

“I’ll be back!”: The Ukrainian Way to Europe

by Oleksandr Sharov*

Abstract

Ukraine’s European integration aspirations have old historical ties with European civilization, which were interrupted by three centuries of being part of the Eurasian Empire. As a result, the Ukrainian national mentality contains features of both Eurasianism and Europeanism (and the latter were always perceived by the Eurasian empire as something alien). Russian aggression against Ukraine and against the entire West (primarily the EU) makes Ukraine’s accession to the EU a priority for both sides. In this regard, the EU is even ready to change the procedure for admitting new members. At the same time, in order to successfully integrate into the EU, Ukraine must not only fulfill the relevant technical requirements, but also rid its society of the remnants of Eurasianism. And the easiest way to do this is within the EU and with the support of other member states, since both sides need it. Today, when security and defense issues are beginning to play a more important role than the economy, Ukraine’s accession to the EU becomes especially relevant.

The Maidan Application

The European Union, which is based on the Rome Agreement of 1957, concluded by six countries of Western Europe, gradually expanded and strengthened, and came close to the borders of Ukraine. And now the EU, which has 27 members, has joined not only Malta and Cyprus, which have been waiting for their turn for a long time, but also our former partners in the Soviet Union – the Baltic republics (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia), as

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well as neighbours from of the Socialist Camp – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia. We should not forget about the European aspirations of the Western Balkan countries, our neighbours – Moldova and Georgia, and our other neighbour – Turkey.

Ukraine's long road to signing an association agreement was almost derailed by political interference from Moscow, which was, however, thwarted by the direct expression of popular will known as *the Maidan 2014*. Following eight years of thorough work on the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, Ukraine has submitted its application for membership on February 28, 2022, five days into Russia's brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Upon receiving the candidate status in June 2022, Ukraine opened a brand new chapter of relations with the EU. The new status, however, was complemented by seven additional recommendations by the European Commission (regarding improving of Ukraine's legal system). Now, most of them are implemented or in process of implementation.

The next step for Ukraine in the accession marathon is the start of the negotiations. Negotiations are a complicated process that usually takes between three and seven years. They are structured around 35 chapters of the EU law – the so-called EU *acquis communautaire*. Basically, the chapters are 35 policy areas in which Ukrainian legislation has to be approximated to the EU law.

Later on, when all 35 chapters are closed, an accession treaty is signed. It should be supported by the European Parliament and ratified by the parliaments of all 27 member-states and the Ukrainian parliament. This completes the Ukrainian accession journey and Ukraine becomes a full member of the European Union.

This is how the purely technical, one might say - bureaucratic, side of the matter looks.

Ukraine isn't Russia, Ukraine is Europe

Meanwhile, the strategic vision of the development of the Ukrainian state through European integration has been perceived ambiguously in our country for too long. Although almost all political forces agreed that Ukraine's place is in Europe, disagreements began in details where is the devil hiding. The loudest voices were those who replaced the geopolitical question with a simple geographical answer: they say, there is nothing to talk about, because Ukraine is already located in Europe, moreover, in its

very centre¹. Others, on the contrary, considered the path to the European Community to be so long and difficult that it is more reasonable to move there together with Russia, or perhaps even with the entire CIS countries. But someone disagreed with such an argument, explaining it by Russia’s “Eurasian choice” and the non-Europeaness of many CIS peoples, while Ukrainians have been a purely European nation since ancient times. However, the words of the then President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, were a cold shower for them. In an interview to the Dutch daily *De Volkskrant* (November 27, 2002) he said: “The fact that Ukrainians or Armenians feel European means nothing to me. Because New Zealanders feel European too”. That is, it is not very important what other nations think about themselves (New Zealanders, they say, also consider themselves a European nation), it is more important what undoubted Europeans think about it.

Before starting to analyze the problem, first of all it is necessary to outline some basic concepts. So, talking about “Europe”, we mean not so much the geographical space from Brest to the Urals and from the Norwegian fjords to the Sicilian rocks, but the peoples and states belonging to the European Civilization. Considering this, it is probably more correct to speak not about the place of Ukraine in Europe, but about the place of Ukrainians among European nations. Then the problems immediately take on clearer features.

Further, we understand the concept of “joining Europe” as the introduction into our everyday life of the rules and traditions by which the nations of “old Europe” live from Brest to Brest², and not to the Urals (since in the latter case there is no need to join anyone, because all our rules and traditions, by definition, are considered European). By “European integration” will be meant the achievement of associated or full membership in the European Union and, accordingly, in NATO (although this is a separate but closely related issue)³.

¹ There are several options where the centre of Europe is located. In 1885-1887, geographers from the Imperial-Royal Military Geographical Institute in Vienna determined that the geographical centre of Europe is located in the village of Dilove (Zakarpattia region, Ukraine). After a thorough study of the area, geologists installed a memorial sign on the territory of the village of Dilove with the following inscription: “Locus Perennis Delicentissime cum libella librationes quae est in Austria et Hungaria confectacum mensura gradum meridionalum et paralleloumierum Europeum. MD CCC LXXXVII”.

² This refers to the French Brest on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and the Belarusian Brest on the border with Poland.

³ Associated country means a third country which is party to an international

First of all, let's note that the EU in its current state (even taking into account the latest Enlargement) is not exactly a "new project". As then Germany's President Johannes Rau said:

The dream of a peaceful and united Europe is centuries old. Many have argued for it in their time, among them Henry IV, Victor Hugo, Aristide Briand, the Heidelberg Program of Germany's Social Democratic Party in 1925, Winston Churchill and Konrad Adenauer. (Rau, 2002:34)

By and large, this is another attempt to return to the united Europe of the times of the Roman Empire, which was periodically repeated throughout post-Roman history. In this regard, specialists can recall not only the well-known example with the Empire of Charlemagne – the "father of Europe" (as his contemporaries called him), but also the less well-known unrealized project of Richard the Lionheart regarding the "Empire of Anjou", the reality of the creation of which was for the Plantagenets a serious political purpose from the second half of the 12th century. And the French king Philip IV the Fair is suspected of having tried to use the wealth of the Templar Order he destroyed to acquire the Imperial Crown and thus unify most of the European lands under a single authority. But it was not destined. In the 14th-18th centuries the possibility of unification on the basis of a union of monarchs (from Pierre Dubois to Abbé de Saint-Pierre) was discussed. In this context, the unification of Europe under the "revolutionary sceptre" of Napoleon Bonaparte can also be considered.

In the 19th century Giuseppe Mazzini and Victor Hugo, on the contrary, believed that only Republican regimes are capable of uniting into the United States of Europe. Let's also mention that Comte de Saint-Simon hoped for the unification of Europe through economic convergence and the elimination of trade borders. The movement for a united Europe was also quite noticeable in the '20s of the last century. It is enough to recall the names of the apologists of this idea, such as: Jose Ortega y Gasset, Conte Carlo Sforza or Aristide Briand. But here's what draws attention: in all these cases, the concept of "Europe" is actually limited to the lands that in ancient times were called Christendom, or the "Christian Republic" (Christianity). At the same time, in the imagination of contemporaries, Christianity did

agreement with the Community, under the terms or on the basis of which it makes a financial contribution to all or part of the Community research, technological development and demonstration programmes. Associated Country status is open to countries that are members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and current EU candidate nations. The terms of their association differ slightly by country. They do not have a role in the negotiations that shape EU research funding.

not include all Christian countries, but only Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist countries. (Fletcher, 1997:509) And “Ukraine did not play any real role in Roman Europe. (...) The Europe of the Holy Roman Empire [only] coexisted with Russia-Byzantium” (Wilson, 2022:315). At the same time, it was somehow forgotten that Christian Europe was created, in particular, on the basis of three large geopolitical formations – the Latin West, the Byzantine Empire, and Kievan Rus’⁴, and none of the projects (starting with Charlemagne) envisaged the entry into a united Europe of either Byzantium or Rus state. The reasons for this are that the further spread of European (Latin) civilization to the East depended on the advance from East to West deep into the continent of the Tatars’ *Golden Horde* and, later, the Ottoman and Russian empires. Of course, in certain periods there were situations in which these parts of geographical Europe temporarily joined the rest of “Christendom” (such as, for example, Greece during the period of the “Latin Empire” after the Fourth Crusade or right-bank Ukraine during the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth/*Rze zp spolita*). But each time it was about joining the values existing in the Western part of Europe, and not about an equal role in this union. Moreover, the defence of one’s system of values (from “faith of parents” and “traditions of great-grandfathers” up to Gorbachev’s “*choice of our grandfathers*” and Putin’s “*spiritual screpy*”/staples) in these territories led to further “falling out of Europe”.

And what were the actual differences in these same values? The Western model showed the dependence of the Imperial Power on the Church, the Eastern Byzantine model testified to the subordination of the Church institution to the Imperial Power. Thus, the very idea of statehood was fundamentally different: in the East, it found its full embodiment in the Empire, which subjugated the Church itself to its power; in the West, it is completely the opposite: the Pope, thanks to known circumstances, concentrated in his hands not only spiritual power, but also worldly power. Therefore, Western despots were restrained by the moral authority of a supranational authority - the Pope (who could, in extreme cases, exempt his subjects from swearing allegiance), while Eastern despots always guaranteed themselves the ideological support of their protégés in the national churches. And this even now reminds us of something not only from the relatively recent past, but even from our present. (And that is why the confrontation of “Moscow

⁴ The term «Rus’» originally referred only to the Kievan state. After these lands became part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, they were called “the Rus’ Principality”. But when the Moscow Tsar Peter the First proclaimed himself Emperor, he chose the name “Russia” (the Greek version of the word “Rus’”) for his Empire.

Orthodoxy” with the Ukrainian authorities often remains incomprehensible in Western Europe, where some people see it as pressure on freedom of religion, and not as a confrontation with an ideological agent of the enemy Empire).

The role of the state is closely connected with the main problem that Ukraine is constantly reproached by its external partners – a *corruption*. There is no doubt that any form of corruption, especially embezzlement and swindling, is unacceptable. And all the political forces of Ukraine know this. And just so steadily they fight against it. However, they do without significant success. It’s just that the reason for all corruption lies not only in simple human greed and dishonesty, but also in the nature of the *Eurasian form of power*, which has always underpaid everybody, including its officials. At the same time, it established a relationship with them, which received the eloquent name of “*cormlenie*” – i.e. *feeding*. Thus, the officials got the right to collect any money for himself (on top of what they were obliged to deliver for the government). Officials did not perceive this as a violation, but as a norm. Some perceive it in this way even now. It is not only law enforcement agencies, but also the whole society that should force them to work in accordance with the *new normal*. But only a truly democratic society can do this, because it considers itself the “supreme power” not only because it is written in the Constitution, but also because the new normal is a fact of daily life.

Everyone also knows the different attitude of people towards private ownership of land at the two ends of geographical Europe. It is based on the difference in historical practice, due to the different periods of disappearance of *i*) the village (*countryside*) community – in the East and *ii*) the German landmark community (*Markgenossenschaft*) – in the West.

In the East (...) the peasant community was protected from destruction. Having delayed social evolution at the first, i.e., economic stage, the Byzantine kings undoubtedly prevented the development of the order of things that had come in the West: in Byzantium, it was impossible to develop seigniorial and vassal relations, it was impossible to create a feudal system. (Uspenskiy, 1996: 685)

For Europe already at the beginning of the 20th century, it was rather of academician and historical interest, and in the expanses of the Russian Empire – of practical interest, since the issue of community played an important role in legislation, science, and literature. Ultimately, this led to the liquidation of private farming and the emergence of collective farms (actually state-owned agricultural enterprises). How important is it? In Western

Europe, the principle “my vassal’s vassal is not my vassal” was in effect. As a result, the royal power is increasingly destroyed, and the administrative and judicial power of the lords grows in its place. Here is the germ of the three branches of power, and the rights of the regions... In the Byzantine tradition nothing like this was observed. Such a thing would not have existed in Ukraine, if for three centuries it had not been a component of another European state - the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rze zp spolita*). After all, in the Russian tradition, the absolute power of the Byzantine Emperor (tsar) was strengthened by the absolute despotism of the Mongol Great Khan.

As one can see, the most important “values” that ultimately need to be realized are closely related to the heirloom of Byzantium and the Golden Horde. These are not the ancient traditions of the Ukrainian people, but “mildew”, deprived by three centuries of life in a Eurasian state. Initially, original European traditions could be preserved, if historical events unfolded a little differently. In particular, the first archbishop of Magdeburg, Adalbert of Magdeburg, before being promoted to this high rank, was sent by Emperor Otto to the country of the Rus’ (*Rusciae*) as a simple bishop but was expelled by pagan allies of Sviatoslav, Prince of Kyiv. It happened because in the period between the sending of the mission to Emperor Otto by Grand Princess Olha in 959 and the arrival of Adalbert in Kyiv in 961, a bloodless coup took place. Pagan party prevailed, the young Sviatoslav pushed his mother into the background, and that’s why the German bishops had to return empty-handed. So, better roads and faster trip could result by close relations of Rus with Western Christianity and fate of the rest of Europe. Then, in XIII century Prince Danylo of Galich requested Pope Innocentius IV to organize a crusade against Tatars of Batu Khan with promise to accept the crown and royal title and Rome version of Christianity. Meanwhile, army of Batu, that reached Trieste, returned to Mongolia: Rus’ remained subordinated to Gold Horde instead of joining to Christendom. This could lead to the fact that the Kingdom of Galicia (the historical basis of Ukraine) would become part of Christendom.

It cannot be said that Ukrainians did not try to change themselves. There was a great chance to do it in 17th century in times of Ukrainian rebellion against Polish dominance. But the political elite, after considerable hesitation, was inclined to support the old traditions (first of all – Orthodox Christianity). And it was not a mistake, but a historical choice.

Quick disappointment in this choice (caused by the Russian fear of the “European path of development”) which was incomparably stronger than the fear of despotism and the fact that freedom was never a priority value for the Russian intelligentsia) (Zabuzhko, 2018:554-555) led to opposition

to assimilation with Eurasian civilization. And that one, in turn, fought against any manifestations of the old European tradition. Hence, the ban on the activities of the *Uniate* (Greek Catholic) Church, the liquidation of Cossack institutions (Hetmanship, Zaporozhye Sich), the destruction of the peasant private farming and establishment of serfdom, and in response – Hetman *Mazepa's rebellion* against Peter the First, the peasant republic of *father Makhno*, the *Maidans*...

All this is hidden by the history written by the Russian Empire. “But the *written history* (...) is far from the same as the *actual* history – and the latter is endowed with the attribute of indestructibility... Is it possible in the new century to re-galvanize our chivalrous heritage, ‘elimination of the gap’?” (Zabuzhko, 2018:637) In the end, one needs to understand that the issue of Ukraine’s European integration is a historical choice for us again. After all, we are only geographical Europe today. If the ideas of Byzantium had historically won, other European countries would have united around them. But it happened as it happened...

So, Ukraine is not trying to join the club of countries with a different history and national mentality. It strives to return to the native house, which it did not even leave voluntarily, but was kidnapped. This is not the return of the Prodigal Son. This is the release of a hostage.

Is it economy, stupid?

Such brief *path dependence* analysis leads to the conclusion that Ukraine’s accession to the EU requires, first of all, significant efforts not only (and not so much) in the economic sphere, but in the sphere of humanitarian and socio-political relations. Changing your own habits and traditions is difficult. So, are we, our neighbours, colleagues, and the majority of the people ready for this – that is a question? Are Ukrainian politicians well aware of the complexity of this process? Do they remember that integration into the EU is not a bureaucratic procedure, but a truly national affair? It is not possible to join the European Union as easily as the Eurasian Union or the “single economic space” of the CIS countries. The accession procedure requires referendums in all EU member-countries (whether they agree to recognize Ukrainians as “Europeans”), as well as in Ukraine (whether Ukrainians consider themselves “Europeans”). Let me remind that even in more pro-Western countries, a significant part of the population opposed joining the European Union during mandatory referendums: in Slovenia, 21%; in Cyprus, 25%; in Estonia, 31%; in Latvia and Malta, 32 %.

Modern sociological studies indicate a strong desire of the majority of Ukrainians for European integration. In particular, in 2019, 30% of Ukrainians saw full membership in the EU as the best model for rapprochement. After 2022, this indicator increased to 93%. The reason for such rapid dynamics was, of course, the War, which Russia invaded Ukraine and radically changed the outlook of every citizen of the Ukrainian state in.

Against this background, one may wonder how timely is the optimism regarding the results of public opinion polls? It seems that for many people, joining Europe is not associated with the adoption of “European values”, the European lifestyle and social behaviour, the poetry of Francesco Petrarca or the Sistine Chapel, but only with the possible provision of a higher life standard. Many people expect that this prosperity will fall on their heads automatically, as a result of the very fact of joining the EU. Instead, the European Union agrees to join only those countries that have already achieved a certain level of economic development.

At the same time, it should be noted that the recent enlargements of the Union have already created a lot of problems. First of all, due to the fact that the number of member states of the European Union has increased inadequately to the economic potential, which is growing at a much more moderate pace.

Unfortunately, Ukraine also does not boast a high GDP per capita: according to World Bank estimates, in pre-war 2021 it was equal to about 4,835 US dollars, or less than 10 percent of the average level for EU member-countries. But this, in fact, is the chance for Ukraine. One way or another, Europe is no longer a “club of the rich”. Those countries that were recently among the outsiders – Greece, Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Romania, and Bulgaria – today occupy quite decent places in the “European club”. And “new Europeans” from post-communist countries perfectly understand that quantitative macroeconomic indicators are not the main criterion of “Europeanness”. For example, even before joining the EU, Polish government officials stated: “Europe did not end a few years ago at the Oder River and will not end on the Bug River in the near future. (...) And after expansion (...) we must develop strategic relations with Ukraine, Russia and Belarus” (Wilson, 2002:287). Such a strategy is traditional for Polish politicians. In any case, the Chief of the Polish State (*Naczelnik Państwa*) Józef Piłsudski spoke as early as 1919 about the need to create a union of states from Finland to the Caucasus, led by Poland and Ukraine as a connecting link.

However, it should also be taken into account that the Europe to which Ukraine will eventually join will not today’s Europe at all. After all, as many Europeans feel, the old Europe is dying because its very idea, its culture

and what it stands for have changed. And this, in fact, is the most important thing. No matter how wealthy the “European club” looks for outside observers, for the club members themselves it is primarily an association of like-minded neighbours, and not only the rich ones. Simply wealthy, economically developed countries are the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It is important that an architect of the EU, Jean Monnet, said at the end of his life that if he had to create a united Europe again, he would start not with the economy, but with culture. And today the weak link of the united Europe is precisely the common culture, a single mentality, not the uniformity of economic development.

If one looks at Ukraine from this point of view, one could see that the degree of openness and involvement of Ukraine’s economy in the international division of labour is quite large and generally meets the requirements of the modern World Economy (in any case, if we talk about quantitative indicators). The average value of the trade openness indicator for Ukraine during the period of its independence (since 1992) was 89.36 percent, with a minimum of 45.97 percent in 1992 and a maximum of 115.74 percent in 2000. The latest value from 2022 is 87.71 percent. By comparison, the global average in 2022 based on 148 countries was 100.81 percent. Ukraine’s trade openness is lower compared to neighbouring EU members, such as Poland (117.6) or Slovakia (186.8), but not so much lower than in Germany (89.5) and even higher than in Spain (68, 2) and France (63.9).

At the same time, it is worth considering that Poland, for example, increased its openness index from 89.3 to 117.6% in 10 years. The EU is Ukraine’s largest trading partner, accounting for 55.2% of its trade in goods in 2022. Ukraine is the 17th largest trading partner of the EU, which accounts for about 1% of the total EU trade in goods. Total trade in goods between the EU and Ukraine reached EUR 57.8 billion in 2022, i.e. trade in goods has doubled since the entry into force of the FTAA in 2016. Thus, it can be expected that the integration processes will lead to an increase in trade openness and deepening of Ukraine’s trade relations with EU countries, and in the future, currency integration will contribute to our accession to the European Union.

Europe: *Premonición de la Guerra*

But what fundamentally changes the very understanding of the need for Ukraine to join the EU is Russian aggression against Ukraine, aimed at the entire the West (and, first of all, the EU). Europe felt this threat with the

arrival of the new Millennium. This found its expression in the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). It is described in the Treaty of Lisbon, also known as the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which entered into force in 2009. Since the Treaty of Lisbon, the CSDP has evolved significantly, both politically and institutionally. In June 2021, the EU launched a reflection on the future of European security and defence. This process led to the creation of the Strategic Compass on Security and Defence, a policy document which lays down the EU’s security and defence strategy for the next 5-10 years. But it is quite possible that the CSDP will require a radical revision in the direction of accelerating the creation and strengthening of joint military forces. And it is Ukraine that will play one of the key roles in this process. Increasing the value of the EU security component will also increase the value of Ukraine for other member states (which largely compensates for incomplete compliance with certain economic or legal criteria). It seems that the understanding of this “new normal” has found support among European politicians.

Ukraine’s formal application for EU membership, on 28 February 2022, took place in tragic circumstances. It also came as a surprise to many. The formal bid for EU membership was an act of despair by a country already at war since 2014, and now fighting for its survival. Indeed, this bold move ultimately served its purpose and considerably boosted the combating morale of the Ukrainian nation. It also raised hopes for more military, financial and technical assistance on behalf of the EU to support Ukraine in its war effort. By any standards, the EU accession process triggered by the application unfolded with unprecedented speed. Arguably therefore, the EU Member States and institutions have granted the candidate status to Ukraine essentially as an act of moral support, to boost the country’s resistance to the aggression and, perhaps more than ever in the history of EU enlargement, as a (geo) political decision rather than a scrupulous legal application of the conditions related to art. 49 TEU (Petrov, 2023:1058).

The European Commission started working on a draft negotiation framework for Ukraine, a document that defines the principles and procedures for negotiating EU accession, in January 2024. It was hoped that the negotiating framework would be ready approved at an intergovernmental conference convened after the March summit of EU leaders. The convening of the intergovernmental conference is the de facto start of accession negotiations. But as it became known later, the framework for negotiations on Ukraine’s accession to the EU will not be ready before the European elections scheduled for early June, 2024. As expected, the proposals would change how the EU admits new members. Rather than the current all-or-

nothing approach, Brussels wants to gradually ease Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans into the EU. This would allow countries in the EU waiting room to reap some membership benefits, rather than waiting for years or decades while they undertake the necessary reforms. In particular, Brussels is proposing to gradually allow accession countries to join the single market — drawing from a proposal by France, Germany and Portugal (Vela, 2024).

Conclusion

This allows us to conclude that, most likely, Ukraine cannot simply take the model of some country and try to reproduce it in itself, since the tasks that Ukraine solves are specific. At the same time, when forming the post-war model of Ukraine's foreign economic openness, it is necessary to take into account both the specifics of the tasks being solved and the general trends characteristic of the modern world. (Zadoia and Duc,2023:264) It allows to conclude that, most likely, Ukraine cannot simply adopt a model of some country and try to reproduce it in itself, since the tasks to be solved by Ukraine are specific. At the same time, when forming the post-war model of foreign economic openness of Ukraine, it is necessary to take into account both the specifics of the tasks to be solved and the general trends characteristic of the modern world.

Thus, the following final theses of our analysis can be put forward:

- politically, Europe is the countries of Western Roman civilization;
- Ukraine historically belongs to both Western and Eastern Roman (Byzantine) civilizations;
- there are quite large differences between the two branches of Roman civilization, but neither theoretically nor practically they constitute insurmountable obstacles for convergence;
- the convergence of Western and Eastern European countries at the current historical stage requires not only the further development in Eastern European countries of traditions that coincide with Western European values, but also the borrowing of certain traditions, rules and laws that are not characteristic of Byzantine civilization (but which will not destroy society);
- such convergence will require not only and not so much hard work of authorities, but awareness of the need for changes by an active part of the population.

The prevailing opinion among experts is that

whether and when Ukraine accedes to the European Union will depend greatly on how and when its war with Russia ends and post-war reconstruction starts, and how the EU handles issues of governance, security, migration, trade, investment, the energy transition, decarbonisation and the EU budget. The enlargement process is likely to overlap with post-war reconstruction, increasing the EU’s influence in fostering Ukraine’s institutional development. (Darvas *et al.*, 2024)

There is hope that Ukraine’s accession to the European Union will immediately stop the war, as Russia is unable to fight in Europe. May be more realistic is view of Ukrainian Prime Minister D. Shmyhal, who said:

I have great hope that the political decision on Ukraine’s accession [to the EU] will be made immediately after our victory. I do not believe that the EU will wait for any formalities for Ukraine to do its homework. We will do it, we fulfil all our obligations and we appreciate the advance steps. (RBC-Ukraine, 2024)

The same time, as Dr. V. Poselsky of the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO, Paris) noted, contemporary move to unite Europe within a single political and economic community is often regarded as the latest geopolitical “expansion of the West” or, vice versa, a civilizational “European homecoming”. We believe that it is worthwhile defining the current advancement of the European Union to the East of the continent as the process of voluntarily assuming all the Western norms and values by the countries of the former Eastern Europe, which facilitates their economic integration as well as further accession to the European Community. Regarding all this approaching the EU contains four interconnected stages: stabilization, democratization, the establishment of association and the acquiring of membership (Poselsky, 2004: 53). It is expected, that the EU will also need to develop assistance programmes to help the Ukrainian government manage post-war external and internal security challenges, including the large number of weapons in circulation, and to encourage Ukrainian refugees to return to the country when possible, as they will be needed for the reconstruction effort (Darvas *et al.*, 2024).

Bernard Henri-Lévy, French philosopher and public intellectual. Interviewer said in one of his interview:

Since the Maidan in 2014, I keep telling Ukrainians the same thing: it is them who are the real Europeans. That they are more European than the majority of French politicians. The day when they join the European Union will be a special day for us – it will not be the EU that will give them a present, but it will be them who will provide a gift to us – it will be a blessing and an opportunity. (Szczepański and Lévy, 2023)

This is a very high and flattering assessment. But trying it on for the whole nation, it is still more realistic to perceive it as, to a certain extent, an advance (although not just a nice compliment). However, our main conclusion is that in reality Ukraine will fill itself a full member of the EU only when Ukrainians ourselves build not only a state according to European standards (that is, a management apparatus with appropriate legislative support), but also Society. It is this problem that is vitally important both - for Ukraine and the rest of Europe.

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