

Europe's "Shadow Agent": Rethinking Ukraine's Historical Role in the 20th Century

Serhii Hrabovskyi (ORCID 0000-0003-3041-8945)

H. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy,
of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Ukraine)

Iryna Grabovska (ORCID 0000-0002-7416-9541)

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv,
Research Institute of Ukrainian Studies (Ukraine)

The article is devoted to the problem of adequately understanding the role of Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation in European being. The authors focus not on economic, cultural, and scientific factors, which are also important, but on geopolitical and military-political factors. The article describes and analyzes the most important moments of active participation of Ukrainians in events that are extremely important for the whole of Europe. To this end, the authors use the concepts of active and latent geopolitical subjectivity, national subject, and actor. They introduce the concepts of "shadow agent" and "pulsating subjectivity" into scientific discourse for the theoretical understanding of the role of Ukraine and Ukrainians in the events of the 20th century. With their help, the authors seek to reveal as deeply as possible the essence of the "key moments" in European history to which Ukraine is directly involved. These include the destruction of the despotic Russian Empire in 1917, the halting of the Bolshevik invasion of Western Europe in 1920, and active participation – from September 1, 1939, to September 2, 1945 in combat operations against the totalitarian states of the Axis, the liquidation of the Gulag, and, ultimately, the dismantling of the USSR.

The article concludes that throughout the 20th century, Ukraine and Ukrainians repeatedly played one of the key roles on the "geopolitical chessboard," either as an active player or as a shadow actor, and if they had not done so, Europe would now look much worse, and European civilization might even have dissolved into the Eurasian geopolitical swamp. However, the real role of Ukraine and Ukrainians was not always recorded, so it seemed that historically significant events took place, but without Ukraine. Therefore, the authors note: "bringing" Ukraine "out of the shadows," showing the whole world, and above all Europe, its true historical value as an integral factor, and often even the savior of European civilization, is today one of the most pressing tasks of the Ukrainian intellectual elite, including scholars of Ukrainian studies.

Introduction and Conceptual Framework

"For the first time in history, the fate of at least Europe is being decided in Ukraine and by Ukrainians." It is not difficult to find statements like this, or similar ones, on social media and popular websites. These statements seem fair, because the independence of the Ukrainian state was proclaimed in 1991, and there have been no wars of such magnitude as the one started by Russia in Europe since then. But they only seem to be true. After all, the subjectivity and activity of a country do not always coincide with its formally independent status, so the reality was and is much more complex than it seems at first glance, and an inadequate self-assessment is unlikely to benefit the nation and its active part.

Before turning to the conceptualization of historical situations related to Ukraine's role as a factor of European

being, let us outline the basic concepts that will be used in this process. It is clear that Ukraine (the country, nation, state) must be an active force in this context. In our opinion, the term "actor," ("актор" – ukr.) often used in such cases by Ukrainian authors, is hardly suitable here, as it is a mechanical translation of the term actor (from the Latin actor – one who acts), which is polysemantic, including the meaning "a person or an organization that is involved in or important in politics, society, etc. in some way because of their actions" (Cambridge University Press, (n.d.)). In the Ukrainian language, however, apart from highly specialized slang, this term is either associated with art or perceived in the context of "actor/game".

The concepts of "agent" and 'subject' seem adequate to us at the moment. The first refers to

KEYWORDS

*Ukraine,
Ukrainians,
geopolitical subjectivity,
"shadow agent
of Europe",
pulsating subjectivity,
European civilization*



an outstanding historical figure (politician, ruler, religious prophet, hero, charismatic leader, passionate person, Nietzschean superman, poet, or artist), a social group (social class, social stratum, ruling elite, aristocracy, creative minority, technical intelligentsia, "new" intelligentsia of post-industrial society, technocrats, social movements), large collective communities (people, nations, races, ethnic groups, cultures...). (Mishalova, 2020).

A subject is also a personality, social group, or large collective community capable not only of action, but of purposeful action, with understanding and prediction of its consequences. In other words, a player (actor) can be a completely irrational agent (individual or collective) or a passive observer (observation can also be a game). A subject, on the other hand, is the bearer and creator of purposeful rational action directed at objects or other subjects. Another thing is that goals can be very specific, and rationality can be very peculiar (including based on totalitarian mythology). On the side of the agent is an active force, but is it purposeful? A geopolitical subject is one who arbitrarily sets goals and acts, who sets certain rules of conduct, and not only for himself.

Under In contemporary scientific discourse, subjectivity is understood as the degree of independence and autonomy of a country from external factors, its self-sufficiency and independence as an agent in history. As is easy to see, subjectivity actually coincides with the sovereignty of the state and nation, but the subjectivity of a country is the dynamic development of its sovereignty, autonomy, and independence. [...] When defining subjectivity, the emphasis is placed precisely on the country as a unity of the state, the nation, and the community of citizens who has inhabit that country. (Hrabovska et al., 2024: 38).

Ideally, there is no distinction between the nation, the state, and the community of citizens, but in reality, this is not always the case: for example, the state may collapse or go "underground" (as Poland did in 1939-45), the community of citizens may be binational – as in Ukraine, where the political nation unites Ukrainians and Qırımlılar (Crimeans, Crimean Tatars); the latter strive for their own statehood in the form of autonomy, etc.

By a country's geopolitical subjectivity, we mean the extent of its influence on the unfolding and development of world (global) and regional processes, its ability to act independently as an active force in international politics (Subjectivity, 2025). This may refer to established, stable, defined, and recognized geopolitical subjectivity, such as that of the G7 countries, or to incomplete, unstable, sometimes not very stable, and sometimes even lost geopolitical subjectivity, as is the case with some G20 countries, not to mention countries that are less powerful financially, economically, militarily, and politically, even if they have a population of several hundred million people and significant mineral reserves.

Geopolitical subjectivity can be actual or latent. The concept of "latent geopolitical subjectivity" refers to hidden, potential, or unrealized aspects of a country's geopolitical position or role. Its broad meaning can include not only current, relevant components, but also future potential.

Among the various aspects of latent geopolitical subjectivity, we can highlight economic (significant production resources, technological potential, transit capabilities that may play an important role in the global economy in the future), power (strong mobilization potential and strategic location, capable of giving the country the potential to influence world arenas), scientific and educational (investment in science and education, the presence of scientific schools capable of actively participating in the creation and implementation of innovative

technologies), energy (control over significant existing and potential energy resources), and demographic (subject to the formation of a powerful domestic market and influence on global demographic trends). Latent geopolitical subjectivity may be linked to long-term development strategies, the implementation of reforms, as well as global events and changes in the world political and economic situation. (Hrabovska et al., 2024: 65).

Finally, the conceptual metaphor of a "shadow agent of history" is important for considering the stated topic. In conditions of latent subjectivity of a particular country/nation, it is often possible for a certain social group to exist, which is not numerically dominant and sometimes insignificant, but which actively influences internal or external processes, but does not always have rational guidelines related to national interests. Often, such a group acts in the political and informational shadow of other groups that attribute to themselves (or are attributed) the results of its actions, no matter how significant they may be. In this case, it is obviously appropriate to speak of a "shadow agent." In the context of European history, such a shadow agent is not visible from the outside or dissolved in other geopolitical subjects, but is real and important. In Ukrainian history, it is associated with that active minority which, according to Oleksandr Kulchytsky, was distinguished by chivalry, heroic, maximum exertion of all forces, but could not always lead and organize others (vita heroika or vita maxima) (Kulchytsky, 1995).

Research methods

The authors deliberately apply the approach to the problems of philosophy and sociology of history developed by A. J. Toynbee and S. Huntington, where conceptual developments are "immersed" in specific historical material, which is perceived as objective reality rather than a verbal game. The theoretical methods used in the article are subordinated to the implementation of this task. This refers to conceptual analysis, which distinguishes between the key terms "actor," "agent," and 'subject'; and conceptual analysis, which substantiates the central concepts of the study: "latent geopolitical subjectivity" (hidden, potential) and "shadow agent of history." Among the empirical methods used are: historiographical analysis, which is used to collect facts and generalize the conclusions of other scholars in order to argue the author's concept; the historical-chronological method, which traces Ukrainian subjectivity over time; case studies (illustration of theses about the shadow agent and latent subjectivity with historical episodes).

Results and Discussion

This happened more than once: for example, the People's Will party was both in terms of its composition (even in St. Petersburg) and its programmatic goals (the destruction of the Russian Empire and the establishment of independent states and a confederation of parliamentary democracies) was clearly Ukrainian, and was led by Andriy Zhelyabov (party pseudonym "Taras"), a member of the Young Community. However, it is perceived not only in Russia but also in the current Ukrainian public consciousness as a purely Russian organization, which resulted in the renaming of streets in Kyiv named after leading members of People's Will party. A similar thing happened with the 1905 uprising on the battleship Potemkin, led by "sincere" (i.e., conscious) Ukrainians, members of semi-legal and illegal Ukrainian structures Vakulenchuk, Matyushenko, and Kovalenko, but attributed to the Russian revolution and almost to the Bolsheviks.

In general, Ukraine has long been a “shadow agent” not only in Russian but also in European history. One can recall the Battle of Blue Waters and the siege of Odessa (Kotsyubijev) during the reign of the Grand Duke of Lithuania and Rus, or the victory over the Ottomans near Vienna (the army of the King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Jan III Sobieski together with Ukrainian Cossacks). In such situations, Ukrainian agents of history at least partially “came out of the shadows” and were perceived more adequately.

Europe was fascinated by the famous raid of the Cossacks led by Hetman Stefan Kunytsky, carried out in November 1683 – January 1684 to the mouth of the Danube. [...] The Austrian, Italian, Swiss, German, and Dutch press wrote enthusiastically about the campaign and the capture of Kiliya and Izmail. The Neapolitan “Nuova e distinta Relazione” pompously noted: “Cossack General Kunytsky conquered Podolia, Wallachia, and Tataria.” And the Post und Ordinar-Zeitung from Zurich reported that the Cossack hetman “marched with all his might on Adrianople, seeking to reach Constantinople. (*Brekhunenko, 2022: URL*).

But let's focus on the 20th century. Ukrainians played an extremely important role in the revolution in the Russian Empire, primarily in the armed overthrow of the tsarist regime in the spring of 1917, which was the result of the transformation of latent subjectivity into actual subjectivity. In his thorough research, Yuriy Yuzych cites numerous facts and evaluative judgments of participants in the events, which attest to the decisive role of Ukrainian soldiers of the guard regiments and members of underground organizations in the revolution (*Yuzych, 2019*). At that time, this role was recognized by some journalists and political activists, meaning that Ukrainians acted as a very significant factor in the anti-monarchist revolution. Yuzych drew attention to the fact that the days of fierce struggle for Ukrainians were a time of preparation for Shevchenko Days, and at the same time – we would add – for the Petrograd working women, it was March 8 according to the calendar of that time. Both factors merged, which was not surprising, since the revolution was not only democratic but also anti-colonial. There was a local transformation from latent to actual subjectivity (after all, the leaders of the uprising had a clear goal – at least state autonomy, and preferably complete independence for Ukraine). The actions of Ukrainians as political subjects had enormous geopolitical consequences, not only for Europe. After all, it marked the end of the despotic, essentially medieval empire that had repeatedly used military force to destroy the European peoples' aspirations for freedom. But for a number of reasons, even for the majority of Ukrainians in Ukraine itself, the Ukrainian regiments and political organizations in Petrograd remained a shadow agent of history, not to mention abroad. Furthermore, Ukrainians were erased from the history of the revolution in favor of the Bolsheviks, and the “Short Course on the History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)” continues to influence Ukrainian mass consciousness and historiography to this day.

At the same time, it is striking that despite the significant number of ethnic Ukrainians among the leaders of the Bolshevik coup in Petrograd in the fall of 1917 – Dybenko, Krylenko, Antonov-Ovsiyenko, Skrypnyk, Podvoisky, Petrovsky, and others – they not only did not represent any organized force, but also, for the most part, did not declare themselves as Ukrainians. This example shows that ethnic affiliation and numerical participation in a particular event does not mean the role of either a subject or even a shadow agent. The following years wit-

nessed Ukraine's transition from latent to actual subjectivity. However, despite the proclamation of state independence, recognized by dozens of countries, including Moscow, the transition to subjectivity remained unstable. For example, little Estonia demonstrated stable regional subjectivity, becoming an active force capable of very serious things. Ihor Losiev notes:

Back in May 1919, the Estonian army launched a general offensive against the Bolsheviks. This small nation managed to create a powerful military force: 86,000 soldiers and officers of the armed forces, 32,000 militiamen of the Kaitseliit. [...] On May 26, the Estonian military took Pskov. At almost the same time, [they] defeated German formations in Latvia, in particular General Rüdiger von der Goltz's Iron Division of volunteers. In October, Estonian armored trains helped the Latvians repel Pavel Bermont-Avalov's German-Russian army from Riga. (*Losiev, 2011: URL*).

At the same time, the ZUNR, this was much larger in terms of territory and population, managed to field an army of the same size at the beginning of 1919. The Active army of the UNR in 1919 had ranged in size from several hundred thousand to several tens of thousands. Some Ukrainian units defected to the Bolsheviks; others broke away from the nominally independent Ukrainian SSR or simply dispersed. For example, in the first half of 1919, the Bolsheviks were able to occupy most of the formerly Russian-controlled Ukraine with relative ease because they resorted to “first Ukrainization,” proclaiming the Ukrainian SSR, creating the Ukrainian Front under the command of Vladimir Antonov-Ovsiyenko, in which Ukrainian armies and divisions operated, and carrying out a certain Ukrainization of cultural life, etc. (Lenin: “Antonov must be forbidden to call himself Antonov-Ovsiyenko; he must be called simply Ovsiyenko.” (*Lenin, 1918: URL*)).

But in June of the same year, Moscow carried out the de-Ukrainization of the army – and everything “fell apart.” The Bolsheviks quickly lost Ukraine under pressure from the combined armies of the UPR and the ZUNR, and not so much from Denikin's army as from rebellious peasants who did not want “communism.” Numerous atamans were able to assemble quite significant rebel formations, which, after short-lived, though sometimes grandiose successes, simply disappeared, dispersing to their homes. Therefore, Ukraine's geopolitical subjectivity at that time was not just unstable; it was “pulsating.” At moments of its “fading,” its return to a latent state, only a few active participants remained “on the surface.”

But even such a “pulsating” geopolitical subjectivity of Ukraine saved Europe more than once in those years. For example, in the summer of 1920, Lenin gave a directive to Stalin, one of the leaders of the Red Army's Southwestern Front, which was advancing on Lviv: “Zinoviev, Bukharin, and I think that it would be worthwhile to encourage the revolution in Italy immediately. My personal opinion is that to do this, we need to Sovietize Hungary, and possibly also Czechoslovakia and Romania.” (*Lenin, 1920: URL*).

It is clear that in this case, the path of the “red horses” had to go first through Ukraine. But not only the Polish Army stood in their way, but also the active army of the Ukrainian People's Republic, which held the defense along the Dniester and in Zamość. As a result, as we know, they failed to water these horses from the Rhine and Marne, or to capture Milan and Rome. But in terms of European history, Ukrainians remained a shadow player, invisible from afar, dissolved in other geopolitical entities, but nevertheless real.

At least in passing, it is worth noting the significance of the Ukrainian factor in the transition of the Bolshevik leadership to the NEP. Soviet-Russian historiography emphasizes two points: the Kronstadt uprising and the Tambov uprising, which, they say, prompted Lenin to dictatorially "break the knee" of the party he led and introduce a controlled market economy, a food tax instead of food requisitioning (read: robbery of the peasants). But this ignores a key component of the NEP: encouraging peasants to sow and grow grain. Meanwhile, Ukrainian peasants supported the Revolutionary insurgent army of Ukraine led by Nestor Makhno and the insurgents of Kholodny Yar, whose units raided agricultural regions. Therefore, one of the main tasks of the Bolsheviks in the spring of 1921 was to pacify the Ukrainian peasantry, direct the energy of Ukrainians toward economic affairs and Ukrainization. De facto, the latter began in the Ukrainian SSR in the fall of 1921, as it was necessary to allow and restore "Petliura's" cooperation, without which the NEP was impossible. These processes had a certain impact on European realities, as they established real ties between Ukrainians in the Ukrainian SSR and Ukrainians abroad, creating at least a relatively coherent culture, although these ties cannot always be viewed positively today.

And in 1932, when the USSR was aiming for war against Poland, several factors thwarted this "liberation campaign," and it was no coincidence that Stalin wrote to Kaganovich and Molotov that Ukraine was the weak link in the USSR and posed a danger to the entire Soviet system.

If we do not take immediate action to rectify the situation in Ukraine, we may lose Ukraine. [...] Keep in mind that there are quite a few (yes, quite a few!) rotten elements in the Ukrainian Communist Party (500,000 members, heh-heh), conscious and unconscious Petliurists, and ultimately direct agents of Pilsudski. (*Teror golodom*, 2025).

But if such a "campaign" had succeeded, and the Second Polish Republic had already been divided in favor of the USSR and Germany (then still democratic, but with Hitler's NSDAP as the most powerful party) or even transformed into the "Polish Soviet Republic" (Stalin had such a plan in 1939, but it did not work out)? Ukraine's punishment for disrupting the "liberation campaign" was the Holodomor.

The Holodomor, the curtailment of Ukrainization, and the destruction of the intelligentsia and part of the party nomenclature resulted in the loss of even partial, rather superficial, subjectivity for the Ukrainian SSR. Therefore, in 1937, political emigrant and anti-Stalinist Lev Trotsky stated "Crucified between four states, Ukraine now occupies the position in Europe that Poland occupied in the past [...] The Ukrainian question is destined to play a huge role in the life of Europe in the near future." (*Trotsky*, 1939b: URL). With this, Trotsky confirmed, first, the colonial status of Ukrainian lands – including those in the USSR – and, second, their potential, i.e., latent subjectivity (it was not for nothing that two years later he directly stated that the "national-revolutionary Ukrainian movement" had every reason to free itself from Moscow's rule, even if it was imaginary and democratic, and to achieve complete independence for the entire country (*Trotsky*, 1939a: URL), thirdly, he saw the potential of a "shadow agent" in the form of avant-garde political groups capable of transforming latent subjectivity into actual subjectivity under favorable circumstances. Subsequently, this national revolutionary movement materialized (which would have been a big surprise for Trotsky, or perhaps not) in the creation of the Ukrainian Main Liberation Council (UMLC) from representatives of

very different ideological currents and the formation of an underground government. Further manifestations of Ukrainian subjectivity in the 1940s and 1950s were largely determined by this act.

During World War II, Ukrainian national revolutionary forces offered armed resistance to both "red-flag totalitarianisms" — Nazi and Soviet. But the vast majority of Ukrainians, for various reasons, focused on the war against the Third Reich and its allies. Unlike the Russians, who fought against Nazism from June 22, 1941, Ukrainians entered this war on September 1, 1939.

Throughout the six years of World War II, Ukrainians fought continuously against the Nazis, fascists, and Japanese militarists, without a single pause or 'day off'. On all fronts and on all oceans – not only in Europe or the Pacific region, but also in North Africa, the Middle East, the Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean. In Polish units on the Western Front (these were citizens of the second Polish Commonwealth), in the French army (persons with French citizenship), and thousands of Ukrainian volunteers served in the French Foreign Legion in 1940. After France withdrew from the war, Ukrainian soldiers fought as part of de Gaulle's forces. More than 10,000 Ukrainians fought in the Polish Army in various sectors of the Western Front from 1942 onwards; they took part in the famous Battle of Monte Cassino (Italy). And in 1944, young men from Ukrainian families in the US and Canada – as citizens and soldiers of those countries – took part in the Normandy landings. During the first month in Normandy, about 40,000 American soldiers who came from families of Ukrainian immigrants to the United States landed. Three separate Ukrainian formations operated as part of the French partisans (maquis): the Taras Shevchenko Battalion, the Ivan Bohun Battalion, and Lieutenant Krukovsky's unit, which, together with the French, undermined the German rear and participated in ensuring the success of the Allied landing operation (*Hrabovsky*, 2015: 73).

It cannot be said that the participation of Ukrainians went unnoticed. However, they did not appear as an independent force, but were always considered part of other forces, that is, they acted as a "shadow player." Let us note that Stalin made certain concessions to Soviet Ukrainians during the war. He did so not only to gain an additional vote in the newly formed UN. There was also pressure from latent Ukrainian subjectivity, which was becoming more prominent, and the influence of shadow actors. And it was necessary to "notarize" that everything Ukrainian at that time had its core in the "sovereign" Ukrainian SSR as part of the Soviet Union, and that those Ukrainian forces that were against the USSR were fake, some kind of imposters. "Ukrainian-German nationalists" — this term appeared during World War II in the speeches of high-ranking Soviet officials and in official documents. The term, which is completely absurd from the point of view of political science and elementary logic, is nevertheless logical within the framework of Soviet mythology, because it was intended to discredit the subjectivity of the Ukrainian liberation movement. For this reason, Stalin was forced to legalize Ukrainian patriotism, or rather "Ukrainian red nationalism," at the end of 1942, because even Soviet generals of Ukrainian origin were not particularly eager to die for "great Russia." The Ukrainian SSR obtained the right to conduct its own foreign policy (even concluding some international agreements during the war), the right to have its own Red Army, the status of the Ukrainian people as a "great" nation, and much more. But all this ultimately remained in the shadows. In the anniversary "round" and "half-round" years of the "meeting on the Elbe," US presidents greeted Yeltsin and Putin, although the first to meet with the Americans were the scouts of the 1st Ukrainian Front (which indeed

included many Ukrainians) under the command of Senior Lieutenant Hryhorii Holoborodko, a mechanic from Poltava in peacetime. Interestingly, among the American scouts were Sergeants Joseph Polovsky, Murray Shulman, and Peter Sytnik, who were born into families of immigrants from Ukraine. But the war in Europe had been won, and it was possible to push Ukrainians into oblivion, so completely different people from both the Soviet and American sides became the heroes of the myth of the “meeting on the Elbe.”

After the war, Ukraine emerged as a shadow player in European history during the Berlin Blockade (June 24, 1948 – May 12, 1949), when Soviet troops cut off all land routes to the western sectors of Berlin, which were under the control of the US, Great Britain, and France. This event is considered “one of the first major international crises of the Cold War.” (*Berlin Blockade*, 2025). Stalin's calculation was simple: without food and fuel supplies, the soldiers of the Western powers would not last long and would be forced to surrender West Berlin, and they would not dare to break through the land corridor to it by force, because the Soviet army had a colossal advantage in manpower, tanks, and artillery on German territory. But the US deployed its huge transport aircraft and heavy bombers to transfer resources to West Berlin. And Stalin did not dare to shoot down these planes: the West had superiority in the air. You may ask: what does Ukraine have to do with this? The fact is that at that time, the Resistance Movement was still active in Western Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania. And if large-scale hostilities had begun, the Western powers' air forces would have transferred enough weapons to the anti-communist partisans, who, in turn, would have been able to disable the railways used to supply Soviet troops in East Germany. Considering all this, Stalin decided to shift the arena of military confrontation from the US and the “bourgeois world” to the East, initiating an attempt by communist North Korea to seize South Korea.

At the same time, another story unfolded, also related to Ukraine's influence on world events. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Ukrainian prisoners from the UPA and OUN became the main force of the Resistance in the Gulag camps. Even Solzhenitsyn, who was not particularly sympathetic to Ukraine, was forced to acknowledge this, writing about how camp life changed radically when “seasoned, broad-shouldered lads” ended up behind barbed wire, first putting criminals in their place and then organizing more than one uprising.

Those rebels arrived, looked around, and, as Solzhenitsyn later wrote, “the banderites brought the germ of rebellion with them”. Strong young men had just arrived from the forest path, looked around, saw the lawlessness that prevailed around them, and took up knives to restore order (*Bondaruk*, 2025: URL).

As a result of this, after a series of uprisings, Stalin's Gulag was quickly liquidated, which, in addition to the release of tens of thousands of citizens of European states imprisoned there, led to a significant transformation of the socio-political and economic life of the USSR (because prisoners, especially political ones, were a powerful driving force behind economic projects). True, Brezhnev's Gulag then emerged, but that is another story.

The post-Stalin “thaw” of the second half of the 1950s, which gave rise to “Shelest's autonomism” and the Shestydesyatyky movement in the Ukrainian SSR, objectively undermined Soviet totalitarianism. There was also a Sixties movement in Russia, but, as Ivan Dziuba noted,

the Ukrainian and Russian Sixties movements were formed under different conditions, had different directions and different content. That is, the Russian Sixties movement had no anti-colonial discourse. Russian Sixties, relatively speaking, did not go beyond the limits of Russian imperial discourse (*Nota Bene*, 2023: 3).

The movement of the Sixties and dissidents as agents in Ukrainian life ultimately paved the way for the collapse and liquidation of the USSR. Ukraine's non-participation in the new “union treaty” first provoked the August 1991 GKChP coup, and then finally destroyed the Union. There is no doubt that Ukraine's position in those events was decisive – it is enough to glance through the memoirs of members of Gorbachev and Yeltsin's teams. However, even here Ukraine's role was not properly appreciated – Western correspondents sat in Moscow and described events from their vantage point, while many domestic intellectuals, accustomed to seeing their country through the eyes of the metropolis in accordance with postcolonial tradition, tried to fit Ukrainian reality into the supposedly “advanced” Moscow mold.

Conclusion

Thus, throughout the 20th century, Ukraine and Ukrainians repeatedly played one of the key roles on the “geopolitical chessboard,” either as an active player or as a shadow agent of history, and if they had not done what they did, Europe would be much “sadder” than it is today, and European civilization would have dissolved into the Eurasian mire. But the real role of Ukraine and Ukrainians was rarely recorded, and it turned out that significant things were happening, but as if without Ukraine.

“Bringing” Ukraine “out of the shadows,” showing the whole world, and above all Europe, its true historical value as an integral factor, and often as the savior of European civilization, is today becoming one of the most pressing tasks of the Ukrainian intellectual elite, including scholars of Ukrainian studies.

REFERENCES

- Berlin Blockade. (2025, July 15). In Wikipedia. Retrieved August 20, 2025, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Blockade
- Bondaruk, L. (2025, March 24). Ukraintsi v HULAHU [Ukrainians in the GULAG]. Localna istoriya. <https://localhistory.org.ua/videos/bez-bromu/lesia-bondaruk/> (In Ukrainian)
- Brekhunenko, V. (2022, September 7). Bytva pid Vidnem: za vse ta z kavovym hepi-endom [The Battle of Vienna: For everything and with a coffee happy-end]. *Lokalna istoriia*. <https://localhistory.org.ua/texts/statti/bitva-za-vse-ta-z-kavovim-gepi-endom/> (In Ukrainian)
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Actor. In Cambridge dictionary. Retrieved August 20, 2025, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/uk/dictionary/english/actor>
- Hrabovska, I., Hrabovskyi, S., Dodonov, R., Kahamlyk, S., Marutian, R., Nastoishcha, K., Turpak, N., & Chuprii, L. (2024). Heopolitychna subiektnist Ukrainy v konteksti hlobalnykh vyklykiv [Geopolitical subjectivity of Ukraine in the context of global challenges]. Kyiv, Milenium. https://ndiu.knu.ua/images/vydannia/Subiektnist_NDIU.pdf (In Ukrainian)
- Hrabovskyi, S. (2015). Ukraintsi u Druhii svitovii viini: pro bezderzhavnu subiektnist ukrainskoi natsii

- [Ukrainians in the Second World War: On the stateless subjectivity of the Ukrainian nation]. *Filosofska dumka*, (4), 72–79. (In Ukrainian)
- Kulchytskyi, O. (1995). *Osnovy filosofii i filosofichnykh nauk* [Fundamentals of philosophy and philosophical sciences] (In Ukrainian)
- Lenin, V. I. (1918). Pis'mo G. K. Ordzhonikidze [Letter to G. K. Ordzhonikidze]. *Leninism.SU*. <https://leninism.su/works/89-tom-50/318-pisma-mart-aprel-1918.html> (In Russian)
- Lenin, V. I. (1920, July 23). Telegramma I. V. Stalinu 23 iyulya 1920 goda [Telegram to I. V. Stalin on July 23, 1920]. *Leninism.SU*. <https://leninism.su/works/99-v-i-lenin-neizvestnye-dokumenty-1891-1922/3656-dokumenty-1920-g-iyul.html>
- Losiev, I. (2011, July 7). Estonskyi Davyd proty rosiiskoho Holiafa [Estonian David versus Russian Goliath]. *Ukrainskyi tyzhden*. <https://tyzhden.ua/estonskyi-davyd-proty-rosiiskoho-holiafa/> (In Ukrainian)
- Mishalova, O. (2020). Kliuchovy diievets istorii [The key actor of history]. *Актуальні проблеми духовності (Actual problems of mind)*, (21), 159–203. <https://doi.org/10.31812/apd.v0i21.3877> (In Ukrainian)
- Nota Bene. (2023). *Suchasnist the last. Ivan Dziuba ta yoho doba* [Modernity the last. Ivan Dziuba and his era]. Milenium.
- Subjectivity. (2025, June 2). In Wikipedia. Retrieved August 20, 2025, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subjectivity>
- Teror golodom [Terror by famine]. (2025, September 19). In Wikipedia. Retrieved October 20, 2025, from https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%80_%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BC
- Trotsky, L. (1939a). Demokraticheskiye krepostniki i nezavisimost' Ukrainy [Democratic serf-owners and the independence of Ukraine]. *Marxists Internet Archive*. <https://www.marxists.org/russkij/trotsky/works/trotm478.html> (In Russian)
- Trotsky, L. (1939b). Ob ukrainskom voprose [On the Ukrainian question]. *Marxists Internet Archive*. <https://www.marxists.org/russkij/trotsky/works/trotm465.html> (In Russian)
- Yuzych, Yu. (2019, August 20). Ukrainskyi parad u stolytsi Rosii [Ukrainian parade in the capital of Russia]. *Istorychna pravda*. <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2019/08/20/156103/> (In Ukrainian)

«Тіньовий дієвець» Європи: переосмислення історичної ролі України у XX столітті

Сергій Грабовський (ORCID 0000-0003-3041-8945)
Інститут філософії імені Г.С. Сковороди НАНУ, м. Київ (Україна)

Ірина Грабовська (ORCID 0000-0002-7416-9541)
Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка,
Науково-дослідний інститут українознавства (Україна)

Стаття присвячена проблемі адекватного розуміння ролі України й української нації у європейському бутті. Автори зосередили увагу не на економічних, культурних і наукових чинниках, які теж мають важливе значення, а на чинниках геополітичних і воєнно-політичних. Стаття описує й аналізує найважливіші моменти активної участі українців у подіях, надзвичайно важливих для усієї Європи. Для цього автори використовують концепти активної та латентної геополітичної суб'єктності, національного суб'єкта та дієвця. Вони вводять у науковий дискурс задля теоретичного осмислення ролі України й українців у подіях XX століття поняття «тіньовий дієвець» і «пульсуюча суб'єктність». Автори за їхньою допомогою прагнуть максимально глибоко розкрити сутність «вузлових моментів» історії Європи, до яких прямо причетна Україна. Серед них – руйнація деспотичної Російської імперії у 1917 році, зупинення більшовицької інвазії до Західної Європи у 1920 році, активна участь – з 1 вересня 1939 року по 2 вересня 1945 року – у бойових діях проти тоталітарних держав Вісі, ліквідація ГУЛАГу, зрештою, демонтаж СССР.

У статті зроблено висновок, що впродовж XX століття Україна й українці не раз грали одну з ключових ролей на «геополітичній шахівниці», чи як актуальний суб'єкт, чи як тіньовий дієвець, і якби вони цього не робили, Європа зараз виглядала би значно гірше, можливо навіть, що європейська цивілізація розчинилася б у євразійському геополітичному болоті. Але реальна роль України й українців далеко не завжди фіксувалася, тому виходило, що історично значущі речі відбувалися, але наче без України. Тому автори зазначають: «вивести» Україну «з тіні», показати усьому світові, і насамперед – Європі, її справжню історичну цінність як невід'ємного чинника, а часто – навіть рятівниці європейської цивілізації, є сьогодні одним із найактуальніших завдань української інтелектуальної еліти, зокрема і науковців-українознавців.

Ключові слова: Україна, українці, геополітична суб'єктність, «тіньовий дієвець Європи», пульсуюча суб'єктність, європейська цивілізація.