

## **IV. CHANGES IN THE FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATIONS OF UKRAINIANS AFTER THE EUROMAIDAN**

### **National and Regional Levels**

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Changes in the foreign policy orientations and in the integration preferences of Ukrainian society are important components of the transformation processes the country and society have undergone starting in 2013–2014 and continuing to the present. A first important point to note is that on the threshold of 2013–2014, problems in Ukraine’s foreign policy course and indecision concerning the choice of integration pathway—whether with the EU or with the Customs Union spearheaded by Russia—became sources of friction between the official position of the state, on the one hand, and domestic social demands on the other hand. This growing friction ignited the mass protests that became known as the Euromaidan.

Even though the dynamics and intensity of relations between Ukraine and the EU prior to 2013 failed to reflect in a practical way the official aim of gaining EU membership, the change in official policy with President Viktor Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement in November 2013 spurred consolidation of the pro-European part of Ukrainian society. The basis for this consolidation was the orientation toward European integration on the part of a relative majority of Ukrainian citizens that had built up over the period 2011–2013.

A second important point is that attitudes toward Ukraine's prospects for European or Euro-Atlantic integration prior to 2013–2014 revealed cleavages in public opinion that were most pronounced regionally. For this reason the dynamics of public opinion regarding Ukraine's foreign policy direction at the level of the macroregion are a key variable to consider in analyzing the processes of transformation.

### **Main Changes in Attitudes toward European Integration**

Prior to the Euromaidan, the different moods in Ukrainian society with respect to the country's foreign policy orientation, in particular integration options, can be considered among the most sensitive indicia of public opinion. Indeed, support for different integration directions divided Ukrainian society into proponents of European integration, on the one hand, and advocates of a Eurasian alliance on the other.

Such a division was sufficiently stable and was strengthened by age differences. That is, young adults aged 18–29 years were more oriented toward the idea of joining the EU than were older adults. However, the changes in public opinion that occurred in parallel with the mass protests on the threshold of 2013–2014 became established trends in 2014.

The first trend observed was the formation of *a solid core of support in favor of the European direction as the main integration vector*. Support for the European vector dominated in the polls from the end of April 2011 in response to an alternative question: whether to join the EU or the Customs Union. At the same time, the period 2011–2013 was marked by a relative rather than absolute majority of poll respondents in the pro-European camp (*see table 4.1*).

**Table 4.1. Which integration direction should Ukraine take? (%)**

	<b>Oct. 2011</b>	<b>Dec. 2012</b>	<b>May 2013</b>	<b>Mar. 2014</b>	<b>May 2014</b>	<b>Dec. 2015</b>	<b>Feb. 2017</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
Accession to the EU	43.7	42.4	41.7	45.3	50.5	52.0	46.7	49.2
Accession to the Customs Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan)	30.5	32.1	31.0	21.6	21.4	14.6	14.3	10.8
Nonaccession to the EU or the Customs Union	9.3	10.5	13.5	19.6	17.4	21.3	27.9	26.4
Difficult to say	16.4	15.0	13.7	13.4	10.6	12.0	11.1	13.6

*Sources:* Data for 2011–2014 compiled from polls conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Kyiv. For results of a nationwide poll, “Which Integration Direction Should Ukraine Take?,” conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology on December 4–14, 2015, see (<http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=584&page=6>). For February and May 2017 data, see <http://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=713&page=1>.

The major shift in public opinion began with the reaction of society to the refusal of then president Yanukovich to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in Vilnius in November 2013. This shift marked the start of a new, second phase in the development of a steady orientation toward the European prospect. This phase was characterized not so much by a significant increase in support for the European prospect as by a dramatic decline in support for the second potential vector of integration, the Eurasian pathway.

In particular, as early as May 2014 the share of poll respondents favoring integration with the Customs Union had fallen by ten percentage points, or one-third, compared to May 2013, constituting 21 percent of responses (percentages are rounded in the text). By May 2017 the attractiveness of the prospect of Eurasian integration had fallen to 11 percent. This decline was clearly dictated by new realities in the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia.

At the same time, according to polls, relations with EU countries since 2012 were steadily considered the most important foreign policy option, with support ranging from 41 to 53 percent (*see table 4.2*).

**Table 4.2. Which foreign policy direction should be a priority for Ukraine? (%)**

	<b>Nov. 2012</b>	<b>Dec. 2013</b>	<b>Mar. 2014</b>	<b>Apr. 2014</b>	<b>Mar. 2015</b>	<b>Sept. 2016</b>
Relations with EU countries	40.8	43.4	46.0	52.5	47.7	45.8
Relations with the U.S.	1.2	1.0	2.1	1.1	6.0	4.8
Relations with Russia	35.3	34.0	24.1	16.6	10.0	12.6
Relations with other CIS countries	4.8	5.7	5.7	6.8	6.7	6.9
Relations with other countries	3.6	2.7	4.4	4.8	9.1	7.0
Difficult to say	14.3	13.2	17.7	18.1	20.5	22.9

*Source:* Responses to a nationwide poll, “Foreign Policy Orientations of Ukrainian Citizens,” conducted by the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Center, Kyiv ([http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/news.php?news\\_id=781](http://www.razumkov.org.ua/ukr/news.php?news_id=781)).

The share of respondents who considered relations with Russia to be a top priority declined from 35 percent in 2012 to 17 percent in April 2014 (the first major breakthrough) and to 13 percent in September 2016.

In polls with no alternative integration option provided (such as polls that asked only “Does Ukraine need to join the EU?”), a nucleus of EU proponents also appears to form at the level of 50 percent of the population (*see table 4.3*).

**Table 4.3. In your opinion, does Ukraine need to join the European Union? (%)**

	June 2006	Dec. 2009	Dec. 2011	Aug. 2012	Dec. 2013	May 2014	Mar. 2015	Sept. 2016
Yes	43.7	42.8	46.0	42.1	48.0	53.0	52.7	49.7
No	35.9	32.8	32.9	38.6	35.9	35.5	29.6	35.3
Difficult to say	20.4	24.3	21.1	19.3	16.1	11.6	17.7	15.0

*Source:* Same source as for table 4.2.

The second specific trend change observed at the national level since 2014 was *growth in the share of those favoring nonaccession* over joining either the EU or the Customs Union (*see table 4.1*). At the end of 2015 it exceeded 20 percent, reaching 26 percent in May 2017.

A certain share of former proponents of Customs Union membership clearly changed position to neutral, that is, to preferring nonaccession to either a European or Eurasian union. At this time it seems highly improbable that the Eurasian vector will return to a

position of favor. And for those formerly in favor of nonaccession, a change in position in support of Euro-integration cannot be excluded at some point in the future.

The second trend is inseparably associated with the first one, dispelling any notion of the possibility of simultaneous integration in both the European and the Eurasian directions. Up to the end of 2013, a certain share of the citizenry was inclined to support Ukraine's membership in both the EU and the Customs Union. Only in December 2013, after a month of active protests on the Maidan, did proponents of Customs Union membership for the first time end up in the minority (35 percent) relative to opponents (45 percent) (*see table 4.4, part A*).

**Table 4.4. In your opinion, does Ukraine need to join such international organizations? (%)**

**A. Customs Union** (*with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan*)

	<b>Dec. 2009</b>	<b>Aug. 2012</b>	<b>Dec. 2013</b>	<b>Mar. 2014</b>	<b>May 2014</b>
Yes	58.1	46.5	35.1	25.7	24.5
No	20.0	34.5	45.3	53.0	61.1
Difficult to say	21.9	19.0	19.5	21.3	14.4

**B. European Union**

	<b>Dec. 2010</b>	<b>Dec. 2012</b>	<b>Dec. 2013</b>	<b>Mar. 2014</b>	<b>May 2014</b>
Yes	42.8	48.4	48.0	47.5	53.0
No	32.8	29.2	35.9	36.6	35.5
Difficult to say	24.3	22.4	16.1	15.9	11.6

*Source:* Data compiled from polls conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Kyiv.

Instead, the share of those who supported the idea of joining the EU increased gradually from 43 percent in December 2010 to 48 percent in December 2013 to a record high of 53 percent in May 2014 (*see table 4.4, part B*).

In September 2016, had a referendum been held on Ukraine's membership in the EU, 49 percent of respondents would have voted yes, 25 percent would have voted against, 10 percent would have abstained from voting, and 15 percent would have been undecided. At the same time, had a referendum been held on Ukraine joining the Customs Union, with no other integration option offered, only 18 percent of the population would have voted yes, 55 percent would have voted no, and 27 percent would have been undecided or would not have voted.<sup>1</sup>

A third trend observed from poll responses over time was *a change in the age map of attitudes toward integration with Europe*.

In 2014, after the events on the Maidan, for the first time in the history of polling in Ukraine a qualitative change was noticed in attitudes toward European integration by age cohort. Until then young adults in the age cohort 18–29 years were the most inclined toward integration with Europe. This was also the only age cohort in which half the representatives demonstrated a pro-European preference.

The change in this situation was detected as early as May 2014, when support for European integration exceeded 50 percent not only among young adults but also in the age group 30–39 years (55 percent), 40–49 years (53 percent), and 50–59 years (51 percent) (*see table 4.5*).

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<sup>1</sup> Results of a nationwide poll, “Geopolitical Orientations of Residents of Ukraine: European Union, Customs Union, NATO (September 2016),” conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology on September 16–26, 2016 (<http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=650&page=1>).

**Table 4.5. Which integration path should Ukraine take? (%)**  
(By age cohort, May 2013–May 2014)

	18–29 years		30–39 years		40–49 years		50–59 years		60 years and up	
	May 2013	May 2014	May 2013	May 2014						
Accession to the EU	54.1	55.9	44.5	55.3	44.5	53.0	37.5	51.4	30.4	41.4
Accession to the Customs Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan)	18.8	15.8	22.3	17.9	27.6	22.3	38.7	22.2	45.0	27.8
Nonaccession to the EU or the Customs Union	13.4	17.4	16.1	18.7	13.0	16.5	13.7	16.9	11.6	17.7
Difficult to say	13.6	10.9	17.2	8.1	14.8	8.2	10.1	9.4	13.0	13.1

*Source:* Maria Zolkina, “Public Opinion Regarding Euro-integration: New Trends As a Chance to Consolidate Society,” in *Euro-integration of Ukraine: The Experience of Neighbors and the Prospects of Unifying Society* (Kyiv: Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2014), 12 ([http://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/1407765948\\_3132.pdf](http://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/1407765948_3132.pdf)).

The absence of significant growth in support for European integration after the Euromaidan among younger adults can be explained by the fact that for this age group, the potentially possible maximum at that moment was reached even before the Euromaidan.

The fourth major trend observable from polling data was *a change in internal regional dynamics*. Indeed, already in May 2014 a significant decline in the level of support for the Customs Union was registered in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, which formerly were the basis for this option (*see table 4.6, parts A and B*).

**Table 4.6. Which integration path should Ukraine take? (%)****A. South (Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson oblasts)**

	<b>May 2013</b>	<b>May 2014</b>	<b>May 2015</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
Accession to the EU	32.9	28.0	31.2	32.5
Accession to the Customs Union (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan)	39.5	25.1	14.9	10.2
Nonaccession to the EU or the Customs Union	13.8	28.4	33.0	42.7
Difficult to say	13.8	18.5	20.9	14.6

**B. East (Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts)**

	<b>May 2013</b>	<b>May 2014</b>	<b>May 2015</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
Accession to the EU	28.6	30.5	35.8	41.5
Accession to the Customs Union (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan)	40.9	29.5	25.9	18.7
Nonaccession to the EU or the Customs Union	12.6	32.2	26.4	32.8
Difficult to say	18.0	7.8	11.9	7.1

*Source:* Results of polls conducted jointly by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, the Sociological Service of the Razumkov Center, and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. Data tables were compiled by Maria Zolkina.

As a result of these changes, in the spring of 2014 Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts remained the only macroregion where an absolute majority of the residents polled were in favor of joining the Customs Union. The results underscored the impossibility of uniting all eastern and southern oblasts into a unified “South-East” macrostructure, as the Russian propaganda machine had insisted.

**Table 4.6 (cont.). What foreign policy should Ukraine take? (%)**  
**C. Donbas** (since 2014, territories controlled by Ukraine)

	Sept. 2013	Sept. 2015	June 2017
Accession to the EU	18.4	19.1	22.8
Accession to the Customs Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan)	61.0	38.9	23.0
Nonaccession to the EU or the Customs Union	9.5	29.9	33.4
Difficult to say	11.1	12.1	15.8

*Sources:* For 2013 and 2015, aggregate data on the Donbas were extracted from the corresponding polls conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. See Olexiy Haran and Maria Zolkina, “The Demise of Ukraine’s ‘Eurasian Vector’ and the Rise of Pro-NATO Sentiments,” *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* 458 (February 2017) (<http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/demise-ukraines-eurasian-vector-and-rise-pro-nato-sentiment>). For 2017 data, see <http://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/62910972859833313592f11.60155832.pdf>

Over the period 2014–2017, changes in public opinion in the Donbas went in the same direction as in the South and East of

the country. Not a single macroregion remained in Ukraine in which the majority of the population opted for Eurasian integration. Even in the Donbas (the part controlled by Ukraine), the share of proponents of accession to the Customs Union decreased by almost two-thirds, from 61 percent to 23 percent (*see table 4.6, part C*).

Instead, the share of those in favor of nonaccession to either the EU or the Customs Union more than tripled, from 10 percent to 33 percent. The lion's share shifted from the category of former proponents of joining the Customs Union to the category of those preferring nonaccession.

With a sufficiently stable core of EU integration proponents and a low and stable (i.e., not increasing) level of support for the Eurasian vector, those who are undecided or in favor of nonaccession to any integration option will most likely have the greatest influence on subsequent overall changes in integration priorities.

### **Dramatic Shift in Attitudes toward Ukraine's Prospects of Euro-Atlantic Integration**

Attitudes toward Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic prospects were among the main sensitive topics until the Euromaidan. Now Ukraine's potential Euro-Atlantic integration is one of the dimensions in which the greatest change in public opinion has transpired.

The first trend observed in the polling data concerned *cardinal changes in attitudes toward the idea of NATO membership at the national level*. From 2005 to 2014, opponents of joining NATO traditionally constituted the majority. As of 2012, for instance, the share of those favoring an alliance with NATO in a hypothetical referendum was 26 percent, while the share of those opposed was 61 percent (with a probable turnout of 58.5 percent) (*see table 4.7*).

**Table 4.7. If you had participated in a referendum on accession to NATO, how would you have voted? (%)**

*(% of those who would have voted in the referendum)*

	Dec. 2007	Dec. 2009	Apr. 2012	June 2014	July 2015	Nov. 2015	May 2016	Dec. 2016	June 2017
I would have voted for accession	31.8	21.0	26.2	45.4	63.9	74.9	77.7	71.5	69.5
I would have voted against accession	52.8	59.7	60.6	36.4	28.5	19.8	17.4	22.7	25.9
Difficult to say	15.4	19.3	13.4	18.1	7.6	5.3	4.8	5.8	4.6

*Sources:* Results of nationwide polls conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Kyiv (<http://dif.org.ua/article/referendum-shchodo-vstupu-do-nato-buv-bi-vigraniy-prote-tse-pitannya-dilit-ukrainu>; <http://dif.org.ua/article/2016-y-politichni-pidsumki-zagalnonatsionalne-opituvannya>; <http://dif.org.ua/article/gromadska-dumka-naselennya-ukraini-pro-nato>).

A fundamental change regarding Ukraine's accession to NATO was registered as early as June 2014, when the share of opponents fell by nearly half and for the first time proponents of joining NATO constituted the relative majority, at 45 percent. Clearly, such was the spontaneous reaction to the annexation of Crimea and the start of Russian aggression in the Donbas.

Further modeling of the hypothetical referendum results demonstrated an increase in support for Ukraine's membership in NATO, with a corresponding decrease in the share of those who would vote against NATO membership. Indeed, in November 2015, the share of participants in the referendum who would have voted for NATO membership skyrocketed to 75 percent, followed by a slight decrease, to 70 percent, in June 2017 polling results.

A major caveat applies to analyzing the results of a hypothetical referendum, however, and reviewers should not be led astray by such a poll. In the case of an actual referendum, the campaign in the run-up to voting would be highly politicized, and mobilization of the electorate would sweep in proponents and opponents alike. Formally, for all the current and former members of the parliamentary coalition, integration with NATO is a priority. Opponents of Ukraine’s membership in NATO are currently not actively promoting nonaccession among the general public. For that reason, identifying the results of modeling with the actual results of voting would be erroneous, as not all factors that could potentially influence voting are relevant today.

A second trend observable in poll results concerning Ukraine’s participation in a Euro-Atlantic alliance was *an orientation toward joining NATO as the main option that would guarantee national security*. This orientation has prevailed in the attitudes of Ukrainians since 2014 (*see table 4.8*).

**Table 4.8. In your opinion, which option to guarantee national security would be best for Ukraine? (%)**

	Dec. 2007	Apr. 2012	May 2014	Sept. 2014	Dec. 2014	July 2015	Nov. 2015	May 2016	Dec. 2016	June 2017
Accession to NATO	18.9	13.0	32.6	43.6	46.4	35.9	45.7	43.3	44.1	47.2
Military alliance with Russia and other CIS countries	31.3	26.2	13.0	14.8	10.1	7.8	8.2	7.1	6.4	6.1
Military alliance with the U.S.	—	—	1.5	—	—	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.9	—

**Table 4.8 (cont.)**

	<b>Dec. 2007</b>	<b>Apr. 2012</b>	<b>May 2014</b>	<b>Sept. 2014</b>	<b>Dec. 2014</b>	<b>July 2015</b>	<b>Nov. 2015</b>	<b>May 2016</b>	<b>Dec. 2016</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
Non-bloc status of Ukraine	30.7	42.1	28.3	22.2	20.9	28.9	22,6	25.1	26.4	27.3
Other	1.6	0.9	1.0	0.4	1.0	1.6	2.4	2.2	2.5	2.3
Difficult to say	17.5	17.8	23.7	19.0	21.7	22.6	17.6	19.1	16.6	17.0

*Sources:* Table shows aggregated results of polls conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Kyiv (<http://dif.org.ua/article/gromadska-dumka-pro-nato-noviy-poglyad>).

For December 2016 and June 2017 data, see <http://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/13816462815863c78c6b27d3.47743328.pdf>; <http://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/574143415595c9b3a39c058.39544100.pdf>.

In May 2014, immediately after the annexation of Crimea and the start of Russian aggression in the Donbas, a jump of more than twenty percentage points in the research results was observed. Compared with 2012, the share of those who were in favor of a NATO alliance as the key security option grew more than threefold, from 13 percent in April 2012 to 47 percent in June 2017. In parallel with the changes in favor of joining NATO, the share of those oriented toward a non-bloc status (i.e., no alliance with NATO or a Russia-led military organization) declined from 42 percent in early 2012 to 28 percent in May 2014 and to 27 percent in June 2017.

The choice of a military alliance with Russia and other CIS countries took second place in 2012 in Ukrainian public opinion, after the non-bloc choice. Of note, the changes in the perception of

this option were the most radical among polling choices since 2014. In particular, in 2012, 26 percent of the population were oriented toward this option of guaranteeing national security, while in May 2014 (the moment of the most significant pivot in security preferences) this figure fell to 13 percent, and in June 2017 it fell to 6 percent. Rejection of the non-bloc option and of a military alliance with Russia could be even more important strategically than growth in the preference for an association with NATO.

The third trend observed in polling data with respect to Ukraine joining a Euro-Atlantic alliance lay in *changes in those macroregions that are the most skeptical about NATO*.

The increase in orientation toward an alliance with NATO as a guarantee of national security for Ukraine was glaringly evident in all macroregions of the country. The most significant increase in this respect was registered in public opinion polls in the East and the Donbas. In the East in 2012, only 2 percent supported an alliance with NATO. By June 2017 this figure had risen to an amazing 32 percent (*see table 4.9, part A*).

**Table 4.9. In your opinion, which variant of national security would be best for Ukraine? (%)**

**A. East (Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts)**

	<b>Apr. 2012</b>	<b>July 2015</b>	<b>Nov. 2015</b>	<b>May 2016</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
Accession to NATO	1.7	20.2	36.0	29.0	32.2
Military alliance with Russia	38.3	13.5	18.3	14.8	13.1
Military alliance with the U.S	—	0.8	2.7	3.5	—
Non-bloc status of Ukraine	38.0	43.1	29.4	37.5	37.6
Other	1.3	0.8	1.6	0.6	1.5
Difficult to answer	20.7	21.6	12.0	14.6	15.6

**Table 4.9 (cont.)**  
**B. Donbas**

	<b>Apr. 2012</b>	<b>July 2015</b>	<b>Nov. 2015</b>	<b>May 2016</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
Accession to NATO	0.8	12.0	23.3	24.4	19.8
Military alliance with Russia and CIS countries	50.2	12.9	13.6	14.4	16.6
Military alliance with the U.S	—	—	3.8	3.8	—
Non-bloc status of Ukraine	41.4	48.6	34.7	33.3	37.5
Other	0.0	4.4	3.2	1.7	0.5
Difficult to answer	7.6	22.1	21.5	22.4	25.7

*Sources:* Aggregated results of studies conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Kyiv (<http://dif.org.ua/article/gromadska-dumka-pro-nato-noviy-poglyad>; <http://dif.org.ua/uploads/pdf/135075364159f1dbf211c244.95899670.pdf>).

As shown in part B of table 4.9, in the Donbas, the share of NATO proponents grew by twenty-three percentage points between 2012 and 2016, from 1 percent to 24 percent.

In every region the percentage of those who see in NATO a guarantee of national security is higher today than it was on average across the entire country in 2012 (13 percent). At the same time, it is worth noting that the idea of non-bloc status, which lost popularity throughout Ukraine, is perceived differently in different regions of the country. Indeed, the non-bloc option to this day has a relative advantage as a guarantee of national security in the East (37.6 percent), the Donbas (37.5 percent), and the South (36.6 percent) (*see table 4.9, part C*).

**Table 4. 9 (cont.)****C. South (Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson oblasts)**

	<b>Apr. 2012</b>	<b>July 2015</b>	<b>Nov. 2015</b>	<b>May 2016</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
Accession to NATO	6.6	24.2	25.2	19.1	20.1
Military alliance with Russia and CIS countries	30.6	15.3	7.0	12.2	10.9
Military alliance with the U.S	–	2.3	2.3	3.2	–
Non-bloc status of Ukraine	50.6	35.8	37.9	44.3	36.6
Other	0.6	0.5	1.9	0.4	2.5
Difficult to answer	11.6	21.9	25.7	20.9	29.8

*Sources:* Same sources as for table 4.9, part B.

To place these results in perspective, the unfolding of Russian aggression against Ukraine became the trigger for unprecedented changes in attitudes toward NATO, the non-bloc option, and a military alliance with Russia. On the other hand, in such a situation there are several hidden risks. Even the certain easing of pressure on the front line and a freezing of the military situation could lead to a decrease in enthusiasm for the Euro-Atlantic integration track as the advantage of collective security would lose its attractiveness, a fact to which Ukrainian society turned its attention in 2014. The rising affinity for Euro-Atlantic integration means a certain level of expectations from NATO, first and foremost regarding military assistance to Ukraine. The absence of an anticipated response could influence attitudes toward NATO. In light of this, one possible scenario could be a gradual decline in support for NATO membership to a certain level, which could be considered the level

of conscious choice rather than a reaction to contemporary events, and consequently an increase in preference for non-bloc status in the East, the South, and the Donbas.

## Conclusions

Changes in the foreign policy attitudes of Ukrainians over the period 2014–2016 represent one of the most significant transformations in public opinion in recent years. They are characterized by changes in both quantitative and qualitative indicators evident nationally as well as at the regional level.

Regarding *European integration*, one can speak of the *disappearance of the polarity in integration priorities*. The choice between Ukraine joining the EU or joining the Customs Union no longer divides society. As of May 2017, proponents of joining the Customs Union in Ukrainian society amounted to a mere 11 percent. At the same time, fluctuation in support for (hypothetical) accession to the EU ended up at 49 percent (in May 2013 it was 42 percent). Basically, this suggests that *the maximum possible level of conscious support for Euro-integration given today's realities has been reached*. Any additional growth seems possible only with the emergence of new circumstances, either domestic or foreign, including positive developments in bilateral relations with the EU.

*The notion of dualism disappeared in the integration priorities of Ukrainians*. Until 2014, if the poll question offered no alternative option, Ukrainians predominantly supported the idea of membership in both the Customs Union and the EU. However, since the end of 2013 the balance has shifted toward those who oppose membership in the Customs Union: in March 2014 only 26 percent were in favor of this option and 53 percent were against it. Meanwhile, the proponents of membership in the EU continued to remain in the majority.

*Regional changes* regarding integration priorities should be considered the most significant ones. The maximum decline in support for joining the Customs Union was observed exactly in

those regions where the idea of Eurasian integration was traditionally supported by the majority of the population: the South, the East, and the Donbas.

At the same time, loss of support for the Eurasian vector of integration gradually began to merge with an increase in support for nonaffiliation with any of these unions. In other words, the greatest share of people disappointed with the Eurasian vector “swayed” either toward the nonaccession category or toward the undecided category. Support for nonaccession of any kind was greatest in the South, the East, and the Donbas, where it grew significantly over the past two years.

However, two scenarios are possible here. First, the disinclination to join any union could become constant. Then we would have a new kind of regional breakdown, in which yesterday’s proponents of joining the Customs Union would simply object to the need to sway in favor of the EU. This in turn would create new regional differences, but probably less tangible than the previous ones, that is, without a high level of polarization, as in the situation with the country divided into those who favor EU accession and those who favor an alliance with the Customs Union.

In the second scenario, the position “neither the EU nor the CU” would be only temporary, an interim position, and could potentially become a resource for supplementing the ranks of EU proponents. Insofar as a nucleus of conscious proponents of EU integration can already be considered to have formed in the majority of regions, the transition from the position “nowhere” to supporting EU integration seems possible only if new circumstances arise that stimulate loyalty to the EU.

The attitudes of Ukrainians toward *Euro-Atlantic integration* have also undergone major upheavals in the period since 2014. They were even more dramatic than those regarding the choice between the EU and the Customs Union.

*Support for Ukraine’s membership in NATO* began to grow steadily in the spring of 2014 and at the moment is at an unprecedentedly high point in the entire history of NATO-Ukraine

relations. So, if a referendum had been organized in Ukraine regarding NATO membership at any time after June 2014, it would have yielded positive results. In June 2017 the potential yes vote was registered at 70 percent among those who would have participated in the referendum (predicted 66 percent turnout).

The vision of the role of NATO also changed. In 2014, *NATO accession for the first time became the most supported option for guaranteeing the security of Ukraine*. Alongside this shift toward NATO as guarantor was a decline in the support for non-bloc status (the main security option prior to 2014) and for a military alliance with Russia (before 2014 it was in second place).

*Attitudes toward NATO membership changed considerably at the regional level as well*. As an example, in 2012, fewer than 1 percent of the residents of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts considered NATO membership a possible guarantee of national security. In the summer of 2015, this figure in the Ukraine-controlled Donbas grew to 12 percent, and by May 2016 it had increased to 24 percent.

At the same time, a number of risks must be considered. The steady growth in support for NATO membership is associated with the security vacuum that Ukraine got caught up in after the failure of the non-bloc policy and Russian aggression in the east of the country.

Thus, two of the most widespread security options in Ukrainian society prior to 2014, non-bloc status and a military alliance with Russia, were rejected with the emergence of new realities. However, though support for a military alliance with Russia collapsed, the non-bloc status is a different matter altogether. As an option it dropped from first place (from 42 percent in 2012 to 27 percent in June 2017), but in the South, East and the Donbas it remains the most popular option, though supported by only a relative majority. In the event of a freezing of the conflict in the Donbas, with a population accustomed to the status quo (the conflict persists, the territory is uncontrolled, Crimea has been annexed), and should adequate support from Ukraine's Western partners be lacking, a decline in the level of support for NATO affiliation and

an increase in the support of non-bloc status could be expected. Precisely this sector of the population—residents of the South, the East, and the Donbas who support non-bloc status—should be the target audience for information and awareness campaigns regarding the realities and prospects of the national security policy of Ukraine.

Moreover, the aforementioned risks will be strengthened if key political players in Ukraine return to the topic of NATO membership as the central focus of political campaigns (elections/referenda).

To sum up, society's attitudes toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration became a field of dramatic shifts beginning with the Euromaidan in 2013–2014. How the new map of society's moods in Ukraine takes shape will depend on potential changes in the critically important regions of the country, namely, the South, the East, and the Donbas.