

**POSITIONING UKRAINE WITHIN CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
EUROPE (CEE): PERSPECTIVE FROM NETWORK  
OF AQUACULTURE CENTERS IN CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE**

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Due to the ongoing Russian invasion on Ukraine, the issue of understanding of Ukraine's place in the modern geopolitical space creates a relevance to investigate it more particular. Typically, international scholars perceive Ukraine through the lens of post-soviet reality, categorizing the country within the Eastern Europe in their studies. However, we advocate the perspective that Ukraine must be perceived and positioned within the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The attempts to divide Europe regionally had quite a political perception. International scholars stated it was the post-Yalta order which “dictated a strict and single dichotomy by subsuming under the label Eastern Europe all those parts of Central, East Central and South-eastern Europe that after 1945 came under Soviet domination” (Ash G., 1989)<sup>1</sup>. The term was not only an ideological precept pertaining to the East/West conflict, but also ‘denoted the perceived homogeneity of the bloc of European states oriented towards the Soviet Union’<sup>2</sup>. However, Berlund S., Hellén T. & Aarebrot F. H. (1998) defined that the term Eastern Europe was an ambiguous and, in many ways, outdated even in 1998.

It's worth mentioning that of the major developments of the 1980s in Central Europe became the development of single-issue politics, as well as its "greening" (Rupnik, 1990)<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, we found it advisable to look over the concept of CEE and Ukrainian place within this region particularly through the scope of environmental issues. Notably, Ukraine is a signatory to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (*Carpathian Convention*), alongside other six countries of the CEE region. In addition, looking on the map it can be also seen that Ukraine is situated in the mid of Europe, affirming CEE both geographically and certainly geopolitically appropriate region for the country. However, foreign researchers often do not categorize Ukraine within the CEE region. For instance, Selin H. in “*EU enlargement and the environment: Institutional change and*

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<sup>1</sup> Ash G. (1989), *The uses of adversity: essays on the fate of Central Europe*, London: Granta and Penguin, p. 335 p.

<sup>2</sup> Berglund, S. (Ed.). (2013). *The handbook of political change in Eastern Europe*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Rupnik, J. (1990). Central Europe or Mitteleuropa? *Daedalus*, 119(1), p. 249–278.

*environmental policy in Central and Eastern Europe*” (2007)<sup>4</sup> devotes 8 countries of Central and Eastern Europe – three Baltic states, four Visegrad states and one former member of Yugoslavia, excluding Ukraine. Similarly, Green D.<sup>5</sup> in his *Restoring Cursed Earth – Environmental Policy Reforms in Eastern Europe and Russia* (2010) made a detailed studies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Estonia, and post-soviet Russia, not devoting them to the CEE, however also bypassing Ukraine. These examples illustrate the need to reevaluate the place of Ukraine within the CEE and underscore the gap.

Despite foreign researchers do not devote Ukraine to the CEE, there is a notable shift when examining international organizations with an environmental focus. Here we agree with Pilyaev I.<sup>6</sup> (2013) and propose an illustrative example of the international organization that employs the term CEE for Ukraine. Specifically, it is a Network of Aquaculture Centers in Central-Eastern Europe (NACEE)<sup>7</sup>, launched in 2004 by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. In the review of the development of NACEE, prepared by the Hungarian expert Laszlo Varadi (elected president of the organization), Central and Eastern Europe is defined as “developing geopolitical region”. Active members of the Network are organizations from 9 CEE countries: Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Ukraine, as well. Currently (last updated in 2022), the Network consists of institutions and individuals from 10 countries, with Bulgaria and Kazakhstan, in addition to the abovementioned list, excluding the Czech Republic. As it is noted at the organization’s webpage, the idea of the establishment of the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Central-Eastern Europe (NACEE) emerged during the activity of the *European Committee of the European Aquaculture Society (EAS)* in early 2003. This network united the Central and Eastern European institutions and professionals active in the field of aquaculture.

Therefore, the current geopolitical repercussions underscore the necessity of expanding discussions regarding Ukraine's position in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), encompassing both theoretical and practical dimensions. In its turn this entails an examination from academic perspectives, as well as from practical, including Ukraine's active involvement in environmental organizations of the CEE region.

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<sup>4</sup> Selin, Henrik. (2007). EU enlargement and the environment: Institutional change and environmental policy in Central and Eastern Europe. *Ecological Economics*, 61, p. 195-196. 10.1016/j.ecolecon.2006.03.024.

<sup>5</sup> David Green (2010) *Restoring Cursed Earth – Appraising Environmental Policy Reforms in Eastern Europe and Russia*, *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 67:3, p. 460-461, DOI: 10.1080/00207230601124815

<sup>6</sup> Піляєв І. (2013) Специфіка регіону Центрально-Східної Європи в контексті глобальних тенденцій модернізації соціуму. *Віче*. Жовтень, N 20. С. 20–22.

<sup>7</sup> About NASEE – Official website – e-source <https://www.nacee.eu/en/about-nacee/>