

Identity as a factor of personal geopolitical consciousness

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Abstract: *The connection of different forms of personality's identity (social, spatial, ethnic and political) with the features of its geopolitical consciousness, that is reflection forms of events and phenomena of "political world" through the prism of "geographical world", is considered in the paper. The results of the author's empirical research of geopolitical representations among Ukrainian students with different levels of ethnic and political identity, including the specific features of geopolitical images of Ukraine, its Western and Eastern regions, are presented and analyzed. Overall, the results show the moderate impact of ethnic and political identity on the geopolitical ideas of youth. The author explains this by the fact that most of them are stereotyped social representations.*

Keywords: *geopolitical consciousness (GPC), image, idea, identity, ethnic and political identity*

Introduction

The phenomenon of geopolitical consciousness (GPC) is considered by us as a reflection form of (mental representation) events and phenomena of "political world" through the prism of "geographic world" by identifying specific geographic territory with a specific policy that is held there. "Product" and "indicator" of GPC are specific geopolitical images of the world, which can be conventionally defined as "geopolitical mental maps" (GPMM) [Drozdov 2010a]. Being systemic in nature, phenomena GPC and GPMM are concerned with a quite large number of factors such as demographic, geographic, individual and psychological, social and cultural, social and political and so on. Since GPMM is a specific type of the world image (model), we cannot ignore such factor as an individual's identity.

Thus H. Tajfel noted that the processes of social categorization, i.e. grouping of various social objects in the consciousness of an individual, are caused by the social identity of the latter [Tajfel 1981].

In other words, the perception in the system "friend or foe" (which, actually, is one of the basic constructs of political and geopolitical consciousness) always occurs through the prism of the subjective sense of belonging to the different groups. German researcher B. Schäfer speaks on the crucial role of identity in the perception of Others as well. According to his viewpoint, identity is based on the imperative nature of knowledge (in the form of values and standards) that define the perception process and result of Foreign on the cognitive and emotional levels [Schäfer 2004].

Some differences in geopolitical sets on a number of world countries among students

with different levels of ethnic and political (national and state) identity have been found in one of our previous studies [Drozdov 2010b]. O. Shchurko also point out the relationship of the state image (especially one's own) with national identity [Shchurko 2006], considering it as a major factor of this image formation and transformation [Shchurko 2008]. At the same time, V. Prokopenko emphasizes the connection between geopolitical image of one's own country with the so-called civic identity, the political significance of which is associated with supporting a sense of one's own home and faith in the future of one's native country [Prokopenko 2012].

Different researchers take special interest in the kind of identity which is determined by them as "spatial" [Zamyatin 2009] "territorial" [Korzhov 2010; Samoshkina 2008], "regional" [Gritsenko 2010; Krylov 2007; Nahorna 2008], "indigenous" [Antonsich 2010; Lewicka 2008] or "local" [Ovchinnikova 2010]. According to its essence it is one of the main types of social identity based on the identification of the residence or birth place ("sense of place"), peculiar local identity, a sense of "small homeland." This phenomenon is concerned with another one. This is a "place attachment", which foreign scholars define as the individual's emotional set to a certain territory and which may also mediate the perception of the latter. It is believed that territorial identity and attachment are related but different phenomena [Antonsich 2010; **Hernández 2007**; Lewicka **2008**; **Rollero 2010**]. The term "topophilia" by Yi-Fu Tuan is known in the humanistic geography. It represents a wide range of positive human emotions (sympathy, affection, pride, etc.) to a particular place [Yi-Fu Tuan 1974].

In this context there is an interesting idea by O. Filippova that territorial identity can produce two forms of the personality's attitude to the territory: a sense of ownership ("appropriation") and a sense of belonging (which form the idea of "inhabited" and "reference" territories). "Appropriation" of the territory is largely determined by motivational factors such as a sense of satisfaction, psychological comfort and security. The presence of the latter is associated with a sense of the surrounding territory as "one's own", "inhabited" At the same time, a sense of territory belonging is more associated with social and demographic factors and it

is the result of socialization (since it requires particular knowledge of the historical and geographical nature). Relationship between "appropriation" of the territory and sense to it is ambiguous. In some cases, "inhabited" and "reference" territories may coincide entirely, in other cases, they may be completely different. An example of the latter is the identity of immigrants and their descendants: being adapted to the "new" ("inhabited") territory, they can identify themselves with their birth place (or their parents' birth place) on an emotional level [Filippova 2010].

As the researchers point out, the spatial localization of territorial identity (country, region, city, district, house) is defined by social comparison situation where an individual finds himself [Samoshkina 2008; Filippova 2010]. M. Krylov also notes that regional identity involves not only ideas of the territory where people directly live, but also other geographical locations and areas, including their own country on the whole. Specifically, the researcher has found a link between regional identity among citizens of European part of Russia and the general level of patriotism [Krylov 2007] The fact that "spatial identity" creates different geographical and geopolitical images is discussed by D.Zamyatin as well [Zamyatin 2009].

According to the domestic researchers' results, the specificity of political consciousness among residents of Ukraine is that the peculiarities of their ethnic and political identity ("pro-Ukrainian", "pro-Russian") are connected with the home political ("right – left") as well as the foreign political orientations ("pro-Western – pro-Eastern") [Vasyutynskyy 1997]. Thus, **the aim of the research** has become the revealing peculiarities of geopolitical representations among individuals with different levels of ethnic and political identity (EPI).

Method

The research was carried out within the research project "Psychology of mass geopolitical consciousness" in October-November 2012. The total sample comprised 245 students of Psychology and Pedagogics, Technology, Physics and Mathematics faculties from Chernihiv National Pedagogical University named after T.H. Shevchenko, including 95 males and 150 females aged 17-

25 years. Participants were asked to evaluate nine countries (U.S., Russia, Germany, Ukraine, Great Britain, China, France, Japan, Canada) using 21 author's scales of semantic differential (SD) and two regions of Ukraine (East and West) using 14 scales of SD (the latter was assumed if respondents agreed about the appropriate division of these political regions). We emphasize that all countries and descriptors were pre-selected in pilot studies as meaningful while actualizing geopolitical ideas and evaluations.

The projective technique "Who am I?" as a version of self-attitude test ("twenty statements test"), suggested by M.Kuhn and Th.McPartland in 1954 was used to determine the EPI. According to the instruction, participants were asked to give 20 different answers to the question "Who am I?". During processing our attention was paid to responses, which indicated the participant's national or state belonging. The presence or absence of such responses allowed us to determine the level of EPI as high or low.

The survey was conducted anonymously. The data were interpreted through the procedure of statistical analysis via the package SPSS v. 10.

Results and discussion

The division of the sample into subgroups was based on the expressing EPI features. The first subgroup (conventionally with "high EPI" – 37.6%, 92 persons) included participants who identified themselves with their own country or ethnic group through responses like "Ukrainian", "citizen" of Ukraine", "patriot". Participants, whose self-concept did not comprise these features, were included into the second subgroup (with "low EPI" – 62.4%, 153 persons).

Through the Mann-Whitney U-test we found out a few statistically significant differences in geopolitical representations of persons with different level of EPI. Specifically, respondents with high EPI evaluated higher the level of U.S. wealth, but at the same time, they wish less willingly the prosperity of this country (all at $p = 0.05$). It is difficult to explain the first result, while the latter, in our opinion, is quite logical – high EPI may increase the criticality on other geopolitical individuals ("Foreign"). Indirectly, it is proved by one more difference

— this time on Germany: persons with high EPI lower evaluated the ability of the country to protect its own interests (at $p = 0.05$). In regard to Russia, China, France, Japan and Canada, statistically significant differences were not found, which is interesting (at least concerning Russia, which represents one of the political and ideological poles in the Ukrainian public opinion).

As for Ukraine, only three statistically significant differences were revealed: participants with high EPI less critically evaluated "care" level of the national authority about the people, and higher evaluated the culture level in our country and considered it more interesting (all at $p = 0.05$). In our opinion, this fact can be explained like in the previous case, i.e. high EPI (and, consequently, patriotism) leads to a more permissive attitude and less critical assessment of one's own country ("one's own"). It can be proved by differences noticed in the images of Ukrainian regions. Thus, individuals with high EPI lower assessed the crime level in the West, and higher evaluated the democracy and beauty of the Eastern region (all at $p = 0.05$).

Overall, these results allow us to see three tendencies. Firstly, the number of detected differences in geopolitical images does not permit to determine the level of EPI as an important and powerful factor in GPC. It is, rather, an accessory factor, which affects only the particular evaluations and ideas. Secondly, most of the described differences are non-political in content and related general emotional attitude to the countries, to their culturological, everyday or economic evaluation. Finally, a greater proportion of detected differences concerned Ukraine as the country in general and its regions, what can be considered logical.

Therefore, for a more detailed identification of EPI connection with respondents' geopolitical representations we made factorization (the procedure Varimax) of three images scales-descriptors: Ukraine, its western and eastern regions. Note that our attention was attracted by factors of contribution to the total dispersion of at least 9-10%. The data are presented in tables 1-3.

Thus, among **individuals with high EPI** Ukraine is represented by four basic image-factors. They are "*Attraction to the original country*" (non-political factor of emotional and motivational type), "*Bad power and poli-*

High level of ethnic and political identity	Low level of ethnic and political identity
4 factors with a general contribution to the total dispersion 54,5%	4 factors with a general contribution to the total dispersion 50,4%
<p>the 1st factor (16,6%): interesting (0,825), like (0,794), maintains its own culture (-0,736).</p> <p>the 2nd factor (15,7%): ineffective power (-0,782), unfair policy (0,761), power does not care about people (0,712).</p> <p>the 3rd factor (13,3%): weak economics (-0,772), undeveloped science and technology (0,692), has a weak army (0,685).</p> <p>the 4th factor (8,8%): democratic (-0,828), unstable political situation (0,481), non-united (0,466), no order (-0,453).</p>	<p>the 1st factor (18,2%): unfair policy (0,800), power does not care about people (0,779), ineffective power (-0,785).</p> <p>the 2nd factor (12,6%): interesting (0,832), like (0,782), wish prosperity (0,725).</p> <p>the 3rd factor (10,8%): undeveloped science and technology (0,656), weak economics (-0,520), has a weak army (0,511), poor (0,509).</p> <p>the 4th factor (8,7%): democratic (0,750), non-united (-0,548).</p>

Table 1. Factor analysis results of Ukraine image

tics” (political factor), **“Undeveloped country”** (mixed economic, cultural and political factor) and **“Democratic, but disordered country”** (political factor). Analysis of dispersions showed that the participants of this group were at variance most in the estimates of the parameters of the cultural development level, as well as in evaluation of protecting by Ukraine its own interests. The smallest variation in estimates concerned the wish of country’s prosperity, which is quite understandable.

Individuals with **low EPI** had such geopolitical images of Ukraine: **“Bad politics and power”** (political factor), **“Attraction to Ukraine”** (emotional and motivational factor), **“Undeveloped country”** (mixed factor) and **“Democratic, but non-united country”** (political factor). The biggest difference of estimates in this group was observed on the scales of “like-dislike” (which can be considered as expected) and “low-high level of culture.” But at the same time the largest grouping of estimates was like in the previous group and concerned wish for country’s prosperity.

While comparing the results of two groups, it is easy to notice the similarity of all factors-images. So, factor EPI did not significantly affect the perception and evaluation of the country by the youth (at least its “real” image). Also attention should be paid to one difference – the first (most significant) factor in the group with high EPI has a positive (attractive) content, while in the other group it has a negative (critical) one. Thus, we can assume that EPI causes priority in perception of certain aspects of the

own country: “more patriotic” young people perceive it primarily as their “own country” and their “less patriotic” coevals perceive it as a “state” (with all its negative features).

An interesting and unexpected result was that young people with different levels of EPI almost did not differ in the evaluation of the political division of Ukraine into the West and the East – 41% of people with high EPI and 43% of people with low EPI agreed with it (there is no statistically significant difference). This consistence may be explained by the following results which concern the images of these two regions in the youth’s GPC.

The image of the **Western Ukraine among individuals with high EPI** is represented by four images. They are **“Ambivalence of power and politics”** (political factor), **“Undeveloped but rich region”** (economic factor), **“Attraction to the region”** (emotional and motivational factor) and **“Beautiful and highcultural region”** (non-political factor). The lowest consistence of estimates was observed there regarding the parameters of corruption and wealth of the region, and the highest one concerned its beauty.

At the same time, **individuals with low EPI** imagined the West of Ukraine as follows: **“Attraction to the beautiful and spiritual region”** (non-political emotional and motivational factor), **“Ambivalent social situation in the region”** (mixed factor), **“Undeveloped but rich region”** (economic factor) and **“Good power and politics”** (political factor). The greatest variation in the parameter estimates

High level of ethnic and political identity	Low level of ethnic and political identity
4 factors with a general contribution to the total dispersion 73,4 %	4 factors with a general contribution to the total dispersion 68,9%
<p>the 1st factor (26,7%): effective power (0,821), corrupt (-0,797), unfair policy (-0,784), democratic (0,721).</p> <p>the 2nd factor (18,2%): weak economics (-0,852), rich (0,772).</p> <p>the 3rd factor (14,6%): like (0,914), wish prosperity (0,911).</p> <p>the 4th factor (13,9%): beautiful (0,823), high cultural level (0,786).</p>	<p>the 1st factor (23,5%): beautiful (0,898), wish prosperity (0,871), like (0,861), religious (-0,744).</p> <p>the 2nd factor (18,9%): low crime rate (0,753), united (-0,735), corrupt (-0,717).</p> <p>the 3rd factor (13,5%): weak economics (-0,858), rich (0,731).</p> <p>the 4th factor (12,9%): power cares about people (0,773), fair policy (0,735).</p>

Table 2. Factor analysis results of Western Ukraine image

was “authority cares – does not care about people”, and the smallest one concerned estimating the beauty of the region and the wish of prosperity to it.

As we can see, most of the revealed images in two groups coincide in their essence and it indicates the presence of stereotyped ideas of the Western Ukrainian region. But the first (most significant) factor in the group of individuals with high EPI was only political in nature, while in the other group it was quite the reverse. That is, as in the case of the Ukraine image on the whole, EPI is associated with priority of political/non-political criteria in perception and evaluation of a territory.

Individuals with high EPI imagined the

Eastern Ukraine as follows: “**Attraction to cultural and beautiful region**” (non-political emotional and motivational factor), “**Bad power and politics**” (political factor), “**Rich and developed region**” (economic factor) and “**Ambivalence of social and political situation in the region**” (political factor). Taking into account the specificity of the first factor, it was interesting that the largest variation in estimates concerned emotional attitude to the region (“like-dislike”). On the other hand, it possibly can be explained by the contradiction between patriotic values and political and ideological associations on the Eastern Ukraine. The smallest variation in estimates concerned the evaluation of region criminogenity.

High level of ethnic and political identity	Low level of ethnic and political identity
4 factors with a general contribution to the total dispersion 74,7%	3 factors with a general contribution to the total dispersion 62,9%
<p>the 1st factor (22,4%): like (0,904), high cultural level (0,821), beautiful (0,788), wish prosperity (0,723).</p> <p>the 2nd factor (20,1%): power does not care about people (-0,849), ineffective power (0,813), unfair policy (-0,771).</p> <p>the 3rd factor (19%): rich (-0,923), developed economics (0,902).</p> <p>the 4th factor (13,3%): non-united (0,848), corrupt (0,599), democratic (-0,538).</p>	<p>the 1st factor (27,9%): low cultural level (0,874), like (0,859), beautiful (0,858), irreligious (-0,782).</p> <p>the 2nd factor (24,6%): ineffective power (-0,747), united (0,729), power does not care about people (0,721), unfair policy (0,701).</p> <p>the 3rd factor (10,4%): wish prosperity (0,737), corrupt (0,664).</p>

Table 3. Factor analysis results of Eastern Ukraine image.

In GPC of participants with low EPI this region is represented by following images: “**Attraction to backward but beautiful region**”

(non-political emotional and motivational factor), “**Bad power and politics**” (political factor) and “**Corrupt region to which I wish**

prosperity” (mixed factor). The smallest unity of estimates here took place regarding the parameters of unity and the beauty of the Eastern Ukraine, and the highest one as in the previous group concerned the level of criminality.

As we can see, the degree of similarity of the Eastern Ukraine images in groups with different EPI is a bit lower than concerning the West of the country. Only political evaluation of the region coincides completely. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that people with low EPI have ambivalent or negative images of the Eastern Ukraine, whereas in the group with high EPI there are also positive images (including the first most significant). Consequently, while perceiving and evaluating the Eastern Ukrainian region the EPI factor is the most noticeable (“in relief”), perhaps, because the East of Ukraine is the least “Ukrainian” (in a political and ideological sense).

Conclusion

In general, the results show that the level of individual’s ethnic and political identity is associated with the perception and evaluation of only particular aspects of geopolitical reality. And the influence of this factor is more noticeable while perceiving Ukraine and its regions. Its impact can occur both in quantitative (more positive estimates among the individuals with high level of ethnic and political identity) and in qualitative aspects (different priority of political/non-political criteria in perception and evaluation of a territory). In our opinion, such small effect of ethnic and political identity on the content of individual’s geopolitical images and ideas is explained by the fact that the vast majority of the latter is stereotyped social representations. Thus, the individual geopolitical consciousness is based on the elements of mass geopolitical consciousness, and personal factors only partially “correct” (“polish”) them.

Endnotes

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