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Political views in non-government controlled areas of Ukraine

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Introduction and terminology

According to State Statistics Service of Ukraine as of 1.01.2014 about 4 million of citizens lived in the settlements which now belong to non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (NGCA)¹. Within three years after the military conflict started in total, from 14 April 2014 to 15 May 2017, OHCHR recorded 34,056 conflict-related casualties in Ukraine, among civilians, Ukrainian military and members of the armed groups. This includes 10,090 people killed and 23,966 injured. OHCHR indicates that these estimation should be treated as minimal².

As of October, 23, 2017 about 1.6 million of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are officially registered in Ukraine³. According to UNHCR data as of June 2017 427,240 of Ukrainian citizens applied for asylum in Russia. However, the number of displaced persons could be less than 2 million, because some IDPs registered in Ukraine and some people who moved to Russia returned home, also some IDPs travel to GCA from NGCA regularly to receive social payments. According to UN OCHA estimation about 2.9 million people are residing in NGCA in 2017: 1.75 in so called “DPR” and 1.17 in so called “LPR”.

In Ukraine except for the term NGCA the term “Certain Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions” is used for these territories⁴. There is no single internationally recognized term for such territories, as Pegg puts it: *“Despite the various forms of progress, in some ways the subfield of de facto state studies remains mired in persistent and recurrent problems. Perhaps the most obvious one is terminology. What should we call secessionist entities that control territory, provide governance, secure popular support, and aspire to widely recognized sovereign statehood and yet fail to attain it? The terminology chosen here—de facto state—seemingly failed to convince many scholars who offered such alternatives as “pseudo-states” (Kolossoff & O’Loughlin, 1999), “states-within-states” (Spears, 2004), “unrecognized quasistates” (Kolstø, 2006), and “informal states” (Isachenko, 2012). Gradually, some of these terms failed to catch on, and others were abandoned by their authors in favor of de facto states. Over time, there seemed to be a coalescing around three main terms: contested states (e.g., Geldenhuys, 2009; Ker-Lindsay, 2012; Kyris, 2015), unrecognized states (e.g., Caspersen, 2012; Richards, 2014; Richards & Smith, 2015), and de facto states (e.g., Bahcheli, Bartmann, & Srebnik, 2004; Berg, 2013; Broers, 2013; Florea, 2014; Johnson & Smaker, 2014; Kolstø & Blakkisrud,*

¹ The calculation is made by GfK Ukraine, the population of the contact line is included to NGCA. Rayons of Donetska and Luhanska oblasts are defined as controlled or non-controlled by the Ukrainian Government according to the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution № 1276-p as of 02.12.2015. <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1276-2015-%D1%80>.

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2017. Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine 16 February to 15 May 2017. http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/UARreport18th_EN.pdf

³ According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine <http://www.msp.gov.ua/news/14179.html>

⁴ See, for example, the President of Ukraine official website <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/glava-derzhavi-pidpisav-zakon-quotpro-osoblivij-poryadok-mis-33881>

2012; Lynch, 2004; MacQueen, 2015; O'Loughlin et al., 2011; Pegg, 1998; Popescu, 2007; Voller, 2013; Yemelianova, 2015). Yet, even in recent years, a proliferation of new terms continue to be seen, referring to essentially the same things. Wood (2010) collectively lambasted these entities as "limbo world." Coggins (2014) uses "proto-state" as her preferred term of choice. Perhaps most ridiculous of all, in an otherwise informative article, Byman and King (2012) coin the silly term "phantom state," which does nothing to clarify or add to our understanding of these entities. One hopes that Caspersen (2016) adopting the term "de facto state" might signify a larger acceptance of de facto state as "the most appropriate and most neutral" (O'Loughlin et al., 2011, p. 2) or the "least inaccurate and least offensive" (Broers, 2013, p. 69) term available, but that is probably wishful thinking. Two decades of scholarship later, our universe remains unnecessarily divided into a competing plethora of terms." [4, pp. 20-21]

Ó Beacháin suggested the classification on de facto states according to the number and UN membership of the countries which recognise these states: "non-UN member states not recognised by any state", "non-UN member states recognised only by other non-UN members", "de facto states recognised by at least one UN member state but by less than ten" and "non-UN member states recognised by at least ten UN members" which he also calls "partially recognised states" [3]. According to this classification "DPR" and "LPR" are "non-UN member states recognised only by other non-UN members" as they were recognised only by South Ossetia, which is non-UN member.

Also in relevant sources the term "patron state" is used for state which supports de facto states (Russian Federation is patron state for NGCA) and the term "parent state" is used for the state from which de facto states have seceded (Ukraine is parent state for NGCA).

The surveys in de facto states

The results of the surveys conducted in such de facto states as Abkhazia, "Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic", "Republika Srpska", South Ossetia demonstrate that the largest segments of the local population are not willing to be a part of parent state. In different cases, they prefer to unite with patron state or to keep the status quo [1; 8]. However, all these surveys were conducted via face-to-face interview method which usually includes fixing the name and address of the respondent and we may assume that pro-reintegration respondents could refuse to take part in the survey or hide their views. Also large part of the citizens who were against secession could have left de facto states. Toal and O'Loughlin describe the following survey limitations: "Firstly, researchers face the same problems that trouble public opinion research in many countries. Census data may be outdated and accurate population distributions and numbers require inference and estimating from other sources. Permission to conduct research can sometimes be difficult to obtain from governing authorities. Respondents, especially minorities, are sometimes cagey about sharing their opinions, especially about political leaders and the state of affairs in their country.

Secondly, de facto states pose unique problems for public opinion research. Laws by parent states against unapproved travel to de facto states complicate outsiders'

access to the research site. Policies designed to isolate and de-legitimate de facto states by parent states (e.g. Georgia for Abkhazia and South Ossetia), can effectively criminalize research in these regions, irrespective of its intellectual merits and news impact. Research results that simply present the views of residents, and complicate or contradict parent state narratives can elicit hostility and denunciation from these governments. De facto state authorities exhibit similar political sensitivities. Research by foreign academics can be viewed with considerable suspicion and queries about the motives for the work can quickly become conspiratorial. Inevitably the unresolved and ongoing dynamics of conflicts affect the research itself though registering this tension through the questions asked of respondents is part of the value of such research.

A further complication is that inter-ethnic tensions, and translation issues, in certain locations can pose significant challenges to the research gathering process». [8, pp. 15-19]

Does NGCA population want to reintegrate to Ukraine? The public opinion surveys in NGCA are regularly conducted since 2014 (particularly, GfK Ukraine conducted 14 such surveys for different international organizations), but as was mentioned above it is impossible to evaluate either sincerity of respondents or the difference in response rate among pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian respondents (we assume that pro-Ukrainian citizens agree to participate in the survey less often due to fear of political repressions). Also lack of reliable statistics on the distribution of citizens of NGCA creates significant methodological challenges for conducting such surveys. Therefore, most international organizations that initiated conducting of such surveys in NGCA used the results only internally and did not publish them.

Only three surveys which included political questions put both to GCA of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and NGCA respondents were published:

1. "Media consumption and political preferences in 8 oblasts of East and South of Ukraine". The survey was conducted by GfK Ukraine, supported by the Ukrainian Confidence Building Initiative (UCBI), and funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID)⁵. Within this survey 426 telephone interviews with calls to mobile phone numbers were conducted with NGCA respondents in February, 2017. Similar survey was conducted in December, 2015 within Media consumption and political preferences in 6 oblasts of East and South of Ukraine survey⁶.
2. Sasse, Gwendolyn. 2017. "The Donbas – Two parts, or still one? The experience of war through the eyes of the regional population", ZOiS Report 1/2017 [6]. 1200 telephone interviews were conducted with NGCA respondents in December, 2016.
3. "Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index". The survey was conducted by GfK Ukraine, supported by the Ukrainian Confidence Building Initiative (UCBI), and funded by the US Agency for International

⁵ The presentations and datasets are available via link: <http://imi.org.ua/monitorings/analysis-of-the-media-situation-in-the-southern-and-eastern-regions-of-ukraine-2017/>

⁶ In 2017 two oblasts were added – Kherson and Mykolaiv.

Development (USAID)⁷. Within this survey 641 telephone interviews with calls to mobile phone numbers were conducted with NGCA respondents in April-May, 2016.

Further analysis is based on these three surveys, hereinafter the first survey is referred as UCBI survey, the second – as ZOIS survey and the third – as SCORE survey.

Methodological limitations and comparability of GCA and NGCA surveys

Methodological limitations and comparability of the surveys

Two of GfK Ukraine former fieldwork supervisors live in NGCA and conduct face-to-face surveys in these areas. However, the problems of conducting face-to-face interviews in NGCA are: 1) Impossibility to ask any questions on political topics; 2) Inaccessibility of the settlements where shelling is taking place. Therefore GfK Ukraine conducts the surveys on political topics in NGCA via computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI). We can't say that face-to-face method would provide more sincere answers than CATI: on the one hand, face-to-face survey method stimulates more trust to the interviewer, but on the other hand, CATI provides higher anonymity for respondents as the interviewer knows the telephone number only while during face-to-face interviews the name and address are fixed as well for control purposes.

GfK Ukraine monthly conducts 15-20,000 interviews via CATI with calls to mobile phone numbers via random generation of mobile numbers of Ukrainian mobile operators and about 5% of respondents indicate NGCA as place of living. According to last face-to-face survey conducted by GfK Ukraine in May 2017 in NGCA, 91% of so called "DPR" and 96% of "LPR" residents use Vodafone mobile phone operator (the only Ukrainian operator still functioning in NGCA and the numbers of this operator are generated for CATI conducted by GfK Ukraine in NGCA) – so face-to-face survey proved validity of using CATI with calls to Vodafone numbers for NGCA polls.

The telephone numbers for UCBI and SCORE surveys were randomly selected from the databases of previously conducted (within 2011-2013) representative surveys for cities with population >50,000 and for settlements with population <50,000 of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The distribution of the interviews between these databases corresponds to the distribution of the population of these territories in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts together according to the data of State Statistics Service of Ukraine as of 1/01/2014.

The interviewers named the research company “as independent international research company “GfK”. If the respondent asked “What country does this company represent?” the interviewer said that GfK is working in different countries including Ukraine and Russia, and his/her call-centre is situated in Kyiv (it was not widespread question, but about 10% of refusals were explained by “distrust to Kyiv company”). GfK Ukraine guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of answers for all respondents. All politically sensitive questions were put at the end of the

⁷ The executive summaries and data are available via link: <http://www.scoreforpeace.org/?country=17>. Some data presented in this paper (see Table 4) was not published, the permission to publish it was kindly given by UCBI.

questionnaire, if the respondent refused to answer these questions his/her interview was not excluded from the sample.

The source and type (landline or mobile) of telephone numbers of NGCA respondents of ZOiS survey are not indicated in the report and this information was not provided on request via e-mail. Also the distribution by age, gender and settlement size is not indicated in ZOiS report, but it is indicated that the same age, gender, education and settlement size quotas are applied for GCA and NGCA. The settlement size characteristics of GCA and NGCA were different before 2014 - in NGCA the share of rural population was significantly lower – so there are no reasons to consider that now these characteristics are similar. However, there is no data to prove or disprove this.

Overall the data on political questions of three surveys is not comparable due to different methodology – see Table 1 – and different formulations of the questions.

Table 1. Comparison of the methodology of UCBI, SCORE and ZOiS surveys

Criteria	UCBI survey	SCORE survey	ZOiS survey
Source and type of telephone numbers for NGCA	Vodafone mobile telephone numbers received via random generation of mobile numbers. The place of living is indicated according to self-reporting by respondents		Is not indicated
Oblast distribution in NGCA	37% of interviews were conducted in “LPR” and 63% - in “DPR” ⁸	The survey was conducted in “DPR” and “LPR” separately	50/50
Sex, age, education, settlement size distribution in NGCA and GCA	Different in GCA and NGCA	Different in GCA and NGCA	Same in GCA and NGCA

Comparability of face-to-face interviews in GCA and telephone interviews in NGCA

Within all three surveys the survey in GCA was conducted via face-to-face interviews and the survey in NGCA – via telephone interviews. It has to be taken into account that these two methods are not totally comparable: according to GfK Ukraine experience CATI reaches more respondents with middle and high income, more educated and active people because it is more easy to reach them via mobile phone than to “catch” them at home. Also those respondents who don’t have mobile phone and therefore could be reached only by face-to-face method usually are the most poor and the least educated category of population.

⁸ This distribution is almost similar to pre-war distribution when 38% of the population of the territory which now belongs to NGCA lived in the areas which are now controlled by "LPR" and 62% - in "DPR" areas, and close UN OCHA estimation which shows that 40% of NGCA population live in “LPR” and 60% of “DPR”

Thus according to UCBI survey 30% of NGCA respondents have higher education versus 25% of respondents in GCA of Donetsk and 24% in GCA in Luhansk – presumably, this difference is caused by difference of survey method.

Also as was mentioned above the level of sincerity of respondents could be different in the surveys conducted via different methods.

In SCORE and UCBI surveys the wording of the questionnaires for both GCA of Donbas and NGCA was as neutral as possible: for example, military forces of NGCA were called as “people who fight against Ukrainian military forces in Donbas”. GCA questionnaires differed from NGCA questionnaires in some questions: for example, in GCA questionnaires the term “local media” meant Ukraine-based media while in NGCA questionnaires the terms “DPR media” or “LPR media” were used instead.

Preferences on the status of Donbas

According to ZOiS survey 56% of NGCA respondents would like to reintegrate to Ukraine (35% with special status and 21% without) and 44% - to be the part of Russia (33% with some autonomy and 11% without autonomy) – see Table 2. In GCA 91% would like NGCA to reintegrate to Ukraine (26% with special status and 65% without) and 9% - to be the part of Russia (2% with some autonomy and 7% without).

ZOiS present the data only for those who answered the question and the numbers of respondents show that about 20% in GCA and 15% of respondents in NGCA refused to answer this question.

Table 2. Answers to the question "In your view, what should the status of DPR/LPR be?"

	NGCA	Donbas GCA
Special autonomy within Ukraine	35%	26%
Parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts without special status	21%	65%
Special autonomy within Russia	33%	2%
Part of Russia without autonomy	11%	7%
n	1021	948

Source: ZOiS survey

“Special status” of NGCA is indicated in Minsk agreements which according to ZOIS survey are supported by 59% of NGCA respondents and 45% of Donbas GCA respondents and opposed by 10% and 6% respectively.

SCORE survey also shows high support of Minsk agreements in NGCA (8.8 using 10-points scale) and lower support in GCA of Donbas (6.8). The support of Minsk agreements in Western and Central Ukraine is significantly lower than in Southern and Eastern. Notable that NGCA shows significantly higher preference of negotiations to military operations than other regions of Ukraine (see Table 3)

Table 3. Attitudes to violence, negotiations and the Minsk agreements (average scores using 10-points scale)

	Western Ukraine	Central Ukraine	Southern Ukraine	Eastern Ukraine	Donbas (GCA)	Donbas (NGCA)
Violence makes things worse (0) vs. Violence is sometimes necessary (10)	4.6	4.1	4.4	5	3.2	4.7
Emphasis on military operations (0) vs. Emphasis on negotiations (10)	6.8	6.9	7.8	7.3	8.1	9.3
Oppose Minsk Agreements (0) vs. Support for Minsk Agreements (10)	5.2	5.4	6.7	6.8	6.8	8.8

Source: SCORE survey

At the same time SCORE survey shows that despite special autonomy within Ukraine, internationally recognized independence and integration to Russia are more desirable solutions [7, p.20] reintegration to Ukraine and having decentralized status as the rest of Ukrainian oblasts is perceived as acceptable by 59% of “DPR” and 63% of “LPR” respondents and as unacceptable – by approximately one third of the respondents. There are no significant differences between “DPR” and “LPR” in answers to this question. In GCA 8% perceive such solution as unacceptable in Donetsk and 10% in Luhansk, but huge share of respondents refused to answer this question (see Table 4).

Table 4. Answers to the question "Regarding the geopolitical future of Ukraine, how do you evaluate each of the following possibilities?..."

<i>...remain part of Ukraine, with the same decentralized status like all other oblasts in Ukraine</i>	"DPR"	"LPR"	Donetsk GCA	Luhansk GCA
Highly desirable	15%	17%	7%	8%
Satisfactory	21%	20%	16%	17%
Tolerable if necessary	23%	26%	24%	26%
Entirely unacceptable	37%	34%	8%	10%
Don't know	4%	3%	45%	39%
n	329	312	336	125

Source: SCORE survey

According to UCBI surveys uncertainty or fear to answer political questions in GCA of Donbas decreased in 2017 comparing to 2015. Thus the share of respondents who didn't answer the question on Donbas status in Donetsk oblast decreased from 48% to 38% and in Luhansk oblast – from 40% to 30%. Also the prevalence of pro-Russian moods decreased: in Donetsk oblast the share of supporters of reintegration increased from 39% to 54% and the share of supporters of integration to Russia/independent status decreased from 12% to 8%, in Luhansk the first share increased from 42% to 63% and the second decreased from 18% to 8% (see Table 5).

Table 5. Answers to the question "What would you like to see happen regarding Donetsk and Luhansk?"

	Donetsk GCA		Luhansk GCA	
	2015	2017	2015	2017
<i>Return to their political arrangement with Kyiv from before*</i>	21%	30%	18%	41%
<i>Part of Ukraine but have a great deal more autonomy from Kyiv</i>	9%	13%	18%	11%
<i>Part of Ukraine but have some autonomy from Kyiv</i>	10%	10%	6%	11%
Partitioned, with GCA remaining part of Ukraine and letting separatist-held areas go their own way	1%	1%	3%	1%
Independent countries	9%	5%	6%	3%
Part of the Russian Federation	2%	2%	9%	4%
Refused	20%	11%	15%	18%
Hard to say	28%	27%	25%	12%
n	2625	2666	1823	1908

Source: UCBI survey

*Reintegration solutions are marked in italics type and separatist solutions are marked in bold.

Overall according to SCORE survey all regions prefer negotiations among all possible ways of solution of the conflict, but whereas all regions of GCA prefer international negotiations including all sides of the conflict, EU and USA, NGCA respondents prefer internal negotiations between Kyiv and “DPR” and “LPR” leaders. However, international negotiations are also supported by relative majority of NGCA respondents (see Table 6).

Table 6. Evaluation of the strategies to move forward (average scores using 10-points scale where 0= will make things worse, 5= will not make a difference, 10= will make things better)

	Western Ukraine	Central Ukraine	Southern Ukraine	Eastern Ukraine	Donbas (GCA)	Donbas (NGCA)
Massive attack by Ukrainian army to aim for decisive victory	5.4	4.7	2.9	4.3	2.5	0.7
Continuation of Ukrainian army operation at the current level of engagement	4.1	3.9	3.0	3.5	2.7	1.6
Forcing Russia to retreat from the conflict through international sanctions and pressure	8.3	7.6	6.8	7.3	5.2	4.7
International negotiations, including all sides of the conflict, EU and the USA	8.6	7.6	7.7	7.7	7.8	5.9
Negotiations within Ukraine, between Kyiv and the leaders of “DPR” and “LPR”	5.3	5.8	6.8	6.7	7.3	7.9
Continued rebel military activities	1.9	2.0	1.6	1.9	1.3	3.7
Direct Russian military intervention	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.8	3.8

Source: SCORE survey

Preferences on the foreign policy of Ukraine

According to UCBI survey in 2017 8% of NGCA respondents think that primary direction of the foreign policy of Ukraine should be towards Europe, 46% - towards Russia and 32% are for neutral status – these figures didn’t change significantly from 2015.

In GCA 16% are for Russian direction in Donetsk and 12% in Luhansk (this indicator significantly decreased from 20% in 2015), 9% and 17% are for European direction (in Luhansk this indicator significantly increased from 10% in 2015) and 49% and 44% are for neutral status (see Table 7).

Table 7. Answers to the question "What should be the primary direction that Ukraine takes in its foreign policy?"

	NGCA		Donetsk GCA		Luhansk GCA	
	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017
Toward Europe	9%	8%	9%	9%	10%	17%
Toward Russia	44%	46%	14%	16%	20%	12%
Become neutral \ unaligned \ balance between West and East	34%	32%	31%	49%	28%	44%
None of the above	2%	1%	3%	5%	3%	7%
Refused	3%	3%	20%	6%	14%	10%
Don't know	9%	11%	22%	16%	25%	10%
n	463	426	2625	2666	1823	1908

Source: UCBI survey

According to ZOiS survey 28% of GCA respondents and 18% of NGCA respondents consider that Ukraine should join EU (see Table 8).

Table 8. Answers to the question "Should Ukraine join the EU?"

	NGCA	Donbas GCA
Yes	18%	28%
No	82%	72%
n	1063	867

Source: ZOiS survey

Media usage

Russian TV most often is primary source of information for NGCA respondents (27%), following by local TV (16%) and only 8% indicated Ukrainian TV. The share of those who indicated Russian or local sources of information as primary increased from 53% in 2015 to 59% in 2017 while the share of those who indicated Ukrainian sources of information as primary decreased from 19% to 14% (see Table 9).

Table 9. Answers to the question "What is your primary media source for receiving news?"

	NGCA	
	2015	2017
Russian television*	31%	27%

Local "DPR \LPR" television	9%	16%
Social networking sites (VK, Facebook etc.)	8%	11%
<i>All-Ukrainian television</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>8%</i>
Local Internet sites	4%	6%
<i>Ukrainian Internet sites</i>	<i>8%</i>	<i>6%</i>
Russian Internet sites	4%	6%
Radio "DPR \LPR"	1%	3%
Friends and relatives, acquaintance, neighbors, colleagues at work	0%	2%
Russian radio	1%	1%
Printed media	0%	0%
Russian print media	1%	0%
Print edition "DPR \LPR"	3%	0%
<i>Ukrainian radio</i>	<i>1%</i>	<i>0%</i>
I'm not interested in this information	2%	1%
I don't use media to receive information\ Difficult to answer	17%	13%
n	463	426

Source: UCBI survey

* *Russian/local sources are in bold and Ukrainian sources are in italic type*

Russian TV is also the most prevalent source of information about Ukraine for NGCA respondents – 52% indicated it, also 37% indicated local TV and only 35% - Ukrainian TV. The popularity of Ukrainian sites decreased from 28% in 2015 to 23% (see Table 10).

Table 10. Answers to the question "What sources do you use to get news and information about the events in Ukraine as a whole?"

	NGCA	
	2015	2017
Russian television	49%	52%
Friends and relatives, acquaintance, neighbors, colleagues at work	45%	46%
Local television	36%	37%
All-Ukrainian television	31%	35%
Social networking sites (VK, Facebook etc.)	24%	26%
Ukrainian Internet sites	28%	23%
Russian Internet sites	21%	22%
Local Internet sites	18%	19%
Radio "DPR \LPR"	13%	17%
Print edition "DPR \LPR"	15%	16%
Russian radio	14%	14%
Russian print media	7%	7%

Ukrainian radio	9%	5%
Printed media	3%	2%
Other	1%	4%
I'm not interested in this information	5%	2%
I don't use media to receive information \ Difficult to answer	11%	9%
n	463	426

Source: UCBI survey

As for GCA Ukrainian TV is primary source of information for majority of respondents and only 2% indicated Russian TV (see Table 11).

Table 11. Answers to the question "What is your primary media source for receiving news?" in GCA

	Donetsk GCA		Luhansk GCA	
	2015	2017	2015	2017
All-Ukrainian television	53%	49%	46%	64%
Ukrainian Internet sites	11%	11%	10%	10%
Social networking sites (VK, Facebook etc.)	8%	9%	13%	6%
Local television	8%	5%	2%	3%
Printed media	2%	3%	4%	5%
Local Internet sites	2%	3%	2%	3%
Russian television	3%	2%	3%	2%
Radio	1%	1%	2%	5%
Russian Internet sites	0%	1%	2%	0%
Friends and relatives, acquaintance, neighbors, colleagues at work	2%	1%	4%	2%
I'm not interested in this information	9%	9%	7%	3%
I don't use media to receive information	3%	7%	7%	3%
n	2666	2625	1908	1823

Source: UCBI survey

According to UCBI survey in GCA the share of those who use Russian TV or/and Russian Internet sites as source of information (not as primary source, but as one of the sources of news) decreased in Donetsk oblast from 16% in 2015 to 11% in 2017 and in Luhansk oblast – from 14% to 10% (Table 12 presented below doesn't show intersection between those who watch Russian TV and use Russian Internet sites – so these figures were calculated additionally).

Particularly, in Donetsk GCA we observe significant decrease of the share of Russian TV users from 12% to 6% and in Luhansk GCA - significant decrease of the share of Russian Internet sites users from 6% to 3% (see Table 12).

Table 12. Answers to the question "What sources do you use to get news and information about the events in your settlement, oblast and a country as a whole?" in GCA

	Donetsk GCA		Luhansk GCA	
	2015	2017	2015	2017
All-Ukrainian television	81%	74%	67%	80%
Friends and relatives, acquaintance, neighbors	51%	55%	35%	30%
Local television	57%	41%	21%	13%
Social networking sites (VK, Facebook etc.)	27%	24%	21%	15%
Ukrainian Internet sites	26%	21%	24%	19%
Printed media	16%	18%	11%	10%
Local Internet sites	15%	18%	12%	9%
Radio	15%	12%	9%	12%
Russian Internet sites	5%	6%	6%	3%
Russian television	12%	6%	8%	7%
I'm not interested in this information	4%	6%	6%	3%
I don't use media to receive information	1%	4%	5%	2%
n	2666	2625	1908	1823

Source: UCBI survey

Factors of political position in NGCA

Media usage and preferences on foreign policy of Ukraine

According to UCBI survey 30% of NGCA respondents use only Russian and local media as sources of information about Ukraine, 32% use both Russian/local and Ukrainian media and 17% use Ukrainian media only. Among the first group of citizens 57% have chosen pro-Russian course of foreign policy and 4% - pro-European, among the second – 47% and 9%, and among the third – 35% and 18% respectively (see Table 13).

Table 13. Sources of information about Ukraine and preferences on foreign policy of Ukraine in NGCA

	Those who use Russian and local media only as sources of information about Ukraine	Those who use Russian, local and Ukrainian media as sources of information about Ukraine	Those who use Ukrainian media as sources of information about Ukraine
	2017	2017	2017
Toward Europe	4%	8%	18%
Toward Russia	57%	47%	35%

Become neutral \ unaligned \ balance between West and East	23%	39%	36%
None of the above	1%	0%	1%
Refused	2%	0%	4%
Don't know	14%	5%	7%
n	129	136	73

Source: UCBI survey

The analysis of SCORE survey data made by Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD) researchers also proves that “people who follow pro-rebel / pro-Russian media are also reluctant to support reintegration” [7, p.21]

National identity

There is significantly higher correlation among political views and national identity than among political views and language usage in Ukraine. Thus according to UCBI survey GCA of Luhansk have the highest share of Ukrainian-speaking citizens among all oblasts neighbouring to NGCA (16%, additionally 27% use both Russian and Ukrainian language at home), but the prevalence of pro-Russian views in GCA of Luhansk oblast is almost the same as in Donetsk oblast (see Table 7) while these views are significantly less prevalent in Dnipro and Zaporizhia oblasts [9]. At the same time GCA of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are characterized by the highest prevalence of citizens with Russian identity among East and South oblasts [9]. According to the Census of 2001 the highest prevalence of citizens with Russian identity was observed in AR Crimea (58%), Donetsk (38%) and Luhansk (39%) oblasts – in other oblasts their prevalence didn't exceed 25%⁹.

According to UCBI survey 52% of NGCA respondents identify themselves as Russians and 39% - as Ukrainians while in GCA of Donetsk these figures constitute 19% and 77% and in GCA of Luhansk – 16% and 83% respectively.

Among NGCA respondents with Russian identity 57% have chosen pro-Russian course of Ukraine as preferable and 4% have chosen pro-European course while among Ukrainians these figures constitute 38% and 11% respectively – see Table 14.

Table 14. National identity and preferences on foreign policy of Ukraine in NGCA

	Russian identity	Ukrainian identity
Toward Europe	4%	11%
Toward Russia	57%	38%
Become neutral \ unaligned \ balance between West and East	28%	37%
None of the above	1%	0%
Refused	2%	3%
Don't know	9%	11%

⁹ The data is available in Ukrainian via link: <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/results/general/nationality/>

n	229	162
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Source: UCBI survey

According to ZOIS survey of IDPs conducted in December 2016 [5] there are only 2% of persons with Russian identity and 9% with mixed "Ukrainian-Russian" among IDPs. This means that among NGCA dwellers pro-Ukrainian citizens more often became IDPs while pro-Russian ones more often stayed or returned or emigrated to Russia (according to the same survey among NGCA migrants to Russia 26% has Russian identity and 18% mixed "Ukrainian-Russian").

Age

Younger NGCA respondents support reintegration of Donbas to the lower extent than respondents aged 40+ (see Tables 15 and 16).

Table 15. Answers of "DPR" respondents to the question "Regarding the geopolitical future of Ukraine, how do you evaluate each of the following possibilities...?"

<i>...remain part of Ukraine, with the same decentralized status like all other oblasts in Ukraine</i>	"DPR"			
	18-29 y.o.	30-39 y.o.	40-49 y.o.	50 y.o. and older
Highly desirable	9%	10%	19%	19%
Satisfactory	23%	24%	15%	20%
Tolerable if necessary	25%	22%	25%	21%
Entirely unacceptable	41%	39%	35%	36%
Don't know	1%	5%	6%	3%
n	65	55	56	153

Source: SCORE survey

Table 16. Answers of "LPR" respondents to the question "Regarding the geopolitical future of Ukraine, how do you evaluate each of the following possibilities...?"

<i>...remain part of Ukraine, with the same decentralized status like all other oblasts in Ukraine</i>	"LPR"			
	18-29 y.o.	30-39 y.o.	40-49 y.o.	50 y.o. and older
Highly desirable	5%	9%	17%	24%
Satisfactory	17%	16%	26%	21%
Tolerable if necessary	40%	26%	28%	20%
Entirely unacceptable	37%	46%	24%	32%
Don't know	0%	3%	5%	3%

n	48	60	51	153
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Source: SCORE survey

Overall elder people more often stayed in NGCA while younger people more often became IDPs: thus according to "National monitoring system report on the situation of internally displaced persons" conducted by IOM in June 2017 [2] there are 17% of persons aged 60+ in the households of IDPs while according to UN OCHA estimation there are 23% of persons aged 60+ in "DPR" and 22% in "LPR". Thus it can be assumed that younger pro-Ukrainian NGCA dwellers more often became IDPs than elder ones.

As was mentioned above the telephone numbers for UCBI and SCORE surveys were randomly selected from the databases of previously conducted (within 2011-2013) representative surveys in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. These databases include the information about respondent's sex, age and settlement. Analysis of the number of refusals among different age groups showed that respondents aged 50+ refused to take part in the survey more often than younger age categories. As far as respondents aged 50+ more often have pro-Ukrainian views this proves the assumption that pro-Ukrainian respondents less often agreed to take part in NGCA surveys than pro-Russian ones.

Education

The analysis of SCORE survey data made by SeeD researchers shows "elevated hostility towards separatists among <...> more educated people" [7, p.21]

Personal security

Also SeeD analysis of SCORE survey data made shows that "support for reintegration appears to be lower in people who experience high personal security under the current status-quo" [7, p. 21]

Family ties

Direct participation in the conflict is an important factor of attitude to the conflict. Thus SeeD analysis shows that "support for reintegration appears to be lower among Combatants (people who are either combatants themselves; or have family members or friends who are combatants). On the other hand, "analysis revealed elevated hostility towards separatists <...> among people whose families have been divided through the conflict. [7, p. 21]

Political views

In 2014 Ukraine officially declared pro-European course and logically those who are against pro-European course should be against Donbas reintegration. According to SeeD researchers "residents of NGCAs who are reluctant to support integration of Donbas are mainly people who are hostile towards Ukrainian speakers, Western Ukraine and Pro-Maidan narratives". On the other hand, "analysis revealed elevated hostility towards separatists among people who believe Ukraine should join the EU" . [7, p. 21]

Also according to SeeD researchers "people with authoritarian traits appear to be reluctant over Donbas reintegration" [7, p. 21].

Conclusion

Political surveys in NGCA which data is published in Ukraine were conducted via telephone interviews unlike the surveys in such de facto states as Abkhazia, "Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic", "Republika Srpska", South Ossetia which were conducted via face-to-face survey. On the one hand, face-to-face survey method stimulates more trust to the interviewer, but on the other hand, telephone interviews provide higher anonymity for respondents as the interviewer knows the telephone number only while during face-to-face interviews the name and address are fixed as well for control purposes.

Face-to-face surveys in abovementioned de facto states demonstrate that the largest segments of the local population are not willing to be a part of parent state. Unlike these surveys according to ZOIS survey 56% of NGCA respondents would like to reintegrate to Ukraine (35% with special status and 21% without) and 44% - to be the part of Russia (33% with some autonomy and 11% without autonomy). For comparison in GCA of Donbas 65% support reintegration without autonomy, 26% - reintegration with autonomy and only 9% support integration to Russia.

"Special status" of NGCA is indicated in Minsk agreements which are supported by majority of NGCA respondents according to ZOIS and SCORE surveys. At the same time SCORE survey shows that despite "special status" is more desirable for NGCA respondents, majority of them perceive reintegration to Ukraine and having decentralized status as a result of decentralization reform as acceptable option (59% of "DPR" and 63% of "LPR" respondents agreed with this versus 37% and 34% of those which consider this options as unacceptable respectively). For comparison in GCA of Donbas 8% perceive such solution as unacceptable in Donetsk and 10% in Luhansk.

Thus majority of NGCA dwellers would accept reintegration to Ukraine even without "special status", but significant part of the population would support taking pro-Russian course which is not supported by the rest of Ukrainian population.

Overall both UCBI and ZOIS surveys show about 45% of pro-Russian citizens in NGCA versus 9%-15% in GCA of Donbas. In reality the share of pro-Russian citizens in NGCA can be lower, it can be assumed that pro-Ukrainian citizens agree to participate in the survey less often than pro-Russian ones or hide their political position due to fear of political repressions, but apparently the prevalence of pro-Russian views is significant. It is the result of displacement of pro-Ukrainian citizens¹⁰ and media environment when 59% of respondents indicated Russian or "DPR"/"LPR" media as primary sources of information and only 14% indicated Ukrainian media. However, 62% of IDPs want to return home and majority of them indicate that they will do it at the end of the conflict [2] - their return would change public opinion.

¹⁰ According to ZOIS survey of IDPs conducted in December 2016 [5] there are only 2% of persons with Russian identity and 9% - with mixed "Ukrainian-Russian" among IDPs.

The difference in national identities between NGCA and GCA is huge: according to UCBI survey 52% of NGCA respondents identify themselves as Russians and 39% - as Ukrainians while in GCA of Donetsk these figures constitute 19% and 77% and in GCA of Luhansk – 16% and 83% respectively. If the conflict remains “frozen” it can be assumed that the polarization of views between NGCA and GCA of Donbas would increase. The comparison of UCBI surveys in 2015 and 2017 shows that whereas in NGCA the usage of Ukrainian media as primary source of information decreased from 19% to 14% and the usage of Russian/local media increased from 53% to 59%, in GCA we observe opposite tendency: in Donetsk GCA the share of users of Russian media (not as primary source, but as one of the sources of news) decreased from 16% to 11% and in Luhansk GCA – from 14% to 10%. The prevalence of separatist moods also decreased in GCA: in Donetsk GCA the share of supporters of integration to Russia/independent status of Donbas decreased from 12% in 2015 to 8% in 2017, in Luhansk - from 18% to 8%.

The factors of political position of NGCA residents revealed within SCORE and UCBI surveys are summarized in the table below.

Pro-separatist views	Reintegration or anti-separatist views
Usage of Russian or separatist media	Usage of Ukrainian media
Russian identity	Ukrainian identity
Younger age	Older age
Lower education level	Higher education level
High personal security	Low personal security
People who are either combatants themselves; or have family members or friends who are combatants	No combatants in the family
Families have not been divided	Families have been divided through the conflict
Against EU integration of Ukraine	Support EU integration of Ukraine
Authoritarian traits	No authoritarian traits

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