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Historical formation of border regions in the context of the transformation of the modern world order*

Introduction

The global order is vulnerable and unstable under conditions of uncertainty due to the growing gap between personal welfare, security standards, and human values, which leads to a decline in global and regional economies and intensifies the emergence of conflict areas on the world map. The threats to peaceful coexistence have a cross-border character. Therefore, researchers and practitioners pay special attention to border regions – territories where two or more spheres of influence intersect, seeking to control resources and expand their hegemony. Border regions are becoming zones of intercultural dialogue or conflict due to their historical specificity and current development factors. Russia's aggressive foreign policy which, in recent decades, has relied on border regions to establish Russia's hegemony, makes the study of border territories relevant in light of global political processes and the vulnerability of the international security system.

The effective implementation of intercultural practices as tools for peacebuilding and the achievement of parity between partners as sovereign nations in all spheres of life

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will determine the success of peace-making in Europe and will be the key to European security.

The aim of this article is to present the authors' views on the history and development prospects of border regions as constituent elements of sovereign states, which can act as both centers of global conflict and areas of intercultural dialogue. In each scenario, these territories can both navigate and attract transformation processes leading to the emergence of a new world order in the coming years.

The research hypothesis states that border regions can be both subjects and objects of global transformation processes and, under conditions of uncertainty, can trigger significant changes on the world map by absorbing weak states by powerful states, reinforcing the hegemony of the latter, or breaking up the existing states with the aim of achieving independence. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

- What is the meaning of “borderland” and “border regions”?
- Which territories can be classified as border regions?
- What types of indicators can be used to compare and classify border regions?
- What is the role of historical factors in the set of initial conditions that determine the current status of border regions?
- What other factors affect the development trajectory of border regions under the current conditions of uncertainty?
- Can border regions be typologized to identify conflict zones and territories with peacebuilding potential in view of possible scenarios concerning changes in the existing world order?

The main research methods were a systematic analysis and a comparative analysis. The world order was regarded as a system that is undergoing transformation. Border regions can alter the course of the transformation process by attracting change in some parts of the world under the influence of both internal and external factors. This article analyzes the formation and functioning of modern Catalonia, Bavaria, Chechnya, Crimea, and Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk regions) in the context of internal and external factors and influences. A comparative analysis of these regions was conducted based on the following indicators:

- geographic and geopolitical location;
- history of settlement;
- neighborhood (international status of countries that share borders with the analyzed regions);
- international status and domestic political regime of the countries in which the analyzed regions are located;
- resources and potential (economic and cultural heritage, political influences, human, symbolic and social capital);

- the respective countries' regional policies (relations between the central government and the region).

The results of the comparative analysis were used to identify factors that exerted the greatest influence on the formation of border regions, their current status, and prospects for self-determination.

Border regions evolve in the context of historical events and, therefore, differ in character, essence, self-identification, and aspirations. These territories have attracted considerable research, which suggests that the discussed problem requires an interdisciplinary approach. This article relied on previous research on political geography and geopolitics (I. Wallerstein, S. Rokkan, O. Fisun), cultural discourse on the meaning of the term "border region" (O. Kryvytska, V. Kravchenko, M. Mykhalchenko, O. Shevchuk), as well as historical and sociological research examining the identity of border regions (Y. Vermenich, V. Dmytruk, O. Zhulnova, R. Collins, T. Zarytskyi).

An analysis of the theoretical and methodological approaches to research on border regions indicates that the characteristic features of these territories have evolved under the influence of geographic, economic, and political factors, as well as migration processes.

A comparative analysis of the identified indicators supported the determination of the key features of the examined regions and the formulation of intermediate conclusions.

Catalonia

Catalonia's economic and political potential has been largely shaped by its geographic location. Catalonia is situated between two major European powers, which poses one of the greatest challenges for the region. In the Middle Ages, Catalonia operated one of the largest trade networks in the Mediterranean Region, and it was able to expand its influence to several territories in that region. Many of these territories still have Catalan traditions and speak the Catalan language. However, Catalonia was deprived of its status of a regional leader when the global trade network was moved to the Atlantic, and when the region was split between the Spanish and French empires during the War of the Spanish Succession. The Middle Ages were not the only period of economic growth in Catalonia. The region was transformed into an industrial hub in the 19th century, and in the 21st century, Catalonia regained the status of one of Europe's economic powerhouses, accounting for around 19% of Spain's GDP¹. Each period of economic growth was accompanied by an increase in national awareness and the emergence of political movements for regional independence.

¹ M.T. Ferrer, *Catalan commerce in the late Middle Ages*, „Catalan Historical Review” 2012, No. 5, p. 36; *Spanish regional accounts. Regional gross domestic product. 2019–2021 series*, Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2022, https://www.ine.es/en/prensa/cre_2021_en.pdf (accessed: 24 III 2023).

Catalonia's political claims are based not only on its economic prowess, but also on ethno-political factors. Despite the restrictions imposed by the Spanish authorities in the 18th and 19th centuries and during Franco's rule, Catalans have managed to preserve their distinctive language and culture, and to institutionalize Catalan as an official language. Many of Catalonia's inhabitants are proficient in Catalan and strongly identify with their region. According to a survey conducted by the Catalan government, 42.2% of the region's residents consider themselves equally Spanish and Catalan, whereas more than 40% identify as rather Catalan or exclusively Catalan². 37.3% of the population speak Catalan as their mother tongue, and 12.5% consider themselves bilingual³.

Catalonia has developed global brands that are associated with the region, rather than Spain as a whole. These include Barcelona's football and basketball clubs, the 1992 Olympic Games, the works of artist Salvador Dali, architect and sculptor Antoni Gaudi, and others. In 2018, Barcelona was ranked as the 15th most reputable city in the world by City RepTrak⁴.

Catalonia's political ambitions are underpinned by a combination of geographic, economic, and sociocultural factors. The region has a long tradition of self-governance, an independent legal system, and a long history of parliamentary rule. The Catalan government has its own department of foreign relations. German political scientist Klaus-Jürgen Nagel has referred to Catalonia a "leader of European regionalism" because this autonomous region participates in various cross-border organizations and actively seeks to increase its involvement in the activities of the European Union institutions⁵. However, Catalonia is not a sovereign state, and while its inhabitants can reap the benefits of the EU's regional policy, they cannot participate in the voting process.

Political parties in Catalonia have relied on the narrative of Catalan national identity to mobilize their electorate. However, while the majority of the local population support the struggle for increasing Catalonia's autonomy, the independence movement has led to conflict not only with the state authorities, but also within the region. Catalonia's bid for independence is limited not only by Spanish national legislation, but also by potentially greater territorial claims. Catalonia has been historically divided between Spain and France, and if the region secedes from Spain, the borders of the new state will have to be established.

² *Òmnibus de la Generalitat de Catalunya 2021, REO 1011*, Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió. Generalitat de Catalunya 2022, p. 44.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

⁴ *The world's most reputable cities 2018*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/vickyvalet/2018/08/23/the-worlds-most-reputable-cities-2018/?sh=19e8648d7b4d> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

⁵ K.-J. Nagel, *Transcending the national/asserting the national: how stateless nations like Scotland, Wales and Catalonia react to European integration*, „Australian Journal of Politics and History” 2004, No. 50(1), pp. 61–63.

Bavaria

While access to the sea has been a key geographical factor in Catalonia's historical development, Bavaria has access to two rivers: the Danube, one of the leading trade routes in Europe, and the Main River which constitutes an informal border between the northern and southern German states. German states differ considerably in terms of religion, language, and culture. Throughout history, other trade routes crossed Bavaria's territory, and the cities of Regensburg, Augsburg, and Nuremberg became the leading centers of commerce. Bavaria has emerged as a prosperous agricultural region and a center of European trade.

Bavaria is the largest and the second most populous German state. It belongs to the group of top 20 European economies and accounts for 18.5% of Germany's GDP⁶. Despite the fact that Bavaria has the same rights as other federal states, its government has relied on the state's economic prowess to justify its uniqueness and desire for autonomy. The Christian Social Union (CSU), the leading political party in Bavaria, has been promoting an economic ideology that combines market liberalism with state intervention and social welfare. The CSU has referred to this approach as the "Bavarian way"⁷.

According to historical records, Bavaria has been an independent state since the 6th century, and although its role and sphere of influence have changed over time, the region was able to preserve its identity and, to a large extent, its independence⁸. Bavaria had been a sovereign state with a distinctive culture for many centuries, and due to the territorial fragmentation of Germany, it became a part of the German Empire only in the second half of the 19th century. Bavaria is the only German state with a genuine regional or even national identity⁹ which is based on the local dialect (Bayrish), local traditions, and historical memory of statehood. The local dialect is not recognized as an official language, but the vast majority of the local population use Bayrish in everyday communication.

Since the Reformation, Bavaria has been a stronghold of Catholicism, which sets it apart from the northern part of Germany. The percentage of Catholics continues to decline due immigration pressure, but the Church has retained its influence over the Bavarians' daily lives, and the region has the reputation of the most conservative German state. The Bavarian authorities rely on the state's symbolic influence to promote its interests.

⁶ *Bruttoinlandsprodukt, Bruttowertschöpfung. Bruttoinlandsprodukt bis 2021 – in jeweiligen Preisen – vorläufige Ergebnisse nach Bundesländern*, <https://www.statistikportal.de/de/vgrdl/ergebnisse-laenderebene/bruttoinlandsprodukt-bruttowertschoepfung/bip> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

⁷ E. Hepburn, *The neglected nation. The CSU and the territorial cleavage in Bavarian politics*, „German Politics” 2008, No. 17(2), p. 189.

⁸ B. Loester, *A comparison of the language situations of Bavarian and Scots*, „Scottish Language” 2009, No. 28, p. 89.

⁹ Y. Rudenko, *Konsolidatsiina model natsionalnoi identychnosti: vid teorii suverenitetu do teorii politychnoi modernizatsii*, Kyiv 2020, p. 91.

The region's official name is the Free State of Bavaria. The above does not imply that Bavaria has a special status within the federal German state, but its name has historical significance, and only three German states are officially designated as "free". Bavaria's distinct identity is reinforced by the global brands associated with the region, including the Bayern Munich football club, the automotive giants BMW, Audi, and MAN, and the Oktoberfest festival.

Local political parties, in particular the CSU, rely on the Bavarian identity to mobilize their electorate, strengthen their position in the German political arena, and, in particular, promote a more decentralized model of the federal system¹⁰. Bavaria has a thriving economy, and it has developed a distinct regional identity that is unique within Germany. Local politicians make use of the region's economic and symbolic capital to expand their influence on domestic politics, and some of them mobilize foreign policy allies to promote their interest. For instance, Bavarian officials have visited Moscow after 2014 and have criticized the federal government for imposing sanctions against Russia¹¹.

The Bavarian political establishment does not officially advocate for separation from the federal state, but national sentiments are clearly present. More than 30% of the state's population partly or fully support Bavarian independence, and similar results were noted in the opinion polls conducted in 2003¹² and 2017¹³.

Chechnya

Chechnya's development has been largely influenced by its location in a mountainous region. Due to its topographic isolation, Chechnya has been able to preserve its indigenous culture and traditional political system, and to resist occupation and complete assimilation by the main political actors. However, harsh living conditions in the mountains significantly restricted the region's economic and political development. Before the Russian invasion, Chechnya had a feudal social structure that was organized along tribal lines¹⁴. Modern Chechnya is an economically backward region. According to Zubarevich,

¹⁰ E. Hepburn, D. Hough, *Regionalist parties and the mobilization of territorial difference in Germany*, „Government and Opposition” 2012, No. 47(1), p. 82.

¹¹ *Horst Seehofer's trip to Russia a challenge to Angela Merkel*, <https://www.ft.com/content/2ca94528-08bc-11e7-97d1-5e720a26771b> (accessed: 24 III 2023); *Söder gibt sich bei Putin kompromisslos*, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/markus-soeder-gibt-sich-bei-wladimir-putin-kompromisslos-a-600c9647-7862-461e-8d21-2892e55dea0b> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

¹² *Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, Generationenstudie 2003. Heimat und Heimatgefühl in Bayern*, Munich 2003, p. 49.

¹³ *Bundesländervergleich: Jeder dritte Bayer für Unabhängigkeit von Deutschland*, <https://yougov.de/topics/travel/articles-reports/2017/07/18/bundeslaendervergleich-jeder-dritte-bayer-fur-unabh.> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

¹⁴ G. Anchabadze, *Vajnahi*, Tbilisi 2001, p. 4.

in 2021, federal subsidies accounted for 84% of the republic's total budget revenues¹⁵, and unemployment reached 19.8% (official data)¹⁶.

Despite its dependence on state funding, Chechnya has developed a local identity, and its inhabitants do not identify with the state. The main reason for the above is that historical relations between Chechnya and Russia have been marred by centuries of conflict, ranging from covert hostilities to open military aggression (Caucasian War, uprisings during the Soviet era, and two Chechen wars).

Russians and Chechens have virtually no common values. According to opinion polls, the only thing that unites Russians and Chechens is their shared victory in World War II, also known as the "Great Patriotic War". However, the massive deportation of the Chechen people during the war casts a long shadow on this accomplishment. Forced deportation constitutes one of the cornerstones of Chechen national memory. For the local inhabitants, the most memorable events are related to the history of the region, rather than the achievements of the state¹⁷.

The Chechen identity is based mainly on religious affiliation with Islam and Chechen ethnicity. Russian citizenship is of little significance for the Republic's inhabitants. Chechnya is a monoethnic territory, and ethnic Chechens account for 96.42% of its population¹⁸. At the same time, religion is an integral part of Chechen ethnic identity¹⁹. These peculiarities of self-identification have led the current head of state to establish close ties with Muslim leaders and introduce internal policies aiming at the Islamization of everyday life.

Members of the Kadyrov political dynasty, in particular Akhmad Kadyrov²⁰, the father of Chechnya's current leader, have created a "cult of personality" in Chechnya. Akhmad Kadyrov was the Chief Mufti and the Chairperson of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Chechen Republic, and he fought in the first Chechen war on the side of the insurgents before switching sides and becoming the president of the Republic

¹⁵ N. Zubarevich, *Kadyrov vtroe preuvelichil razmer dotacij dlja Chechni. No i real'nyj ob'em dotacij – ogromen*, <https://theins.ru/news/248112> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

¹⁶ *O situacii na rynke truda v Chechenskoj Respublike. Ministerstvo truda, zanjatosti i social'nogo razvitiia Chechenskoj Respubliki*, <https://www.mtchr.ru/o-situacii-na-rynke-truda-v-chechenskoj-respublike/> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

¹⁷ Z. Sikevich, *Jetniceskaja identichnost' russkih i chechencev v kontekste istoricheskoi pamjati (sravnitel'nyj analiz)*, „Vlast'" 2017, No. 25(2), p. 127.

¹⁸ *Vserossijskaja perepis' naselenija 2021 goda, Vol. 5. Nacional'nyj sostav i vladenie jazykami. Nacional'nyj sostav naselenija*, https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Tom5_tab1_VPN-2020.xlsx (accessed: 24 III 2023).

¹⁹ A. Sitnikov, M. Romanov, T. Odaev, *Religioznost' v Chechenskoj Respublike i ee vlijanie na social'nye instituty i instituty vlasti*, „Monitoring obshhestvennogo mnenija: jekonomicheskie i social'nye peremeny" 2019, No. 2, p. 172.

²⁰ *Geroj politicheskoi mifologii. Religioznyj kul't Ahmata Kadyrova v Chechne*, <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/geroy-politicheskoy-mifologii-religioznyj-kuljt-ahmata-kadyrova-v-chechne/31423903.html> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

in 2003. Political slogans, images, and trademarks associated with Akhmad Kadyrov have been popularized by the Kadyrov government.

At present, the Chechen authorities remain staunchly loyal to Russia. This economically backward, but ethnically, religiously, and politically homogeneous Republic receives subsidies from the federal government in exchange for loyalty and maintaining peace. However, Chechnya's isolation stems from many other social and cultural factors, and historical grievances have significantly contributed to the Chechen self-identity.

Crimea

The formation of the Crimean region was influenced by geographic factors, including access to the sea, the division into steppe and coastal zones, and location at the crossroads of civilizations. The sea connected the Crimean Peninsula to international trade networks and enabled settlement. According to Ukrainian researcher J. Vermenych, almost the entire history of Crimea before 1783 was dominated by the struggle between Mediterranean and nomadic cultures, and it was the difference in lifestyle that ensured their long coexistence. The nomadic tribes lacked navigational skills, and for many centuries they relied on the mediation of coastal dwellers. After 1783, the Crimean border was defined by the complex relationship between Russia and Turkey²¹.

Despite its relative favorable geographic location, Crimea continues to receive financial subsidies. Hundreds of thousands of local residents were deported during World War II, and the post-war reconstruction effort was disastrously slow. The resettlement of Ukrainians and Russians to the Peninsula was met with resentment due to inhumane living conditions. In the 1990s, political instability, high crime rates, and the expansion of the shadow economy hindered the region's development. In 2014, Ukraine's finance minister Oleksandr Shlapak stated that by 2013, Crimea had been able to meet its financial needs in only 51.2%, whereas the remaining expenses were covered from the Ukrainian state budget²².

The temporary occupation exacerbated economic problems: Crimea was dependent on water and electricity supplies from mainland Ukraine, economic sanctions were imposed on businesses, and Russian companies were reluctant to invest in Crimea in fear of sanctions. Subsidies to the Crimean government increased in the first years of the occupation. As noted by Russian economist N. Zubarevich, the share of state investments in Crimea in the total volume of investments exceeded 80% by the end of 2017²³.

²¹ Y. Vermenych, *Fenomen pohranychchia: Krym i Donbas v doli Ukrainy*, Kyiv 2018, p. 140.

²² *Krym buv i zalyshaetsia dotatsiynym rehionom – holova Minfinu*, <https://www.unian.ua/economics/finance/895858-krim-buv-i-zalishaetsya-dotatsiynim-regionom-golova-minfinu.html> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

²³ N. Zubarevich, *Sotsial'no-jekonomicheskoe razvitie i sostojanie bjudzhetov regionov v 2017 g.*, „Jekonomicheskoe razvitie Rossii” 2018, No. 25(2), p. 71.

Crimea's problems can be largely attributed to the USSR's barbaric policy towards the indigenous population. The deportation of Crimean Tatars was a milestone event in the Peninsula's history. According to H. Bekirova, deportation deprived Crimea of its multi-ethnic character, where different ethnic and religious groups coexisted peacefully, but did not assimilate, and where members of various social groups felt that they were part of a greater whole and, consequently, were able to develop a "Crimean" identity²⁴.

Due to the repressions and genocidal practices of the Soviet regime, and the decades-long ban on Tatar settlement in Crimea, more than half of the local population were displaced by the early 21st century, and indigenous inhabitants were an isolated minority. According to E. Horyunova, Russian and Crimean Tatar identities had been most strongly consolidated before the occupation, not only in terms of ethnicity. The Ukrainian identity was represented mainly by the ethnic component. The Crimeans had a relatively weak civic identity which changed with the political situation and prompted many Crimeans to assume Russian citizenship²⁵.

The largest ethnic groups shared virtually no common values. The only symbols that unified these groups were the Soviet slogan "Crimea is a pan-Soviet health resort" and the Artek international children's center, which relied on the nostalgic sentiments of the former Soviet republics. The Peninsula's potential for conflict is also reflected in its symbols. The Tatar coat of arms and flag, which make a reference to the Giray dynasty that reigned in the Khanate of Crimea, are significant symbols. Mustafa Dzhemilev, the leader of the Crimean Tatars, is a dissident who has long opposed the Soviet regime and was banned from entering Crimea. The Mejlis and the Qurultay, the executive bodies of the Crimean Tatar people, were also outlawed by Russia.

The Black Sea Fleet and Sevastopol, known as the "city of Russian sailors" and the "city of Russian glory", are the key symbols for the Russian population. These slogans were used to justify the occupant's rights to Crimea. Even before the occupation, indigenous place names making a reference to the Peninsula's turbulent history had been staunchly defended by ethnic groups and were a source of unending political conflict.

Crimea remains under the strong political influence of Russia which continued to implement aggressive policies against the Peninsula. Russia supported separatist movements in 1992–1996, attempted to occupy Tuzla Island, issued illegal passports to Crimea's residents, and funded pro-Russian organizations and protests. The Black Sea naval base in Sevastopol was of critical importance during the Russian invasion and occupation of Crimea.

²⁴ G. Bekirova, *Krymskie tatary 1941–1991. Opyt politicheskoy istorii*, Simferopol 2008, p. 9.

²⁵ Y. Horiunova, *Transformatsiia krymskoi identychnosti v umovakh rosiiskoi okupatsii pivostrova (2014–2021)*, „Politicus” 2021, No. 5, p. 24.

At the same time, political parties advocating for Crimean separatism did not receive significant support from the local population. Most Crimeans opted for more moderate pro-Russian forces. However, due to the lack of unity between pro-Ukrainian forces and low levels of civic identity, the Russian army was able to invade Crimea in 2014 almost without a fight. The Crimean Tatars were the only group that united in defense of territorial integrity. However, after the mass deportation campaigns of the 20th century, the Tatars accounted for only 13.7% of Crimea's population²⁶, and they were significantly outnumbered by Russian forces.

Donbas

The Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk regions) is the region that, for many centuries, had been known as the Wild Fields, a steppe zone that constituted “no man's land” and was not suitable for permanent habitation. The Donetsk steppe is a frontier battlefield and a war zone, where human settlement entailed many risks and difficult living conditions.

Hiroaki Kuromiya, an American researcher who specializes in the history of the Donbas, wrote: “In both a geographical and symbolic sense, the Donbas constitutes a particular community, just as a nation, city, or village does. It is a space, a frontier land, where inner yearnings for freedom, wild exploitation, and everyday violence have competed for dominance”²⁷.

The abundance of natural resources was the second factor that contributed to human settlement in the Donbas. Within just a few decades, this deserted region was turned into an industrial giant that needed vast numbers of people to serve its rapidly growing economy. The region's population increased several-fold in the course of a single century, and this desert area was rapidly urbanized. Economic growth and the demand for qualified labor have led to the establishment of educational institutions, provided financial incentives for migrant workers, and contributed to the development of cities.

However, the Donbas has become hostage to its industrial sector. The economic crisis of the 1990s led to mass impoverishment, lumpenization, and an increase in crime. The closure of businesses resulted in the economic decline of entire cities. The state attempted to counteract the crisis by creating special economic zones and priority development areas. By the end of 1999, such zones had been established in 22 cities and

²⁶ *Intehratsiia ranishe deportovanykh osib u Krymu, Ukraina. Otsinka potreb, serpen 2013 r.*, Verkhovnyi komisar OBSiE u spravakh natsionalnykh menshyn, 2013, p. 2.

²⁷ H. Kuromiya, *Svoboda i teror u Donbasi: Ukrainsko-rosiiske prykordonnia, 1870–1990-i roky*, Kyiv 2002, p. 22.

five districts of Donetsk region²⁸ and in six cities and three districts of Luhansk region²⁹. However, these measures served mainly the interests of the wealthy elites who lobbied for their implementation.

At the same time, strategic businesses were privatized with the active intervention of Russian actors, and financial and industrial groups were rapidly created to assume control over the region's key economic sectors and resources, thus significantly influencing state policy. At the peak of its economic development, the Donbas accounted for more than 17.5% of Ukraine's GDP³⁰, but its population continues to be heavily dependent on social benefits from the state budget. The volume of subsidies and grants exceeded the budget revenues generated by the region. According to O. Kryvytska, due to the rapid emergence of local financial elites, the Donbas was transformed into a "turbulent geopolitical zone" whose social structure was based largely on the socio-economic hierarchy rather than ethnicity³¹.

However, the settlement history and ethnic composition of the Donbas population should not be ignored. Hiroaki Kuromiya noted that "harsh economic exploitation and brutal ethnic conflict were part of the everyday life of the Donbas"³². Ukrainians have been the largest ethnic group in the Donbas since Cossack times, but the region's ethnic diversity was an obvious obstacle to the formation of a national identity. The mass migration of Russians to the Donbas during the Soviet era was also an important factor. Gasydzhak analyzed census data and found that the proportion of Ukrainians declined steadily, whereas the Russian population continued to increase in the region. Komsomol activists from various Soviet republics, university graduates, and professionals with managerial experience settled in the region to share their experience with the local population and fuel the economic development of the Donbas³³.

Unlike the Ukrainian-speaking population (mostly Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians), Russian-speaking Russians accounted for only a little over 50% of the Russian-speaking population of the Donbas, while the share of Russian-speaking Ukrainians remained significant (over 40%)³⁴. The main narrative used by Russia to justify the annexation of

²⁸ Pro spetsialni ekonomichni zony ta spetsialnyi rezhym investytsiinoi diialnosti v Donetskii oblasti. Zakon Ukrainy, redaktsiia vid 21 zhovtnia 1999, 356-XIV, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/356-14/ed19991021#Text> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

²⁹ Pro spetsialni ekonomichni zony ta spetsialnyi rezhym investytsiinoi diialnosti v Luhanskii oblasti. Zakon Ukrainy, redaktsiia vid 7 hrudnia 1999, 970-XIV, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/970-14/ed19991207#Text> (accessed: 24 III 2023).

³⁰ Statystychnyi zbirnyk „Valovyi rehionalnyi produkt za 2013 rik”, ed. I. Nikitinoi, Kyiv 2015, p. 13.

³¹ O. Kryvytska, *Identychnist ukrainskoho pohranychchia: Donbas*, „Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsionalnykh doslidzhen im. I.F. Kurasa NAN Ukrainy” 2017, Vol. 87, No. 1, p. 303.

³² H. Kuromiya, op. cit., p. 18.

³³ L. Hasydzhak, *Etnichniy sklad naseleння Donbasu: polityzatsiia problemy*, „Etnichna istoriia narodiv Yevropy” 2007, No. 22, p. 70.

³⁴ V. Skliar, *Vidminnosti v etnomovnii strukturi naseleння pidporiadkovanykh Ukraini ta okupovanykh terytorii Donetskoi ta Luhanskoi oblastei*, „Ukrainoznavchyi almanakh” 2016, No. 19, p. 83.

Crimea and the armed conflict in the Donbas region was “the oppression of the Russian-speaking population” rather than Russians.

As a result, the ethnic composition of the Donbas changed significantly, mainly under pressure from the Russian government. The percentage of Ukrainians decreased, and other ethnic groups in the region were nearly completely replaced by Russians who became the dominant ethnic minority. These processes did not contribute to the emergence of a Russian identity, but they significantly undermined the formation of a Ukrainian national identity in the region.

Soviet narratives, including the glorification of the working class and the significance of victory in the Great Patriotic War, occupied a prominent place in the symbolic dimension. The main representatives of the Stakhanovite movement – Alexei Stakhanov, Nikita Izotov, and Pasha Angelina – had direct links to the region. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the significance of these symbols gradually declined in the face of dire reality. Paternalistic trends were intensified during the transition to a market economy, and the working class was replaced by “red dictators” and then “businessmen” such as Yuri Zvyahylsky, Viktor Yanukovych, and Rinat Akhmetov whose reputation was questionable and provoked a negative response from the public. These men were largely responsible for the region’s negative reputation and the fact that the term “Donetsk” had largely negative connotations outside the Donbas. The Shakhtar football club was perhaps the only positive symbol that unified opposing forces in the region.

The political landscape of the Donbas has been largely influenced by its economy. After a short-lived rise, Ukrainian national movements were quickly marginalized, and coal miners’ strikes were used by the local authorities to confront the government in Kyiv. The economic crisis of the early 1990s led to a revival of communist sentiments. The Communist Party of Ukraine, banned at the peak of the perestroika, was revived during a congress in Donetsk and remained the leading political force in the Donbas for nearly 10 years. At the same time, organizations such as the International Movement of Donbas and the Movement for the Revival of the Donbas promoted Russian narratives about the federalization of Ukraine and its unification with Russia and Belarus.

At the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries, the communists were replaced by financial and industrial groups as the new local elites. These groups formed the Party of Regions, a political project which monopolized the political scene in the Donbas. The party protected the interests of the financial and industrial elites, including those linked to Russia, and received funding from these groups. The Party of Regions relied on Russian narratives and Soviet myths to communicate with the public and reinforce Russia’s symbolic influence in the region. The party lost political power in the 2014 revolution, and it was deprived of influence at all levels, from the parliament to local councils. Powerless

and unable to put up armed resistance, the people of Donbas had to confront Russia which relied on its considerable influence in the region to initiate hybrid warfare, followed by full-scale military aggression.

Conclusions and prospects for future research

Border regions have continued to emerge on the political map of the world throughout human history. This complex phenomenon is influenced by political, economic, migratory, and other factors. In this study, factors that determine the status of border regions, their levels of influence, and relations with their respective countries have been analyzed on the example of Catalonia, Bavaria, Chechnya, Crimea, and the Donbas. The analysis demonstrated that geographic factors such as climate and geophysical features, as well as the proximity of trade routes are responsible for differences in the “initial conditions” for the emergence of border regions. Difficult natural conditions enable population groups to preserve their unique traditions and identities, whereas physical barriers protect these regions against conquest and assimilation by more powerful forces. The proximity of trade routes can facilitate the economic growth of border regions and expand their influence. As a result, these territories can become sovereign nations or autonomous territorial and administrative regions within other states.

The history of settlement in a given region significantly influences the formation of border territories. Ethnicity, religion, self-identification of local inhabitants, language, and mentality are the key factors in this process. Regions such as Catalonia and Bavaria, which are in fact distinctive nations with their own ethnicity, language, and deeply rooted religious traditions, are able to defend their interests through dialogue with the central government. These regions absorb migrants who relatively easily identify with their new home. Territories with a monoethnic population and/or a single religion tend to isolate themselves from their respective countries. Other ethnic groups may be intentionally displaced, as can be seen on the example of Chechnya.

Border regions that have emerged as multi-ethnic boundaries with a blurred identity or territories that were significantly influenced by migration policies can become hotspots for ethnic conflict. Areas where territorial identity supersedes national or civic identity, such as Crimea or the Donbas, are particularly vulnerable to external influences.

A territory's political ambitions and capabilities are largely determined by its economic development, access to natural resources, contribution to the national economy, and dependence on government subsidies. However, economic prowess is only one of the many factors, and it changes over time. A territory may lose its independence and status during a period of economic decline. A region whose loyalty is dependent on government funding may find alternative sources of income and give up allegiance to the country.

Symbols are indicators rather than determinants of border regions' status. Self-sufficient territories are capable of creating global brands. Border regions with a well-defined identity maintain unity and homogeneity at the local level through the use of symbols. In contrast, territories lacking a well-established identity and economic resources tend to borrow symbols from external sources, and the image portrayed by these regions and their leaders often generate conflict.

Political factors such as traditions of statehood, stable institutions, and political movements and parties justify the political claims of territories and determine their ability to pursue these claims. Catalonia, Bavaria, and, to a certain extent, Chechnya can invoke their right to self-determination, and they have political leaders who formally represent their interests.

The results of the presented analysis indicate that border regions can be divided into three categories based on the following factors:

1. **Self-sufficiency.** Self-sufficient regions are usually formed under geographical conditions that support international trade. These regions are in fact political nations. These territories have a high economic potential and significant symbolic capital. They are capable of creating global brands and spreading their influence beyond their borders. These border regions have established political institutions that represent their interests at the national and international level. They invoke the right to self-determination, and, under favorable economic and political conditions, can destabilize the states in which they are located and claim sovereignty.
2. **Monoethnicity.** Monoethnic regions have a distinctive ethnic and religious identity and a historical memory or a myth of their own nation-state. However, these territories are dependent on external funding due to the scarcity of economic resources. Local leaders uphold the regions' ethnic and religious homogeneity through symbolic and political influence, which contributes to their isolation from the state. Such regions do not have sufficient resources to claim the right to self-determination. However, the central government's failure to reward these regions for their loyalty can be regarded as a violation of the status quo and can lead to secession.
3. **Geographic boundaries.** Limitrophe states have a marginal, unclear, and multi-ethnic identity. Their "identity matrix" is shaped through myths and social divisions ("us" vs. "them", "good" vs. "bad") rather than national values or civic identity. These regions borrow symbols and their meanings from the neighboring areas (states). Limitrophe regions have no traditions of statehood. Under favorable economic conditions, local leaders expand their political influence to the national level, but by relying on symbolic capital borrowed from external sources, they in fact become agents of the owners of that capital. These regions

are risk zones that are unable to acquire sovereignty (at least in the foreseeable future), but can destabilize their respective states.

In view of the above, the shift in the global order after Russia's invasion of Ukraine is likely to intensify conflict in regions situated along national borders. Countries with monoethnic borders will have to implement special measures to maintain their national integrity and sovereignty, and to strengthen the role of self-sufficient border regions as spaces for intercultural dialogue, centers that foster global development trends and brands, incubators of innovation, and regional centers with a unique identity.

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Historical formation of border regions in the context of the transformation of the modern world order

Summary: Border regions are formed in different spatiotemporal continua and under different initial conditions, where historical factors play the most important role. As a result, these territories are not homogeneous in terms of their character, essence, self-identification, and aspirations. The features of modern border regions have evolved under the influence of geographic, economic, and political factors, as well as migration processes. In this study, attempts were made to classify border regions and to analyze the history and development prospects of these areas as constituent elements of sovereign states. In the group of the examined factors, the main focus was placed on the historical discourse concerning the formation of these territories, their present development, the influence exerted by their respective states, and the interactions with these states. The novelty of the presented research stems from the fact that it classifies modern border regions into three types. The first type includes self-sufficient regions which fostered the development of political nations with a high economic potential, symbolic capital, and stable political institutions. These territories could probably evolve into independent states and, under favorable economic and political conditions, could destabilize their respective countries. The second category of border regions are monoethnic regions with a strong ethnic and religious identity. Due to resource scarcity, these areas are dependent on external funding (both from their respective countries and other states) and could become hotbeds of international conflict. The third type of border regions are territories situated along geographic boundaries, where ethnic or civic identity has not evolved. These areas are vulnerable to external influence, and they are regarded as risk zones that are unable to achieve independence, but can destabilize states whose boundaries overlap these territories.

Keywords: world order, border regions, frontier, Catalonia, Bavaria, Donbas, Chechnya, Crimea.

Historische Dimensionen der Bildung von Grenzgebieten im Kontext der Transformation der heutigen Weltordnung

Zusammenfassung: Grenzgebiete bilden sich in unterschiedlichen zeitlichen und räumlichen Kontinua und unter verschiedenen Ausgangsbedingungen heraus, wobei historische Faktoren eine wichtige Rolle spielen. Infolgedessen sind diese Gebiete in Bezug auf ihre Natur, ihr Wesen, ihre Selbstidentifikation und ihre Bestrebungen nicht homogen. Die heutigen Grenzgebiete haben ihre Merkmale unter dem Einfluss von geografischen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Faktoren sowie von Migrationsprozessen erworben. Die Autoren haben versucht, die Grenzgebiete zu klassifizieren sowie die Geschichte ihrer Entstehung und ihre Entwicklungsperspektiven als Elemente der staatlichen Souveränität darzustellen. Bei den vergleichenden Indikatoren konzentrierten sich die Autoren auf den historischen Diskurs über die Entstehung dieser Gebiete, auf Indikatoren für den aktuellen Entwicklungsstand, den Grad des Einflusses und die Formen der Interaktion mit den jeweiligen Staaten. Das wissenschaftlich Neue an der Studie der Autoren ist die Identifizierung von drei Typen von zeitgenössischen Grenzgebieten. Insbeson-

dere: 1) autarke Räume, in denen sich politische Nationen mit einem starken wirtschaftlichen Potenzial, symbolischem Kapital und stabilen politischen Institutionen herausgebildet haben. Diese Gebiete würden wahrscheinlich vorgeben, eine unabhängige Einheit zu werden, und könnten unter günstigen wirtschaftlichen und politischen Bedingungen die Staaten, in denen sie liegen, destabilisieren; 2) monoethnische Gebiete, die in Form von ethnischen und religiösen Identitäten existieren. Aufgrund mangelnder wirtschaftlicher Ressourcen sind sie von externer Finanzierung abhängig (sowohl von ihrem eigenen Staat als auch von anderen) und können zu Zentren zwischenstaatlicher Konflikte werden; und 3) geografische Grenzen - Gebiete, in denen sich keine ethnischen oder staatsbürgerlichen Identitäten herausgebildet haben, die für externe Einflüsse anfällig sind und als Risikozonen gelten, die nicht in der Lage sind, eine unabhängige Einheit zu bilden, aber Staaten destabilisieren können, deren Grenzen mit denen der Gebiete zusammenfallen.

Schlüsselwörter: Weltordnung, Grenzgebiete, Grenze, Katalonien, Bayern, Donbas, Tschetschenien, Krim

Historyczny wymiar kształtowania się obszarów przygranicznych w kontekście transformacji współczesnego ładu światowego

Streszczenie: Obszary przygraniczne kształtują się w różnych kontinuuach czasowo-przestrzennych i w różnych warunkach początkowych, w których najważniejsze są czynniki historyczne. W rezultacie terytoria te nie są jednorodne ze względu na swoją naturę, istotę, samoidentyfikację i aspiracje. Współczesne obszary przygraniczne nabrały swoich cech pod wpływem czynników geograficznych, ekonomicznych, politycznych i procesów migracyjnych. Autorzy podjęli próbę sklasyfikowania obszarów przygranicznych, a także przedstawienia historii ich powstawania i perspektyw rozwoju jako elementów suwerenności państwa. Wśród wskaźników porównawczych autorzy skupili się na historycznym dyskursie formowania się tych terytoriów, wskaźnikach obecnego stanu rozwoju, poziomach wpływów i formach interakcji z odpowiednimi państwami. Naukową nowością badania autorów jest identyfikacja trzech typów współczesnych obszarów przygranicznych. W szczególności: 1) samowystarczalnych przestrzeni, w których ukształtowały się narody polityczne o silnym potencjale gospodarczym, kapitale symbolicznym i stabilnych instytucjach politycznych. Terytoria te prawdopodobnie pretendowałyby do stania się niezależnym podmiotem, a także, w sprzyjających warunkach gospodarczych i politycznych, mogłyby zdestabilizować państwa, w których się znajdują; 2) terytoria monoetniczne, które istnieją w formacie tożsamości etnicznych i religijnych. Ze względu na brak zasobów ekonomicznych są one uzależnione od finansowania zewnętrznego (zarówno od własnego państwa, jak i od innych) i mogą stać się ośrodkami konfliktów międzypaństwowych; 3) granice geograficzne – terytoria, na których nie ukształtowała się tożsamość etniczna lub obywatelska, są podatne na wpływy zewnętrzne, są traktowane jako strefy ryzyka, które nie są w stanie stać się niezależnym podmiotem, ale mogą destabilizować państwa, których granice pokrywają się z ich granicami.

Słowa kluczowe: porządek świata, obszary przygraniczne, granica, Katalonia, Bawaria, Donbas, Czeczenia, Krym