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**ON SAILS AND GALES, AND SHIPS  
DRIVING IN VARIOUS DIRECTIONS:  
POST-SOVIET UKRAINE AS A TEST CASE  
FOR THE MESO-AREA CONCEPT**

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*“One ship drives east and another drives west  
With the selfsame winds that blow  
’Tis the set of sails and not the gales  
Which tells us the way to go”*

*Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919)*

**BEYOND A REVOLVING DOOR**

Since the collapse of communism, historians of Eastern Europe have been increasingly involved in the search for new paradigms for writing history. There are at least two sources of pressure for a paradigm shift. The first is political. The break-up of the Soviet Union undermined the vision of Eastern Europe as a solid block. It led to a reemergence of the alternative concepts of *East Central Europe* as a territory covering the former Rzeczpospolita [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth] or *Central Europe* as the realms of the former Habsburg monarchy. Now, with EU enlargement in 2004, both concepts seem to be losing their salience; new political borders will divide countries that claimed common historical and cultural legacies (such as Ukraine and Belarus, on the one hand, and Poland, Lithuania, or Hungary on the other).

The second reason for a paradigm shift is of an academic nature. It is related to the emergence of post-modernist and post-colonial interpretations. Combined with political changes, these have led to a loss of prestige of the old paradigms, organized around a class, an empire

or a nation as the main research unit. The same goes for the West/East dichotomy that has been widely used in non-communist historiography of the region, and which is now very much discredited as a part of an orientalist discourse.<sup>1</sup>

Several strategies have been proposed for moving beyond a restricted research agenda. Some of them essentially stick to the old field of inquiry, even though they try to modify it by writing multiethnic/multicultural history,<sup>2</sup> combining national and social history,<sup>3</sup> introducing recent theories of nationalism into East European studies,<sup>4</sup> moving to a more fashionable cultural history,<sup>5</sup> or using a comparative approach.<sup>6</sup> Others suggest shifting to a broader “Eurasian”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To be sure, these new Western trends have not shattered traditional historiographic discourses in Eastern Europe. In post-communist historiography, the only significant change has been a decline of the class paradigm, and, more generally (and more regrettably), of social history. Most indigenous historians still work along familiar empirical and/or national lines, and essentially are not interested in the newest theories and approaches. The search for a new paradigm reflects the delicate position of a much smaller group of scholars trying to bring their research agenda in line with recent developments in the Western academic world and thus “normalize” their own field. For a general overview of East European historiographies, see: *Klio ohne Fesseln? Historiographie im östlichen Europa nach dem Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus*, edited by Alojz Ivanisevic et al. (Wien, Frankfurt am Main, New York, 2002)

<sup>2</sup> Andreas Kappeler, *Russland as Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung - Geschichte - Zerfall* (München, 1993); Mark von Hagen, “Does Ukraine Have a History?,” *Slavic Review* 54:3 (Fall 1995), pp. 658-673; Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past. Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, 1993); Boris Mironov, *The Social History of Imperial Russia, 1700-1917*, Vol. 1-2 (Boulder: CO, Oxford, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Narys istorii Ukrainy. Formuvannia modernoi ukrainkoi natsii* (Kyiv, 1996); Aleksei Miller, “Ukrainskii vopros” v politike vlastei i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX v.) (St. Petersburg, 2000); Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowocześnieści narodu. Przypadek Polski* (Warsaw, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Orlando Figes, *Natasha’s Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (London, New York, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, *After Empire. Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building. The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires* (Boulder: CO, Oxford, 1997). See also two recent international projects that are underway in Moscow (“Empires, Comparative History, Development of Education in Russia Megaproject”: website address: [www.empires.ru](http://www.empires.ru)) and in Budapest (“Empires Unlimited University Seminar at the Central European University”: website address: [www.ceu.hu/pasts](http://www.ceu.hu/pasts))

<sup>7</sup> Mark von Hagen, “Eurasia as a New Post-Soviet Paradigm,” *American Historical Review* 109:2 (2004), pp. 445-468.

and even “global”<sup>8</sup> context, or practicing so-called “entangled history.”<sup>9</sup> Without denying the legitimacy of these strategies, this chapter suggests a new one: it seeks to test the validity of the meso-region concept in the light of recent empirical research on different aspects of post-communist transformation in Eastern Europe. Such a test helps us to move beyond the “revolving door” of discourse analyses,<sup>10</sup> following the line of an argument that “the boundaries of the field can only be determined by empirical investigation.”<sup>11</sup>

The suggested approach reflects also a growing belief in the crucial role that diverse historical legacies play in shaping different patterns of post-communist economic, political, and cultural developments in Eastern Europe. As a Polish scholar has observed:

“It was history that “carved” the regions, in the same way as it made states and nations. A historical factor was also very important for creating an ethnic situation, as well as cultural, linguistic, religious and economic ones. For this reason, the historical dimension [deserves] special attention.”<sup>12</sup>

This approach is not intended to replace the old teleological vision of history with a new one. Rather, it reflects an understanding that even during periods of radical change historical continuity has to be given its due. Or, to put it in terms of “path-dependence” theory, “where you can get to depends on where you’re coming from.”<sup>13</sup> While tracing the structural constraints and advantages that the historical legacy imposes on the present,

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<sup>8</sup> E. Thomas Ewing, “Russian History in Global Perspective,” *NewsNet: News of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* 42: 4 (September 2002), pp. 1-4.

<sup>9</sup> Philipp Ther, “Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe,” *Central European History* 36 (2003), pp. 45-74.

<sup>10</sup> I borrowed this image from Nancy F. Partner, who defined “linguistic turn” in contemporary Western historiography as “a revolving door” in which “everyone went around and around and got out exactly where they got in” (Nancy F. Partner, “Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions,” Frank Ankersmith and Hans Kellner, eds., *A New Philosophy of History* (London, 1995), p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, London, 1992), p. 100.

<sup>12</sup> Roman Szul, *Perspektywy regionalizmu Galicyjskiego w Polsce na tle tendencji międzynarodowych*, Jerzy Chłopiecki, Helena Madurowicz-Urbańska, eds. *Galicja i jej dziedzictwo. Vol. 2. Społeczeństwo i Gospodarka* (Rzeszów, 1995), p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, 1993), p. 179.

historians are at the same time enriching their understanding of the past. And by implication, they help us to see “what is alive” and “what is dead” in historical divisions between and within Eastern and Central Europe.

As a case in point, I have chosen post-communist Ukraine. Until 1991, Ukraine was largely absent from dominant discourses in both “East” and “West,” and by the same token it has a strong “revisionist” potential to challenge them.<sup>14</sup> Ukraine is *per se* an assemblage of different regions, each with a distinctive past, and regionalism is held to be a key factor in modern Ukrainian history.<sup>15</sup> Because of its large size and internal regional diversity, Ukraine makes a perfect case for the issue under discussion; it can be simultaneously inscribed in different historical and geographical contexts and thus serve as a test for several concepts of meso-regions.

To be sure, the suggested approach has its own limitations and shortcomings. They are, however, reduced to a minimum by the two following considerations: first, it limits itself to a test of old divisions and does not seek to introduce a new one; secondly, unlike a national paradigm, it does not treat Ukraine as something exceptional or pre-given. In my view, for the purpose of the suggested analyses Ukraine could be replaced by any other country or region of Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup> The choice of Ukraine is dictated by considerations of efficiency and - last but not least - of my personal convenience, since this is the case that I know best.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I tried to develop this point in my “Wie soll man nach 1991 die Geschichte der Ukraine unterrichten?,” *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 23 (2001), pp. 1-25.

<sup>15</sup> David Saunders, “Modern Ukrainian History,” *European History Quarterly* 21:1 (1991), p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> So far I have found only one case of denial of “path-dependency theory” when it comes to former communist countries: Walter C. Clemens in his “Why Study the Baltics? How?” (*NewsNet: The News of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* 42: 5 (December 2002), p. 2) writes that “Balts, however, were not ‘path dependent,’ as were Aalborg, Denmark, and Italy - north and south - according to major scholars. Their lives were shaped but not paralyzed by history - not straitjacketed by the long *durée*.” The quoted statement seems to be untenable, and it is based on an inadequate understanding of the theory; history “matters” in both success and failure of transformation, so even the Baltic success requires a “path-dependent” explanation.

<sup>17</sup> Since 1994, as a director of Institute for Historical Research, L’viv National University, I have been involved in several interdisciplinary and international projects that dealt with regionalism in Ukraine, with a special focus on two cities, L’viv in Western and Donetsk in Eastern Ukraine. The results of these projects have been published in several articles (see footnotes 75 and 79 below). In addition, they will be presented and summarized in a separate collection of essays that will be published simultaneously as Volume 10 of the Institute’s Annual *Ukraina moderna*.

## DOES GEOGRAPHY MATTER?

The recent turn in identity studies is characterized by a “return of geography,” the latter understood in the sense both of “real” (the impact of physical environment) and “symbolic” (constructed/imagined/invented).<sup>18</sup> The importance of the geographic factor in the Ukrainian case can be discerned from the very name of the country: Ukraine, like Baluchistan, Nagaland, Scotland, Zululand and others, is a country whose name reflects a claim upon special territory by a people.<sup>19</sup> Since its very emergence, Ukrainian national historiography has seen the history of Ukraine as a function of its geography.<sup>20</sup>

While there seems to be a general agreement on this point, historians cannot agree on how geography affected identity formation. One school of thought sees Ukraine as a rather compact territory. Ukrainian historians who belong to that school emphasize the relative isolation of Ukrainian lands by forest belts in the west and the northeast, and by marshes in the northwest and mountains in the west and south. This isolation supposedly limited contacts on the Ukrainian-Russian, Ukrainian-Polish, Ukrainian-Belarusian and Ukrainian-Hungarian borderlands. Ethnic borders to a large extent coincided with later political and administrative divisions in Kyivan Rus' and Rzeczpospolita, as is confirmed, among other things, by onomastic and toponomic data.<sup>21</sup> It is not hard to place this school in the context of current discourses on nationalism: it shares the general assumptions of a trend that reifies ethnic groups as *a thing*. Its weak point lies in ignoring the transactional character of ethnic identity, since for any definition of *what is* and *what is not* a separate ethnic group, external factors are no

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<sup>18</sup> See: David Hooson, “Afterword: Identity Resurgent – Geography Revived,” David Hooson, ed., *Geography and National Identity* (Oxford, Cambridge: MA, 1994), p. 369.

<sup>19</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism. The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, 1994), p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus', Vol. 1, From Prehistory to the Eleventh Century* (Edmonton, Toronto, 1997), pp. 7-12; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 3rd ed. (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2000), pp. 3-5. For a brief overview see: Natalia Iakovenko, *Paralel'nyi svit: Doslidzhennia z istorii uiaavlenn' ta idei v Ukraini XVI-XVII st.* (Kyiv, 2002), pp. 334-336.

<sup>21</sup> For a recent example of such views see: Yaroslav Isaevych, *Ukraina davnia i nova: Narod, relihiia, kul'tura* (L'viv, 1996), pp. 63-74.

less important (to say the least) than the self-identification of the given group itself.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the making of Ukraine must be seen not only as a result of a growing identification within a certain group, enhanced by its geographical isolation, but of numerous encounters of various groups over geographic borders as well.

Adherents of the other school of thought claim that it is precisely the absence of clear-cut geographic borders that has constituted an essential feature of Ukrainian history,<sup>23</sup> and, by implication, affected identity formation. The modern Ukrainian ethnic territory is part of the vast East European plain that runs from west to east as far as the Ural Mountains and is bounded on the north and south by the Baltic and Black Seas. In contrast, say, to the French “isthmus,”<sup>24</sup> the plain never formed a single and coherent territory. It has often been called “a paradise for generals,” since this part of the European continent displays no major geographic barriers that would hinder the planning of large-scale military operations.<sup>25</sup> The only exception are the Prypiat (Pripiat) marshes and Polissia (Полісся) – now part of the border region between Belarus and Ukraine. They were hard to cross and hindered the progress of large armies, as was the case with Charles XII’s campaign in 1706 and with the Nazi offensive in the summer of 1941.<sup>26</sup> But even the Prypiat problem was of a relative character; the marshes could not stop the progress of the Russian troops during so-called “Brusilov offensive” in 1916 or of the Red Army during the Polish-Soviet war in 1920 and World War II in 1943. In any case, the geographic isolation of Polissia never led to the emergence of a separate East Slavic Polishchuk nation (even

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<sup>22</sup> For a recent critique of the primordial approach (which, paradoxically, affected both national non-communist and Soviet historiographies of the region) see: Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs. History and Archeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500-700* (Cambridge: UK, New York, 2001), pp. 6-35.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g.: Omelian Terletskiy, *Vplyv pryrody na istoriiu Ukrainy* (Lviv, 1930), p. 30; Magocsi, *A History...*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France. Vol. I. History and Environment* (translated from the French; New York, 1988), pp. 265-300.

<sup>25</sup> Norman Davies, *Orzeł biały, czerwona gwiazda. Wojna polsko-bolszewicka 1919-1920* (Kraków, 1997), p. 29. This is translated from: *White Eagle, Red Star: the Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20* (London, 1983).

<sup>26</sup> A. Filippi, *Pripiatskaia problema. Ocherk operativnogo znachenii Pripiatskoi oblasti dlia voennoi kampanii 1941 goda* (Moscow, 1959); Andrei Kotliarchuk, *Shvedy u historyji i kul'tury belarusau* (Mensk, 2002), p. 184.

though attempts at such belated nation-building were made by local intellectuals during the Gorbachev era).<sup>27</sup>

Whether geography matters for the making of Ukrainian ethnic borders with Russia, Poland, Belarus and Hungary remains a matter of dispute. There is, however, agreement between the two schools when they discuss the role of a large steppe zone in the southeast. The Ukrainian steppe forms the western part of a long Eurasian belt that starts in Mongolia and extends through southern Siberia, Central Asia, the southern Ural and Lower Volga regions, and the Don area up to the Black Sea coast, ending in Romania. Rich in natural resources, with a warm, dry climate, it was an ideal environment for cattle breeding and served as a broad corridor where nomadic people roamed unhampered by any geographical barriers.

The presence of a great steppe zone, underpopulated because of continuous attacks – first by nomadic people, and then (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries) by Crimean Tartars – is considered to be one of the most characteristic features of Ukrainian history. It is responsible, among other things, for the multiethnic character of the population.<sup>28</sup> Uncontrolled by any political body, the steppe attracted thousands and thousands of refugees, colonizers, and adventurers, who found shelter and constructed military settlements there, like the Zaporozhian Host.

The situation changed by the end of the eighteenth century, when the Ukrainian steppes were incorporated into the Russian empire and both the Crimean Tartar Khanate and the Zaporozhian Host were abolished. The multiethnic character, however, persisted. Under the Russian empire (1785-1917) and in the Soviet Union (1917-1991), the steppe zone was a center of a booming agriculture, modern industry and rapid urbanization. It gave a rise to a huge economic migration from the adjacent Ukrainian and Russian cores, as well from the Black Sea coast and the Balkans.

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<sup>27</sup> This nation-building started in 1985, with the first publication of a literary work in a Polishchuk patois. In 1988, an organization, "Polissia," was founded to promote a separate Polishchuk identity. In 1990, Polishchuk nation-builders started to publish their newspaper "Prabudzhennia" ("Прабуджэння" meaning "Awakening") and came out with a political program. In 1994, Polishchuk put up their own candidate for the presidential election in Belarus. After the victory of Lukashenka the movement ceased to exist; its last manifestation was a festival of Western Polissia songs in 1996. See: Andrei Dyn'ko, "Nainoushaia historyia iatsviagau," ([http://www.geocities.com/g\\_naumovets/jitvegi.htm](http://www.geocities.com/g_naumovets/jitvegi.htm)).

<sup>28</sup> Alfred Rieber, "Struggle Over the Borderlands," S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (New York, London, 1994), p. 61-90.

As a land allegedly awash with “milk and honey” and inhabited by savage, untamed people, the Black Sea steppe was a powerful concept in imaginary geography. This image can already be found in Herodotus and Ovid. During the Enlightenment, the Ukrainian steppe played a very important role in shaping the term “Eastern Europe.”<sup>29</sup> It is strongly rooted in modern Russian, Polish and Ukrainian intellectual traditions as a symbol of a free and glorious past. From the early Romantics onwards, it acted on peoples’ minds like a powerful leaven. In the specific context of Ukrainian intellectual history, the Zaporozhian Host and Cossack Ukraine were sacralized by many authors, Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) above all. It became a major historical and geographical symbol around which the image of Ukraine as the national homeland revolved.<sup>30</sup> In terms of political geography, the steppe remained a territory that was hard for any political regime to control, the Soviet included; in 1919 and then again in 1930 it was a zone of mass peasant uprisings and wars, and by the end of Soviet rule there had emerged a mass workers’ movement that contributed strongly to the fall of Communist power.

The geographic division between the settled forest and unsettled steppe zones persists in contemporary Ukraine. According to the last Soviet (1989) census, the region west and north of the steppe frontier had a population that is 84.8 percent Ukrainophone, while in the territory east and south of it only 18.7 percent used the Ukrainian language.<sup>31</sup> In the first years of Ukrainian independence, the ethnolinguistic and geographical cleavage acquired a dangerous political dimension. During the 1994 presidential elections, the rivalry between two main candidates developed into a political antagonism between the two large regions: the Ukrainian-speaking west and north voted for Kravchuk, and the Russian-speaking east and south opted for Kuchma. These

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<sup>29</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> George Grabowicz, “Between History and Myth: Perception of the Cossack Past in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian Literature,” *American Contribution to the Ninth International Congress of Slavists* (Kyiv, 1983), pp. 173-188; idem, *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Shevchenko* (Cambridge, MA, 1982).

<sup>31</sup> Dominique Arel, “Ukraine: The Temptation of the Nationalizing State,” Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, London, 1995), p. 169.



developments gave a rise to alarmist scenarios about forthcoming civil war and a possible death of the young nation state.<sup>32</sup>

These fears, fortunately, proved to be groundless in the longer term. The next presidential and parliament elections in 1998, 1999 and 2002 revealed that regional differences in Ukraine are in fact subsiding. Despite this tendency, the image of “two Ukraines”, or of Ukraine as “a cleft country”<sup>33</sup> continues to be very persistent in political writings. This “imaginary political geography” remains a source of concern for both the presidential party and the opposition in their struggle for power.

To conclude this part, one has to say that geography firmly places the Ukrainian case in a Eurasian context. The geographical peculiarities of Eurasia – a large expanse of space without interior geographical divisions – led to wholesale confusion and to contests over the definition of territorial and ethnic boundaries. It has been said, “[t]here is probably no other region of the world in which empire building and state-building have been subject to such ambivalence.”<sup>34</sup>

## THE LEGACY OF RUS’

Among other long-term factors, in the Ukrainian case the legacy of Christianity is first in importance. It traces its beginning from the baptism of the Kyivan principedom of Rus’ by Volodymyr (Vladimir in Russian) in 988. With the break-up of Christianity (1054) into Western and Eastern branches, Rus’ came to represent the church unity of the East Slavs, as reflected in the ecclesiastical title of the metropolitanate “of Kiev and of all Rus’.” This was the sole unity that Rus’ possessed.

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<sup>32</sup> “Ukraine – The Birth and Possible Death of a Country,” *The Economist*, 7 May 1994.

<sup>33</sup> Mykola Riabchuk, *Vid Malorosii do Ukrainy: paradoksy zapizniloho natsietvorennia* (Kyiv, 2000); Idem, *Dvi Ukrainy: Real’ni mezhi, virtual’ni viiny* (Kyiv, 2003); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996), pp. 165-168. For a critique see: Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Dylemy ukrajins’koho natsiotvorennia, abo shche raz pro stare vyno u novykh mikhakh,” *Ukrains’kyi humanitarnyi ohliad* 4 (2000), pp. 11-33; Paul Globe, “Russia: Analysis From Washington – The Specter of Disintegration,” *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* (<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2001/03/22032001112304.asp>) (last visited on March 26, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Mark R. Bessinger, “The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11:2 (1995), p. 180.

No political concept of a single complete Rus' state emerged either in the Kyivan period (tenth to thirteenth centuries) or later; there was no single ruler in the Rus' territory, only a single spiritual authority.

The origins of the term Rus' are very obscure. It has numerous etymologies, and they place it in different cultural and political traditions.<sup>35</sup> Originally, the term was used for a small region on the right bank of the Dnieper, around Kyiv; later, it evolved into a broader meaning as a term for the whole East Slavic territory. Its derivatives were also used to describe certain territories (Red Rus' for Galicia; White Rus' for contemporary Belarus, but, at one period, also for the Ukrainian lands of Kyiv and Volyn' [Volhynia],<sup>36</sup> Black Rus', Little Rus', and Great Rus', Southern and Northern Rus', and, lastly, all Rus'). More often than not, these terms were not the proper names but described the fluctuating legal status of the East Slavic lands and people.<sup>37</sup>

On the basis of the extent of use of the Church Slavonic language, historians and linguists define this vast region as *Slavia Orthodoxa*, or *Byzance après Byzance*. It comprised, along with the East Slavs, Romanians and Balkan Slavs as well. Within that space, there emerged some common features of high culture, such as sacral architecture, painting, and music,<sup>38</sup> as well as a popular culture shared by Eastern Christian peasants until World War I.<sup>39</sup> There were also some important intellectual patterns. Eastern Christianity, transplanted from the Byzantine Empire to Eastern Slavic territory, limited itself to emulating Byzantine (Greek) cultural achievements, never seeking to supersede them. It was marked by an extreme dogmatism and conservatism, and poverty of intellectual production. Suffice it to say that the range of reading of a literate Orthodox

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<sup>35</sup> Evhen Nakonechnyi, *Ukradene imia. Chomu rusyny staly ukrainsamy* (L'viv, 2001), pp. 33-70.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Vakar, *Belorussia. The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge: MA, 1956), pp. 2-3.

<sup>37</sup> Borys Floria, "Evoliutsiia znachennia terminu 'Rus' i pokhidnykh vid neho u skhidnoslovians'kykh dzherelakh XII-XIV stolittia," Yaroslav Hrytsak and Yaroslav Isaevych, eds. *Druhnyi mizhnarodnyi kongres ukrainistiv. L'viv, 22-28 serpnia 1993. Dopovidi i povidomlennia. Istorija. 1* (L'viv, 1994), p. 3; Omeljan Pritsak and John S. Reshetar, "Ukraine and the Dialectics of Nation-Building," *From Kievan Rus' to Modern Ukraine: Formation of the Ukrainian Nation* (Cambridge: MA, 1984), pp. 24-25 (second pagination).

<sup>38</sup> Isaevych, *Ukraina davnia i nova*, passim.

<sup>39</sup> Leonid Heretz, "Russian Apocalypse, 1891-1917: Popular Perceptions of Events from the Year of Famine and Cholera to the Fall of the Tsar" (Ph. D dissertation, Harvard University, 1993).

believer in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries was basically the same; it was limited to 200-300 titles, with no book of secular, historical, or scientific content.<sup>40</sup> If book-printing was a major tool of modern identity formation, then in *Slavia Orthodoxa* a transformation of sacred community into modern nation was seriously hampered by the scarcity of printed books. While 200 million copies of thousands of titles had been printed in the Western Christian territories by the beginning of the seventeenth century, in Rus' the figure was no more than 40,000-60,000.<sup>41</sup>

The Rus' legacy is held to be responsible for the persistence of a certain set of political traditions. While the "Western pattern" of politics lies in the separation of the religious and secular spheres, Eastern Europe was characterized by a blurring of the religious and secular powers. The rivalry of the ruler and the Church in the West made it possible for third parties to emerge with their own sources of power. It formed the historical basis for what was later called civil society. In contrast to that, the subordination of the Eastern church to the state led to the absence of a second political actor, and so, by definition, of any other actors. In the words of a contemporary political analyst,

"The symbolic drama of Canossa illustrated this vividly. In no other historical tradition was it conceivable that a powerful secular ruler like Emperor Henry IV would undertake a penitent's pilgrimage, in a hair shirt with a rope around his neck, to expiate his politico-religious sins or, in power terms, to recognize the religious authority of Pope Gregory VII, whom he had unsuccessfully challenged. The idea of the tsar of Muscovy or the Byzantine emperor or the Ottoman sultan performing an analogous penance is an inherent absurdity."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> George Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind* (Belmont, MA, 1975): Vol. 1, pp. 21- 60, 365-412; Vol. 2, pp. 32-33; Ihor Ševčenko, *Ukraine between East and West: Essays on Cultural History to the Early Eighteenth Century* (Edmonton, 1996), passim.

<sup>41</sup> Markus Osterrieder, "Von der Sakralgemeinschaft zur Modernen Nation. Die Entstehung eines Nationalbewusstseins unter Russen, Ukrainern und Weissruthenen im Lichte der Thesen Benedict Andersons," Eva Schmidt-Hartmann, ed., *Formen der nationalen Bewusstsein im Lichte zeitgenössischer Nationalismustheorien* (München, 1994), p. 207. Osterrieder mistakenly gives 20 numbers of copies for the Eastern Christian Slavic region, where it must be 20 books (titles). If we assume that the maximum number of copies of a title was 2,000-3,000, we get as upper limit of 40,000-60,000 copies.

<sup>42</sup> George Schöpflin, "The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe," *Eastern Europe... Central Europe... Europe*, issued as *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 119: 1 (Winter 1990), p. 57.

Since major nation-building projects in Eastern Europe were basically anti-imperial, they had to rely on the resources of civil institutions. But given local political traditions, the latter were very feeble and lacked continuity. Therefore local nationalisms were seriously handicapped in their development, much to the despair of local nation-builders (the same holds true, as Geoffrey Hosking suggests,<sup>43</sup> even for Russian nationalism). As a Ukrainian socialist from the Russian empire wrote in the 1870s, “[b]esides three groups, Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians, there exists a fourth one: *all-Rus’*, something hopeless, a dense stratum of [different] ethnic groups and nationalities covering Rus’.”<sup>44</sup>

The making of modern Ukraine (as well as Russia and Belarus) was therefore bound to be the unmaking of old Rus’. This project remains largely unfinished. Mass sources allow us to trace the persistence of the Rus’, *Rus’kyi* (*Ruthenian*) identity, as distinct from modern Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian identities, well into the 1930s.<sup>45</sup> In the post-communist Ukraine, it is reflected in a phenomenon that sociologists call “Eastern Slavic proximity”; within a range of various Eurasian and North American nations, Ukrainians tend to see their interests as shared with Russians and Belarusians, while feeling increasingly alienated from others.<sup>46</sup>

The persistence of the Rus’ legacy predetermines (if not in rigid terms) identification with East Slavic Europe. And that identification will persist for a long time. In the words of a historian,

“[t]he Byzantine heritage of [...] Ukrainian populations and more recent long-range developments – the latest of which is the Russian cultural impact upon a large part of Ukrainian lands – can recede into the background in the heady atmosphere of change, but their effects will not disappear overnight.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> Cited in: Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, *Z pochyniv ukrainskoho sotsialistychmoho rukhu. Mykh. Drahomanov i zhenevs’kyi sotsialistychnyi hurtok* (Vienna, 1922), p. 64.

<sup>45</sup> *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni. Kolektivizatsiia i raskulachivaniie. Dokumenty i materialy*, in 5 volumes. Vol. 1-2 (Moscow, 1999; 2000), passim.

<sup>46</sup> Natalia Panina, “Nepodolana Dystantsiia,” *Krytyka* 7: 7-9 (July-August 2003), p.18.

<sup>47</sup> Ševčenko, *Ukraine between East and West*, p. 10.

**EMERGING MESO-AREAS IN THE FORMER SOCIALIST COUNTRIES**

TABLE. FORMER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES  
RANKED BY HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX AND OTHER VALUES

Country	HDI Rank	GDI* Rank	Freedom Index	Economic Index	Honesty Rank
Slovenia	29	26	Free	79 (MU)	27
Czech Republic	33	32	Free	32 (MF)	52
Hungary	35	35	Free	32 (MF)	33
Slovakia	36	34	Free	60 (MF)	52
Poland	37	36	Free	45 (MF)	45
Estonia	42	n.a.	Free	4 (F)	29
Croatia	48	43	Free	108 (MU)	51
Lithuania	49	42	Free	29 (MF)	36
Latvia	53	46	Free	38 (MF)	52
Belarus	56	50	Not Free	148 (RE)	n.a.
Russian Federation	60	52	Partly Free	131 (MU)	71
Bulgaria	62	53	Free	108 (MU)	45
Romania	63	55	Free	131 (MU)	77
Macedonia	65	n.a.	Partly Free	97 (MU)	n.a.
Armenia	76	62	Partly Free	45 (MF)	n.a.
Kazakhstan	79	n.a.	Not Free	125 (MU)	88
Ukraine	80	66	Partly Free	137 (MU)	85
Georgia	81	n.a.	Partly Free	108 (MU)	85
Azerbaijan	88	n.a.	Partly Free	118 (MU)	95
Moldova	105	86	Partly Free	105 (MU)	93

\* Gender-Related Development Index

Code: Economic Freedom: F=free; MF =mostly free; MU=mostly unfree; RE=repressed

*Source:* Walter C. Clemens, "Why Study the Baltics? How?," *NewsNet. News of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* 42: 5 (December 2002), p. 3.

It clearly undermines, to a large extent, the viability of both European and Eurasian projects in Ukraine. A large part of the Ukrainian population does not look optimistically toward either European integration (even if it involved close cooperation with the Poles, who in general terms have a very positive image in Ukraine) or the Eurasian option (feeling rather cold toward Central Asia and fearing the prospect of involvement in the Chechnia conflict). The last 10-15 years have revealed the long-term effect of the religious factor in another way: the division between “winners” and “losers” in the post-communist transformation, as based on a comparison of various data of economic, social and political performance, coincides roughly with a division between countries with a Western Christian tradition on the one hand, and an Eastern Christian tradition on the other (see the Table). It does not mean to say that the latter group was doomed to failure. To say this is to fall under the spell of historical fatalism; history does not work that way, and it is always pregnant with various possibilities. It is rather to say these countries seem to follow a different historical trajectory, and their “return to Europe” may take longer than it was initially overoptimistically expected by local pro-“Western” and anti-communist elites.

**“POLISHING”<sup>48</sup> RUS’:  
THE ROLE OF THE POLISH LEGACY**

In medieval and early modern times, what was referred to as Rus’, was under different political regimes and was never homogenous in ethnic terms. Its population shared common Eastern Church rituals (either Orthodox or Greek-Catholic, with Sloveno-Ruthenian as the sacral language), spoke mutually comprehensible vernaculars, and had a diffuse memory of their common descent from Kyivan Rus’. Only gradually, under the centrifugal influences of such culturally

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<sup>48</sup> I use this word as a witticism, implying that, in the context of Rus’, even Orthodoxes of the Rzeczpospolita resisting Polonization defended their identity with intellectual weapons which they obtained through the Polish influences.

productive centers as L'viv, Kyiv, Vil'no (Vilnius), Kraków, Moscow and others, did distinctive national identities emerge.<sup>49</sup>

Until recently, the Eastern European past has stood in the shadow of the Russian and Soviet empires. But both are relatively recent phenomena. Modern Ukraine, like Belarus and the Baltic states, was incorporated into the Russian empire rather late; most of this territory became Russian after the partition of Rzeczpospolita in 1772-1795. The newly incorporated territories were little affected by Russian cultural and political influences. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russian Decembrist Nikita Murav'ev confessed that the local population knew as much about Russians as they did about the Chinese.<sup>50</sup> Until the middle of the nineteenth century Polish cultural influences dominated in Kyiv,<sup>51</sup> and extended as far as Kharkiv University in the Russian-Ukrainian borderland.<sup>52</sup>

The role of the Polish legacy for the shaping of identities in this region cannot and should not be ignored. The problem is, however, that "Polish legacy" is rather an awkward term. It covers diverse and loosely connected phenomena that are hard to reduce to a single common denominator. Among other things, some of them were not Polish *per se*. They included, for example, German urban law<sup>53</sup> and the "Jewish question." To simplify, but not to distort the picture, one may say that Polish influences were responsible for channeling Western (Western Christian) political and cultural phenomena into western and southern Rus'. They "polished" it in a West European style.

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<sup>49</sup> John A. Armstrong, "Myth and History in the Evolution of Ukrainian Consciousness," in Peter J. Potichnyj, Marc Raeff, Jaroslaw Pelenski, and Gleb N. Žekulin, eds., *Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounter* (Edmonton, 1992), pp. 129-130.

<sup>50</sup> Zakhar Shybeika, *Narys historyi Belarusi, 1795-2002* (Minsk, 2003), p. 40.

<sup>51</sup> Michael F. Hamm, *Kiev. A Portrait, 1800-1917* (Princeton, 1993). See especially Chapter 3.

<sup>52</sup> Stepan Kozak, *Ukraińscy spiskowcy i mesjaniści Bractwa Cyryla i Metodego* (Warsaw, 1990).

<sup>53</sup> On the spread of German urban law see: Tetiana Hoshko, *Narysy z istoii Magdeburz'koho prava v Ukraini XIV – poch. XVII st.* (L'viv, 2002); Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* (Seattle, 1993), Map # 12 f. A historical memory of Magdeburg law could be traced among Ukrainian peasants on the verge of the Soviet collectivization (see: William Noll, *Transformatsiia hromadians'koho suspil'stva. Usna istoriia ukrains'koi selians'koi kul'tury 1920-1930 rokiv* (Kyiv, 1999).

This influence can be discerned in the origins of such basic elements of Ukrainian identity as language and historical memory. Due to numerous borrowings from Polish, German, Czech and Latin, early modern Ukrainian (so-called *prosta mova*) was closer to the Western Slavic languages than to Church Slavonic or Russian in its vocabulary. Polish linguistic influences persisted even during the harshest Polish-Ukrainian conflicts until the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup> Polish historical treatises served as the main source for Ukrainian history-writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – to the extent that early modern authors even studied the period of Kyivan Rus' through the lens of Polish chronicles; the authentic ancient Rus' chronicles could not satisfy their refined tastes.<sup>55</sup>

Polish annexation of a significant part of Eastern Slavic territory – under the Polish crown in the fourteenth century, and later, in 1569, under Rzeczpospolita – served as a long-term integration factor for both Ukrainian and Belarusian ethnic territories. It led to the possibility of a common Rus' identity for both Ukrainians and Belarusians, as an alternative to both Polish and Russian nation building (this concept was still being discussed in the nineteenth century). A separate concept of a Ukrainian Cossack state and Ukrainian fatherland emerged in a confrontation with Catholicism and Rzeczpospolita in the seventeenth century. It proved to be viable in the context of Cossack autonomy within the Russian empire – but then again, it was largely based on a Polish concept of patria (*ojczyzna*).<sup>56</sup>

Following the partitions of the Rzeczpospolita in 1772-1795 and until World War II, the most persistent Polish influence in Eastern Europe was nationalism. Polish nationalism did for East European peoples what French nationalism did for the Western Europeans: it nationalized them, i.e. made them accept the logic and practices of

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<sup>54</sup> G.Y. Shevelov, "Language," *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* 3 (Toronto, 1993), p. 44.

<sup>55</sup> Frank E. Sysyn, *The Cultural, Social and Political Context of Ukrainian History-Writing: 1620-1690*, *Europa Orientalis* 5 (1986), pp. 285-310; Oleksii Tolochko, "Rus' ochima 'Ukrainy': V poshukakh samoidentyfikatsii ta kontynuitetu," Hrytsak and Isaevych, eds., *Druhji mizhnarodnyi kongres*, pp. 68-75.

<sup>56</sup> Zenon Kohut, "Derzhavnotvorchi derzhavnoshukannia," *Krytyka* 4:6 (July 2000), p. 5; Frank Sysyn, "Fatherland in Early Eighteenth-Century Ukrainian Political Culture," forthcoming in *Ukraina moderna* 11 (2005).



nationalism. Suffice it to say that both the Ukrainian and the Jewish national anthems begin with a line that is a paraphrase of the Polish anthem "Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła" (Poland has not yet died).<sup>57</sup> If one were to draw on a contemporary Ukrainian map the historical zones of the Polish *Drang nach Osten*, they would coincide with the intensity of Ukrainian identity and spread of the Ukrainian language.<sup>58</sup> Recent surveys on post-Soviet Eastern Europe reveal that ethnicity and ethnic differentiation are losing their salience among ordinary people, while social identification (such as with "workers" or "business(wo)men") is becoming increasingly important for the way people perceive both themselves and ongoing political and economic changes. It is not the case, however, in Lithuania and Western Ukraine – the two most "Polish" zones – where national identification axes are the most salient.<sup>59</sup>

### WESTERN UKRAINIANS AS A CASE OF THE HABSBURG LEGACY

The Western Ukrainian lands deserve special treatment. There is little reason to treat them as a historical unit before the end of the eighteenth century. They can be seen as a unity only *ex negativo*: with the exception of Volhynia, which was a part of the Russian empire from 1795 to 1920, these were Ukrainian lands that were not under Russian/Soviet rule until World War II.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, it is rather hard to think of them as Ukrainian; these were lands that until the 1860s were on the periphery of Ukrainian nation building, and, in some periods Ukrainian identity had very little chance to prevail here. The local dominant elites were Polish, Austrian-German or Hungarian, and Jews

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<sup>57</sup> Shlomo Avineri, "The Presence of Eastern and Central Europe in the Culture and Politics of Contemporary Israel," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 10:2 (Spring 1996), p. 166.

<sup>58</sup> Ševčenko, *Ukraine between East and West*; Szul, *Perspektywy regionalizmu Galcyjskiego*, p. 80.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur H. Miller, Thomas F. Klobucar, William M. Reisinger, and Vicki L. Hesli, "Social Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14:3 (1998), pp. 248-286.

<sup>60</sup> John-Paul Himka, "Western Ukraine between the Wars," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 34:4 (December 1992), pp. 391-412.

predominated numerically in the urban population. The local East Slavic population traditionally identified themselves as Rusyny/Rus'ki/Rusnaky, i.e. belonging to Rus'. To this very day, Ruthenian identity prevails in the Ukrainian-Hungarian and Ukrainian-Slovak borderlands. It provides a basis for several nationalistic intellectuals to attempt to construct a separate nation of Rusyn – a fourth East Slavic nation alongside Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians.<sup>61</sup>

Until the very beginning of World War I (and in Transcarpathia, until World War II) the local Eastern Slavic elites were occupied with a discussion of their national identity. The majority opted for a Rus' solution. Their Rus' was neither Russia nor Ukraine, but a kind of mystical union of both; it represented a conservative Utopia, *Gemeinschaft* rather than *Gesellschaft*, Holy Rus' of Moscow and Kyiv rather than the modern Russia of St. Petersburg.<sup>62</sup> But there is no other Ukrainian region that denied its Rus' legacy so drastically to embark on a modern Ukrainian project. Ukrainian identity won out everywhere here before World War II, and the Soviet integration that followed did little to change it; until the very end of the Soviet Union, Western Ukraine was among the least Russified and Sovietized regions. Western Ukrainians reveal conservative and nationalist attitudes, strongly marked with religious influences; they proved to be very resistant, both politically and militarily, to the Communist regime. They are also very actively engaged in building what is called a civil society; recent statistics reveal that Galicia and Transcarpathia – the lands of the former Habsburg empire – are not matched by any other Ukrainian regions in terms of frequency of NGOs *per capita*.<sup>63</sup>

Western Ukrainians share these attitudes with their neighbors across the borders. This is especially evident in the case of the former Austrian Galicia, which between 1772 and 1918 comprised the major

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<sup>61</sup> See: Timothy Garton Ash, "Hail Ruthenia," *New York of Books* 46:7 (22 April 1999), pp. 54-55; Chris Hahn, "Intellectuals, Ethnic Groups and Nations: Two Late-twentieth-century Cases," Sukumar Periwal, ed., *Notions of Nationalism* (Budapest, 1995), pp. 106-128.

<sup>62</sup> Anna Vernonika Wendland, *Die Russophilen in Galizien. Ukrainische Konservative zwischen Österreich und Rußland 1848-1915* (Wien, 2001), pp. 89, 151, 180-181.

<sup>63</sup> Counterpart data on Ukrainian NGOs (2000): <http://www.viaduk.net/cp/cpk.e.nsf/> (last visited in June 2000). This table is reproduced in my book: Yaroslav Hrytsak, *Strasti za natsionalizmom. Istorichni eseji* (Kyiv, 2004), p. 211.

part of Western Ukraine together with the southwestern borderlands of contemporary Poland. Warsaw-based Polish political scientist Tomasz Zarycki studied post-communist electoral behavior in five countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine. He came to the conclusion that Galicia is exceptional. In his words, “[t]his is one of the few places in the present study where one would like to extend the map beyond the present-day political boundaries and present differentiation of the Polish-Ukrainian political space in order to show the persistence of the 19th-century Galician borders.”<sup>64</sup>

There was, however, very little in either the local geography or its pre-Austrian history that could have made Austrian (i.e., Polish-Ukrainian) Galicia a separate historical region. The Habsburgs revoked its existence, to legitimize the annexation of new lands in East. But this decision was met by many angry voices among local intellectuals, both Poles and Ruthenians (Ukrainians), who were rather unhappy about the shape of their new homeland.<sup>65</sup> And yet in the long run, the former Austrian Galicia proved to be a region with a very distinctive set of attitudes and loyalties.

A comparison with Western Belarus – a region that was also outside the Soviet Union until 1939, but still succumbed to Russification and Sovietization<sup>66</sup> – underlines once again the role of the Habsburg legacy in shaping Western Ukrainian peculiarity. The Habsburg heritage had a very ambiguous character. On the one hand, each ethnic group within the empire inherited constitutional and liberal practices whose long-term impact is still apparent in their political organizations. On the other hand, most of the civic institutions and arenas for public discussion were staffed and attended according to the national identities of their members. As a result, instead of a single one, several competing civil

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<sup>64</sup> Tomasz Zarycki, *The New Electoral Geography of Central Europe: Comparative Study of Regional Political Cleavages in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine* (Lund, Warsaw, 1998), p. 58.

<sup>65</sup> Zbigniew Fris, *Galicja* (Wrocław, 2000), p. 58; Iakiv Holovatskii, “Karpatskaia Rus’. Geograficheskio-statisticheskie i istoriko-statisticheskie ocherki Galichiny, Severo-Vostochnoi Ugrii i Bukoviny,” *Slavianskii Sbornik* 2 (St. Petersburg, 1878), p. 55.

<sup>66</sup> Szporluk Roman, “West Ukraine and West Belorussia: Historical Tradition, Social Communication, and Linguistic Assimilation,” *Soviet Studies* 31:1 (January 1979), pp. 76-98.

societies developed along national lines.<sup>67</sup> This links Western Ukraine to Central Europe, with its long and mixed historical record of multiethnic diversity and interethnic conflicts.<sup>68</sup>

## THE SOVIET LEGACY

Ukraine in its contemporary political borders is clearly a Soviet artifact. But there is certainly more to the Soviet legacy than political geography. Ukraine falls into the category of post-Soviet societies (the majority of them) where this legacy is so strong that for many years – probably generations – an authoritarian system, disguised as democracy, will prevail there, and the national economies will continue to decline before they improve.<sup>69</sup> The Soviet legacy also strongly affected identity formation. On the one hand, under Soviet rule basic elements of the Ukrainian identity were not just preserved, but their role increased (as in the case of territorial identification).<sup>70</sup> On the other, key elements of modern Ukrainian identity – such as a literary language and national history – went through a strong revision that sought to minimize differences between Russians and Ukrainians. Soviet rule led to an increase of the Russian factor in Ukraine, first of all, through a mass migration of Russians into the Ukrainian SSR – to the extent that some demographers consider the scale of this migration unprecedented in twentieth-century Europe<sup>71</sup> – and then through the linguistic Russification of Ukrainians.

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<sup>67</sup> Walentyna Najdus, “Kształtowanie się nowoczesnych więzów społeczno-organizacyjnych ludności ukraińskiej Galicji Wschodniej w dobie konstytucyjnej,” Henryk W. Żaliński, Kazimierz Karolczak, eds., *Lwów: Miasto – Społeczeństwo – Kultura 2* (Kraków, 1998), p. 166-167.

<sup>68</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, “The Puzzle of Central Europe,” *New York Review of Books* 46:5 (18 March 1999), p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> See: Roy D. Laird, *The Soviet Legacy* (Westport, 1993).

<sup>70</sup> Bohdan Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine* (Edmonton, 1987), pp. 219-250; Taras Kuzio and Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence* (Edmonton, Toronto, 1994), pp. 152-170; P. T. Shelest, ... *Da ne sudimy budete. Dnevnikovye zapisi, vospominania chlena Politbiuro TsK KPSS* (Moscow, 1995).

<sup>71</sup> Piotr Ebelhardt, *Przemiany narodościowe na Ukrainie XX wieku* (Warsaw, 1994), p. 244.

It remains, however, a matter of dispute whether linguistic Russification was tantamount to national assimilation.<sup>72</sup> There are good reasons to believe that in many cases it was not. The Soviet regime promoted not so much a Russian as a Soviet identity built on Russian lines.<sup>73</sup> One of the greatest surprises to be revealed after the demise of the Soviet Union was that a Soviet people had actually developed, especially among Russians living in non-Russian states. The Soviet identity proved to be very popular in Southern and Eastern Ukraine.<sup>74</sup>

Ukrainian identity is the most salient of all group identities everywhere in the Ukraine, with the exception of the South. Regional differences become more pronounced if one considers the hierarchy of the most popular social identities in Ukraine. For example, in L'viv, the symbolic capital of Western Ukraine, the assertion of Ukrainian identity in 1994 was associated with the popularity of identities that had been repressed by the Soviet regime (notably "Greek-Catholic" and "Westerner"). In a contrast to that, Ukrainian identity in Donets'k, the largest industrial center in the East, was linked with the sense of being "Soviet" and "Worker," identities that were promoted by the Soviet regime.<sup>75</sup>

There are good reasons to believe that people who regarded themselves as "Soviets" are not necessarily those who vote for Communists and feel nostalgia for the Soviet Union. They bought the whole package of the Soviet legacy beyond Communist ideology, including the unrealistically high expectations of government support and the lack of private initiative. Part of that package is an inability to

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<sup>72</sup> See: Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytskyi, *Istorychni ese 2* (Kyiv, 1994), pp. 471-476.

<sup>73</sup> Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Concept of the Soviet People and its Implication for Soviet Nationality Policy," *The Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the United States* 14:37-38 (1978-1980), pp. 87-133; Roman Solchanyk, "Molding 'the Soviet People': The Role of Ukraine and Belorussia," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 1 (Summer 1983), pp. 3-18.

<sup>74</sup> Paul S. Pirie, "National Identity and Politics in Southern and Eastern Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48:7 (1996), pp. 1079-1104.

<sup>75</sup> Yaroslav Hrytsak, "National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of Lviv and Donetsk," Zvi Gitelman, Lubomyr Hajda, John-Paul Himka, and Roman Solchanyk, eds., *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk* (published as Vol. 22 (1998) of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*), p. 267.

organize continuous and efficient pressure on decision makers and power centers “from below.” People in the East of Ukraine on average are much less politically mobilized than their compatriots in the Western Ukraine. The former may have a desire to reunite Ukraine with Russia or to restore the Soviet Union. Still, as the experience of the last few years has proved, it is unlikely that they can organize any political movement to promote their goals.<sup>76</sup>

As strange as it may sound, it is this mixture of “Ukrainianness” with “Sovietness” that provides the post-communist Ukrainian leaders with an opportunity to keep the country together. The ruling elites are doing their best to preserve a balance between two alternative versions (Soviet and non-Soviet) of the modern Ukrainian identity.<sup>77</sup> This line has proved to be quite effective; at the end of a decade of Ukrainian independence the regional differences within Ukraine seem to be losing their political salience.<sup>78</sup> Along with these changes, Soviet identity seems to be fading away even in the most Sovietized region.<sup>79</sup>

While the project of the Soviet nation is doomed to disappear with the demise of the Soviet Union, its corollaries may be here to stay for a long time. This is reflected, among other things, in a specific social attitude that is shared by most of the Ukrainian population, regardless of regional differences, and that can be described as a *lack of social trust*. In the post-communist Ukraine people tend not to trust each other if they are not members of the same family, relatives or close friends. Or, to put it in a more sophisticated way, they have non-communitarian social capital, which, if we are to believe Robert Putnam, constitutes a serious impediment to successful democratization. This might be regarded as a psychological legacy of Soviet rule; as state socialist institutions did not efficiently provide goods and services,

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>77</sup> Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Pennsylvania, 1998).

<sup>78</sup> Peter R. Craumer and James I. Clem, “Ukraine’s Emerging Electoral Geography: A Regional Analysis of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections,” *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 40:1 (1999), pp. 1-26; *Vybir Ukrajinyy-99. Shcho dali. Zbirnyk stattei i dovidkovykh materialiv* (Kyiv, 1999), pp. 102-103, 108, 238-239, 254-255.

<sup>79</sup> Yaroslav Hrytsak, “Ukrainian Nationalism, 1991-2001: Myths and Misconceptions,” *CEU History Department Annual 2001-2002* (2002), pp. 243-244.

people had to rely on personal contacts and networks.<sup>80</sup> Even though Western Ukraine is distinctive in voter turnout and electoral terms, it would be too bold to claim that a uniquely Western Ukrainian/Galician civic culture exists within Ukraine today; even here in the least Sovietized L'viv, non-communitarian social capital continues to permeate the experience of daily life.<sup>81</sup>

If this is so, then the fading away of the Soviet legacy does not automatically mean better prospects for the Ukrainian state. To a large extent this legacy is responsible for providing a minimum of political stability and of internal cohesion. But on the other hand, it creates serious impediments for successful political and economic reforms. The crucial issue is whether any other internal cohesion will develop in Ukrainian society besides the one that has a clear Soviet pedigree. For if the communist past has some lessons to teach us, one of the most important would be that a social solidarity imposed "from above" proves not to be the most efficient way to build a stable society in the long run.

### **A POST-SOVIET TENDENCY, IF NOT A NEW LEGACY**

During the last decade, Ukraine has experienced developments that may be characterized as, if not a post-Soviet legacy, then rather stable post-Soviet tendencies. On the one hand, Ukraine falls into a category of countries that are "losers" in the post-communist transformation. It shares this fate with most of the former Soviet republics (the Baltic states excluded) and the countries of Eastern Christianity (Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia). On the other hand, Ukraine proved to be distinctively different at least in two major aspects. First, it was the only country in the post-Soviet space (again, excluding the Baltic region) that managed to transfer presidential power

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<sup>80</sup> This point was elaborated by Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams*. See especially Chapter 3, "On Being Soviet," pp. 49-75.

<sup>81</sup> Martin Åberg, "Putnam's Social Capital Theory Goes East: A Case Study of Western Ukraine and L'viv," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52:2 (2000), pp. 303-313; John O'Loughlin and James E. Bell, "The Political Geography of Civic Engagement in Ukraine," *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 40:4 (1999), pp. 233-266 (see, especially, pp. 253 and 255).

from one group of ruling elites to another peacefully and without manipulation.<sup>82</sup> This was so in 1994, but during the 1999 presidential elections Ukraine failed to repeat such a transfer. Secondly, despite the failure in 1999, Ukraine remains one of two countries in the post-Soviet space (the second is Georgia) where a political opposition is still a major factor in local politics.

The viability of those two distinctive features will be tested during the 2004 presidential elections. It makes these elections crucial for determining Ukraine's place in the post-communist space for the foreseeable future. So far, this place is shrouded in ambivalence. Such ambivalence reflects a current popular mood. In the words of a leading Ukrainian social scientist,

“[a] person in an ambivalent state of mind, while mentally sound, may simultaneously go for a multi-party system and against all ‘new-baked’ parties, for both freedom of movement and restrictions in border control, for an increase of market economy and state regulation of prices, [...], for the independence of his or her state and the restoration of the Soviet Union.”<sup>83</sup>

This ambivalence is reflected, among other things, in a choice of external orientation; a 2002 survey demonstrated that 69 percent of the population would support integration with both the European Union and Russia.<sup>84</sup> Seen from another perspective, this ambivalence may provide Ukraine with a unique opportunity; it opens a window for creative politicians to make advantage of this ambivalent public opinion that corresponds to interests of long-term and sustained Ukrainian development without antagonizing the other part, thus avoiding the risk of a social confrontation.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Dmitrii Furman, “Ukraina i my. Natsional’noe samosoznanie i politicheskoe razvitie,” *Svobodnaia mysl’* 1 (1995), p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> E. I. Golovakha, “Postkommunisticheskoe razvitie Ukrainy i Rossii (sravnitel’nyi analiz sotsial’no-politicheskikh protsesov),” T. I. Zaslavskaja, ed., *Kuda idet Rossia?... Sotsial’naia transformatsiia postsovetского prostranstva* 3 (Moscow, 1996), p. 51.

<sup>84</sup> Liliia Utkina, “Back to the USSR,” *Ukrains’ka Pravda*, 14 January 2003; Ivan Smishko, “Ukrainets – tse zvuchyt zahadkovo,” *Postup*, 16-22 January 2003.

<sup>85</sup> Golovakha, “Postkommunisticheskoe razvitie Ukrainy,” p. 51.



## CONCLUSIONS

By way of preliminary and very tentative conclusions, I would like to propose four statements:

(1) The Ukrainian case belies any clear-cut and distinctive divisions in post-communist Eastern Europe. It could be compared with the famous Russian *Matreshka* doll (which is nothing more than an East Slavic imitation of the Japanese nesting doll)<sup>86</sup>; it is firmly located in several regional/national/international/supranational landscapes. The comparison fails, however, in one respect: Ukraine belongs not to one, but to several nested geographies. Their number is not unlimited, and one can count them on the fingers of two hands: Eastern Europe, East Slavic Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Central Europe, the former Soviet space, and former *Slavia Orthodoxa*, not to mention the obvious megascales of Europe and Eurasia. And yet you cannot disentangle Ukraine from any of them without a risk of destroying a facet of multilayered Ukrainian identity.

(2) In the general balance of “sails” and “gales” that drives Ukraine in various directions, politics are much more important than geography, and culture takes precedence over both. Among the cultural factors, a civilization divide – the division between Western and Eastern Christianity – seems to have had a major long-term effect, although not along Huntington’s lines. It explains some peculiarities of Ukrainian nation-building, as well as patterns of post-communist transformation (the placement of Ukraine among “outsiders,” using the term suggested by Osamu Ieda<sup>87</sup>) – which corresponds to the historical meso-area of *Slavia Orthodoxa*.

(3) Within the latter region, one may envision the emergence of another meso-area that would comprise the former Western and Southern borderlands of the Russian Empire/Soviet Union minus the Baltic region. This new meso-area might include Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia as potential – although in a very distant perspective – members of the EU. That this region is not a mere speculation may be confirmed by recent initiatives to create GUAM as

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<sup>86</sup> Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, p. 267.

<sup>87</sup> See Chapter 1 of this volume.

an alternative political union within the NIS. One may also anticipate as possibilities other combinations made by these states and their neighbors (for example, Poland claiming a special role vis-à-vis both Ukraine and Belarus in their (future) European integration, or a possible union of Moldova and Rumania). The worst case – and, fortunately, the least possible – scenarios would be either an inner disintegration of these countries into separate regions which would drift in different directions (for example, Western Ukraine seeking independent entry into the EU, in accordance with the mood of some younger intellectuals in Galicia), or conscious efforts of a ruling elite to isolate their country to preserve its power (the current Belarusian case).

(4) One thing is, however, certain: the recent experience of the post-communist transformation provides us with too short a period to make a sound judgment as to the future placement of Ukraine and the neighboring countries. A comparison with interwar Eastern European history could be very instructive: for example, contemporary Ukraine grapples with the same structural problems of a young state that interwar Poland did.<sup>88</sup> To paraphrase the path-dependency theory, the record of the last decade helps in understanding “where you come from” better than “where you get to.” After all, history *matters* in various ways, and it is always pregnant with many possibilities. In the case under consideration, the variety of possibilities is both reflected and overlaid by a large ambivalence of local institutional identification. Or, to put in other terms, there is not that much of *Sollen* in the region, while *Sein* is still very ambivalent. Only time will tell whether this ambivalence will fade away in the longer run.

As I suggested at the very beginning, the Ukrainian case does not seem to be either unique or exceptional. For the sake of our discussion, it can be relatively easily replaced by any other case – for example, even by the case of present Israel, which is strongly rooted in East and Central European history and politics.<sup>89</sup> The generalization that variety is the rule rather than the exception may be the soundest generalization of all. This is not to deny the validity of drawing meso-regional borders as

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<sup>88</sup> I tried to develop this point in my article: “Pro mozhlyvist’ pobudovy politychnoi natsii v odnii okremo vziatii (U)kraini, abo choho nas vchyt dosvid Pol’shchi,” *Ň* 13 (1998), pp. 28-39.

<sup>89</sup> Avineri, “The Presence of Eastern and Central Europe,” pp. 163-172.

a valuable academic exercise. It is just to remind us that the choice of scope and scale is not “objectively” pre-given and that it depends on the questions we ask ourselves. To this extent, the analyst is as much a factor in any analysis as any other “objective” factor. While indulging in this kind of academic exercise, one has no choice but to practice a certain modesty and even self-irony.