges, cooperating in energy security and reservations regarding support for the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline project, as well as strengthening energy integration that provides cheaper energy and increasing its efficiency. Additionally, Ukraine has agreed to integrate its environmental agenda with the EU under the European Green Agreement that will enable both to work together on environmental challenges.

In the direction of Euro-Atlantic integration, the Ukrainian government seeks to combine the security cooperation within the EU and NATO. The essence of Ukraine’s security interaction at the EU level is revealed through Ukraine’s potential involvement in the EU rapid reaction operations and defining the perspectives of Ukraine’s security commitments in sectors of mutual interest. At the same time,

Ukraine has obtained the NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partnership membership status that is an instrument for deepening the Alliance's bilateral cooperation with third countries. Ukraine's accession to the NATO Enhanced Partnership is a key element of increasing European security and deepening cooperation. Additionally, this program envisages enhanced cooperation in the intelligence sphere and enables its partner countries to obtain positions in the NATO headquarters or structures. Ukraine has something to offer the Alliance to continue involving the Ukrainian armed forces in operations under the NATO auspices, namely the exchange of the experience gained during the confrontation with Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, including the hybrid component, intelligence sharing, and security in the Black Sea.

In the area of communication for supporting the European and Euro-Atlantic integration, the Ukrainian government has adopted communication measures in the field of European and Euro-Atlantic integration to increase the support of this state policy by Ukrainians. In particular, the campaigns are aimed at communicating successful practices of implementing European standards in all spheres of life and the success stories of Ukrainian business, science, culture, and public initiatives in the EU. Moreover, holding seminars and training on Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration is foreseen to change citizens' attitudes towards NATO and national policies in rapprochement with the Alliance.

Therefore, the efficiency of government actions concerning informing the public on Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations has been explored through analysing international and Ukrainian media space after intensifying interaction in political, economic, and security fields. We should note that the fact of raising the awareness of the international and Ukrainian communities will contribute to deepening integration processes and determining further directions for ensuring initiatives of the state.

6. RESULTS

The study of the perception of Ukraine's European integration and Euro-Atlantic policy conducted using Google Trends enabled us to identify inquiries popular in the media about the main foreign policy directions, while Media Cloud enabled us to distinguish the peculiarities of communicating to the international and Ukrainian communities information on integration activities. On average, the popularity dynamics of the "Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement" inquiry during the period from 2013 to March 2020 was three times higher when compared to the topic of "Ukraine-NATO relations" (Fig. 1).

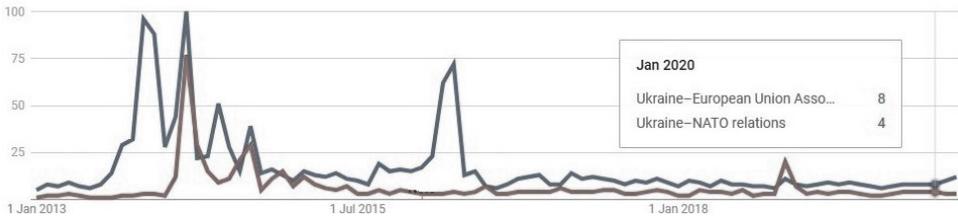


Fig. 1. Dynamics of world popularity of the request “Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement” and “Ukraine-NATO relations” during 2013–March 2020

Source: own work based on Google Trends.

The Netherlands, Sweden, Moldova, Belarus, Russia, Finland, Belgium, Austria, Germany, and Norway were ten countries where users were interested in the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement. At the same time, the countries interested in Ukraine-NATO relations included Estonia, Norway, Russia, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland, Sweden, Bulgaria, and Belgium. The thematic focus of the searches on Ukraine’s European integration issues was linked to the Ukraine–EU Association Agreement, its ratification issues, as well as the political and economic implications for the European and Ukrainian communities. “Is Ukraine a part of NATO”, “Are there NATO troops in Ukraine” and “What military exercises does NATO conduct in Ukraine” were the top searches of users interested in the Ukraine-NATO interaction.

There existed a high level of interest of the international community in the topic of developing European integration processes in Ukraine in 2014 and 2016 (Fig. 1), which is connected with signing the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, as well as the processes of its ratification. Due to the violation of the territorial integrity of Ukraine in 2014 and deepening of security risks, there was an increase in interest of users in the development of NATO-Ukraine relations. At the same time, if one compares the period before 2014 and that after, one could find increased interest of users in the topic of the Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine.

Considering the intensity of the development of Ukraine’s relations with the EU and NATO, which were identified as strategic partners along with the US, as well as the aggravation of relations with the Russian Federation, the perception of Ukraine’s foreign policy activity by leading political actors has changed. Along with this, the thematic line of the development of Ukraine’s relations with the EU and NATO was of interest either in business centres of the above-mentioned countries or in the metropolitan regions, with inquiries concerning the news on Ukraine and the studied international organisations with an emphasis on the query “Is Ukraine a part of the EU or NATO”. Overall, 71% of internet queries were

related to the “Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement” query and 29% were related to the topic of “Ukraine-NATO relations”.

Ukrainians showed the greatest interest in the “Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement” query, and the thematic line was related to the development of the cooperation with the EU and the EU-Ukraine-Russia relationship triangle. The interest in the “Ukraine-NATO relations” query was lower and concerned with development of security cooperation. Within Ukraine, users from the regions of Lviv, Khmelnytskyi, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, and from Kyiv showed the highest interest in both topics (Fig. 2). On average, during the study period, the popularity of the queries was higher for the topic “Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement” reaching 10 units, while the topic of “Ukraine-NATO relations” showed interest of only 3 units.

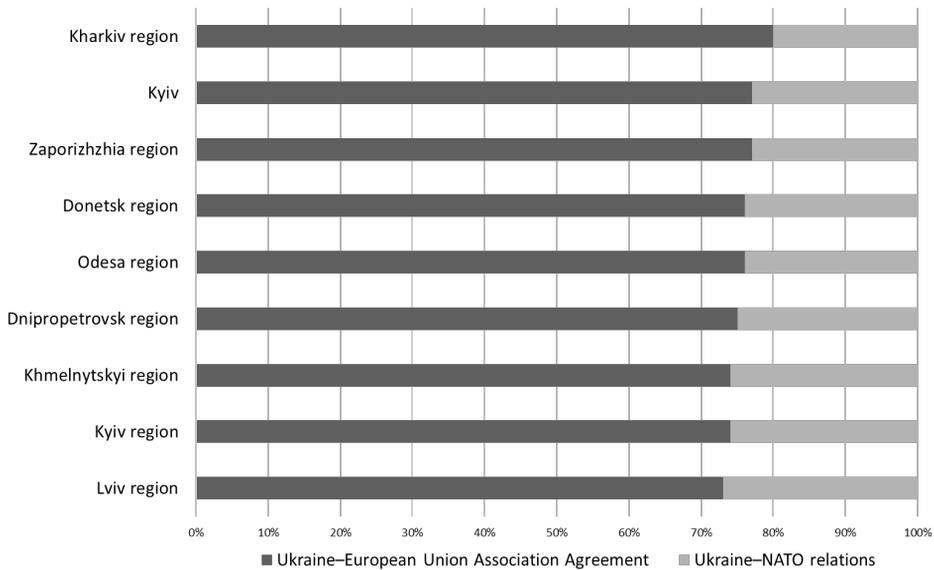


Fig. 2. Popularity of the “Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement” and “Ukraine-NATO relations” queries in Ukraine, 2013–March 2020

Source: own work based on Google Trends.

The interest of participants of international relations in Ukraine’s foreign policy has been primarily determined by a number of internal and external factors that significantly affect the perception of the Ukrainian state as a modern actor in international relations. Therefore, the positioning of Ukraine in the world media space through creation and dissemination of information materials, as well as its presentation abroad, contributes to a positive assessment of the country’s foreign policy initiatives.

The distinguished trends have made it possible to identify queries popular in media about Ukraine's European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies since 2013, and to analyse the main thematic areas of political, economic, security, and social challenges for Ukraine in the context of the EU and NATO engagement. In view of this, key topics were selected such as EU sanctions against the Russian Federation, overcoming the Ukraine's security and defence issues, Ukraine's interaction with the EU within the Association Agreement and a visa-free regime, electoral processes in the EU and Ukraine, as well as migration processes and Ukrainian migrants in Europe.

It has been found that the level of audience awareness about Ukraine's European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies depended on the language in which the information was provided, as the Ukrainian-speaking audience received more information on European integration processes in Ukraine and interaction with the EU and its Member States (1,640 pieces of news), while English-speaking audience was becoming familiar more with the thematic information on Euro-Atlantic processes and Ukraine's involvement in them (1,042 pieces of news). Among those, 372 news pieces in Ukrainian referred to Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration and 823 in English informed about Ukraine's European integration prospects. Thus, the English-language media space regarding Ukraine's Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic policies was more balanced (approximately 1.3 reports on Euro-Atlantic policies corresponded to one message on European integration processes in the country); the Ukrainian-language media space focused on disseminating news about Ukraine's European integration prospects (approximately 4.4 reports on Euro-integration policies corresponded to about one news on Euro-Atlantic processes). The communication of Euro-Atlantic prospects to the Ukrainian audience should be expanded upon, as a lack of objective information leads to the emergence of negative stereotypes about NATO in the Ukrainian-speaking media space, which will not deepen security and defence cooperation between Ukraine and the Alliance in the long run.

The study of the reports on the outlined topics during period from 2013 to March 2020 has led to the conclusions that there has been a change in media attention to the challenges of Ukraine's foreign policy activities. In general, in terms of language and the popularity, we can distinguish the following two groups (Fig. 3):

- Ukrainian-speaking key challenging issues – electoral processes in the EU and Ukraine (9,488 news pieces), Ukraine's interaction with the EU within the Association Agreement and a visa-free regime (2,166 news pieces), the EU sanctions against the Russian Federation (1,182 news pieces), overcoming Ukraine's security and defence issues (704 news pieces), as well as migration processes and Ukrainian migrants in Europe (225 news pieces);

- English-speaking key challenging issues – electoral processes in the EU and Ukraine (3,986 news pieces), the EU sanctions against the Russian Federation

(2,731 news pieces), Ukraine’s interaction with the EU within the Association Agreement and a visa-free regime (1,653 news pieces), overcoming Ukraine’s security and defence issues (1,106 news pieces), as well as migration processes and Ukrainian migrants in Europe (176 news pieces).

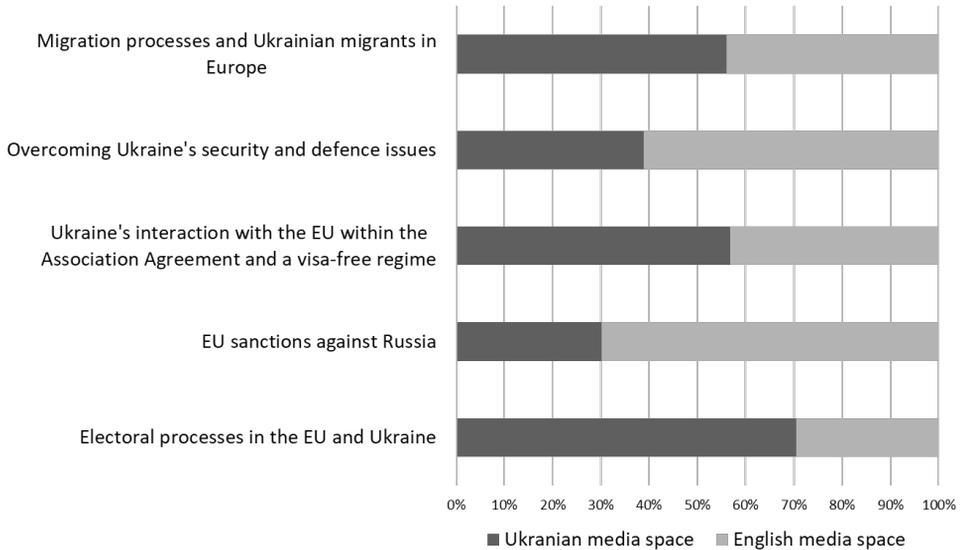


Fig. 3. Popularity of key topics concerning Ukraine’s Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic policy during 2013–March 2020, % of total news pieces

Source: own work based on Media Cloud.

Internal political processes as well as external political and economic interactions have been the main narratives of Ukraine’s European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies, which form a systematic view of the challenges under consideration, (Fig. 4). News pieces about domestic political processes shape the attitude of international and Ukrainian communities to government activity within the “politics and government” narrative. News pieces on foreign political and economic interactions are mainly related to such narratives as “international relations”, “the US politics and government,” as well as “international trade and world market.” Additional narratives related to the narrow characteristics of Ukraine’s European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies included “the US international relations”, “economic conditions and trends”, “embargoes and economic sanctions”, “armament, defence and military forces”, “elections”, “immigration and refugees”, and “labour”.

Hence, the key ideas on the European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies of Ukraine, which remained in the minds of the international and Ukrainian communities after reading the news, were related to the processes of direct in-

teraction between governmental institutions of Ukraine, the EU and the US, as well as global economic processes. At the same time, the issues of local community involvement and development of local economic, cultural and social cooperation were hardly discussed in the media space, whereas the deepening of the European integration and, in part, Euro-Atlantic processes, aims at improving such local ties.

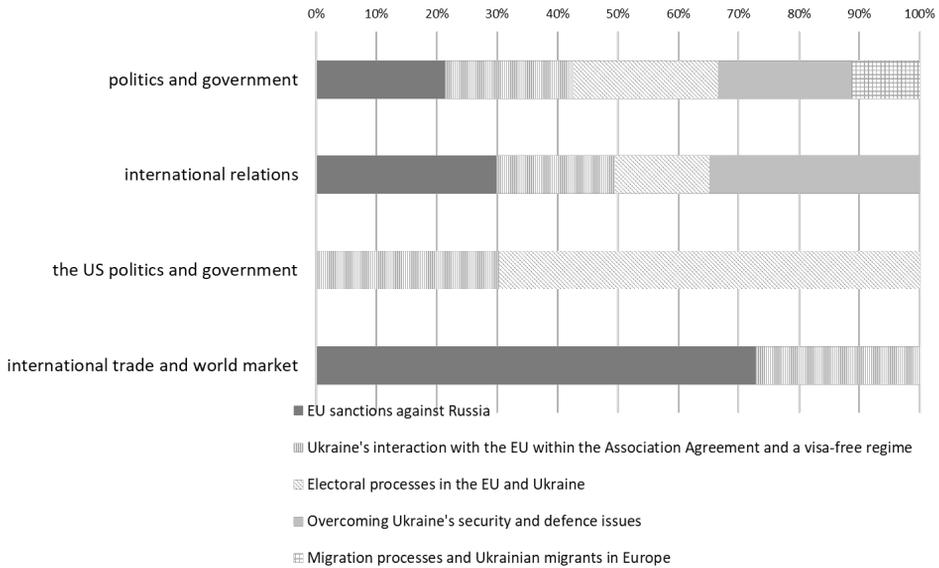


Fig. 4. Main narratives on Ukraine's Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic policies during the period from 2013 to March 2020, percentage of total news pieces

Source: own work based on Media Cloud.

The five political leaders mentioned in the context of all the investigated challenging topics to Ukraine's European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies during the period from 2013 to March 2020 included V. Putin, P. Poroshenko, A. Merkel, D. Trump, and B. Obama (Fig. 5). Additionally mentioned figures included J. Stoltenberg, the 13th Secretary General of NATO (12%), mentioned under the topic "Ukraine's overcoming security and defence issues"; V. Yanukovich, the 4th President of Ukraine, and Y. Tymoshenko, a Ukrainian politician – in the topics of "Ukraine's interaction with the EU within the Association Agreement and a visa-free regime" (V. Yanukovich – 19% and Y. Tymoshenko – 16%) and "Electoral processes in the EU and Ukraine" (V. Yanukovich – 9% and Y. Tymoshenko – 8%); V. Zelensky, the 6th President of Ukraine, M. Salvini, an Italian politician, L. Di Maio, the Foreign Minister of Italy, and L. Codogno, an Economist, (10% each) – in the topic "Electoral processes in the EU and Ukraine";

V. Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary (8%), R. Radev, the 5th President of the Republic of Bulgaria, V. Goranov, the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Bulgaria, and A. Kubisiak, the Expert of Polish Economic Institute (5% each) – in the topic “Migration processes and Ukrainian migrants in Europe”.

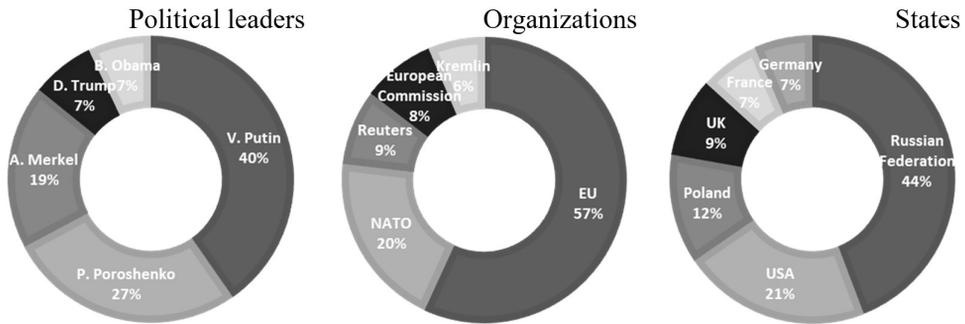


Fig. 5. Five political leaders, organisations and states, mentioned in the context of Ukraine’s Euro-integration and Euro-Atlantic policies during 2013–March 2020, percentage of total news pieces

Source: own work based on Media Cloud.

The European Union, NATO, the European Commission, and the “Kremlin” Presidential Executive Office, as political institutions, and Reuters, as the News Agency, were mentioned most often in the context of all research issues related to Ukraine’s European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies (Fig. 5). Kyiv Post (5.6% of mentions), Agence France-Presse (1.6%) Bulgarian News Agency (1% of mentions), and UNIAN (1% of mentions) were also among the media sources that reported on specific topics covered. European institutions (8% of mentions), the European Council (4% of mentions), and the OSCE (2.6% of mentions) could be further added to the political institutions and organisations.

A high regional frequency of references to Ukraine’s European integration and Euro-Atlantic policies was recorded in the Russian Federation, the USA, Poland, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany (Fig. 5). In addition, news from countries such as Italy, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Turkey, and Belarus also spread certain aspects of Ukraine’s foreign policy initiatives.

Thus, media resources acted as the leaders of the Ukrainian information presence in the minds of the international community, developed an understanding of the political actors of the EU and NATO, acted as components of securing international and national interests of Ukraine, and confirmed that the use of such tools could promote objective positioning of a state in the world’s media space.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The study of European and Euro-Atlantic integration policies in the context of Ukraine's transformation has led to the conclusions that:

1. At the political level, one could observe a qualitative increase of the political dialogue between Ukraine and the EU and NATO that has enabled Ukraine to become a priority partner for the European Union and receive the status of NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partner. The fact of creating common space for enhanced cooperation opens to Ukraine an opportunity to define a reform agenda aimed at developing a socio-economic and security stabilisation of the state. Ukraine's participation in the European and Euro-Atlantic programs contributes to maintaining the pan-European balance of power, as well as strengthening political and economic cooperation on the Baltic-Black Sea axis when both EU Member States and the Eastern neighbours are involved in the integration;

2. At the economic level, one could underline the potential assistance in industrial, environmental, energy, and infrastructure transformation of Ukraine that the government has received within the adaptation to European standards. The fact of reorganising businesses and rethinking the relationship between public and private sectors has remained the current issues for Ukraine that needs solving within the practical implementation of accepted regulations. Moreover, further economic and social growth of the state partly depends on available financial instruments for crisis responses that the Ukrainian government can receive through participation in the EU-NATO economic and security projects.

3. At the security level, one could note Ukraine's opportunities for overcoming hybrid threats to regional peace and stability after the aggravation of relations with Russia and the outbreak of the war in Eastern Ukraine; an upgrade of the Ukrainian defence industry according to NATO standards would strengthen the state political and defence status and enable it to ensure the balance of regional power.

4. At the communication level, Ukraine has faced a negative perception of its state image in the media space due to a lack of objective information on foreign and domestic political transformations. Partial positive changes have occurred after 2014 when the Ukrainian government began deepening the country's involvement in European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. The study of the media space from 2013 to March 2020 has shown that information on Ukraine's European integration aspirations and its achievements within the EU Association Agreement dominated the Ukrainian media space. Information on the possibilities of expanding Ukraine-NATO cooperation circulates in the English-speaking media space because the security stability of Europe is considered as preservation of the political and economic positions of NATO member

states at the international stage. Therefore, the fact of expanding political communication could help not only inform the world about Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic successes but also form the necessary foreign policy narratives on the country's activities. The strategic priority of the Ukrainian government should involve the ensuring and implementing of practical measures aimed at shaping the image of Ukraine as an intended partner that adheres to its political commitments.

In the years to come, the EU, NATO and Ukraine could demonstrate common actions and show solidarity in establishing joint funds to address contemporary political, economic, and security issues, and create renewed economic governance. Ukraine should seek to mobilise domestic resources and become investment attractive to partners by accelerating the digitalisation of its economy and ensuring a sufficient level of cybersecurity. In addition, an interlocked support of Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations could help launch the untapped economic, social, human, and natural resources of Ukraine that would give a new impetus to regional development. Being a border state, Ukraine could be involved in preventing the flow of migrants and participate in the joint EU-NATO actions on border control and security of the region.

Finally, Ukraine's successful integration into the EU and NATO will depend on the use of available foreign and domestic policy resources, the demonstration of political stability, the effectiveness of managing innovative potential, and the improvement of the country's socio-economic development.

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