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Ukraine Is Not Russia: Comparing Youth Political Activism

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Ukraine and Russia began to take different transition trajectories during Vladimir Putin's first term and Leonid Kuchma's second term in office, 2000–2004. The former has taken Russia toward an authoritarian system, with a rubber stamp parliament, pliant media, imprisoned or exiled oligarchs, harassed NGOs and marginalized pro-Western, democratic parties. Since the 2000 Kuchmagate crisis and 2004 Orange Revolution, Ukraine has taken a democratic path away from what has become the CIS authoritarian norm. Ukraine held its first free and fair elections in 2006, its media are now free, and the move toward a parliamentary system will bring future dividends for democratization. Russia's Eurasian, autocratic path and Ukraine's European, democratic path are both backed by public opinion. Ukrainians support democracy as the best form of government, while Russians blame democracy for the country's ills during the 1990s and are willing to trade it for autocratic great power status. The youth in both countries reflect these preferences.

The Orange Revolution and Viktor Yushchenko's election in Ukraine have illustrated divergent Ukrainian and Russian domestic and foreign policy trajectories. These trends were already in place during the preceding four years—that is, during Leonid Kuchma's second term in Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's first term in Russia. When Kuchma attempted to transfer power to his chosen successor, Viktor Yanukovych, he failed. This was in contrast to Russia in 1999–2000, when Boris Yeltsin successfully transferred power to Putin.

This article compares and contrasts Russia and Ukraine's post-Soviet transitions in four areas: regime politics, political culture, Soviet nostalgia, and national identity. The article focuses on the attitudes of young people in Russia and Ukraine toward democracy. It concludes that Russian youth have followed the majority of Russian society in supporting Putin's transition toward "managed democracy," great-power nationalism, and a turn away from the West. In Ukraine, young people remained more independent of older generations, becoming the bedrock of pro-democratic movements

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and calls for change that culminated in anti-regime protests, elections, and revolution.

Regime Politics

During his first and second terms in office, Putin has overseen Russia's movement toward an autocratic state in which democratic rights have been progressively eroded. In contrast, Kuchma's second term was dominated by a severe political crisis that undermined the legitimacy of the ruling elites, leading to the Orange Revolution. Freedom House's annual rankings show the degree to which Russia and Ukraine's transition paths have increasingly diverged. Russia's status has progressively worsened. In 2004, for the first time since 1992, Russia received the ranking of "Not Free." A year later Ukraine was upgraded to "Free," the first state in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to achieve this status. Freedom House downgraded Russia "because of the Putin government's actions to marginalize the political opposition, expand political control over the media, and undermine the independence of the judiciary."[1] These trends worsened in 2005–2006, with Western criticism of Russia focused on its democratic regression, racism, and support for autocratic regimes in the CIS.[2]

During Kuchma's second term in office, an alliance of Communists and pro-presidential centrist forces initiated a successful vote of no confidence that ousted Yushchenko and moved him into the opposition camp. Following Yushchenko's dismissal, he established the Our Ukraine bloc, which finished first in the proportional half of the 2002 parliamentary elections. This was the first time a non-left-wing opposition group had achieved this degree of electoral success. Previously the Communists had been Ukraine's main opposition force. This decline in fortunes for the extreme left has continued, with the Communist and Progressive Socialist parties receiving 6.5 percent of the vote in Ukraine's 2006 elections, and only the Communists entering parliament. In Russia, the Communist Party's support also declined, though to a lesser degree, falling from 24.3 percent in 1999 to 12.7 percent in 2003.[3] In Ukraine, former Communist voters defected to the centrist Party of Regions, while in Russia they were co-opted by the nationalist-Bolshevik Rodina bloc. Russia has one of the highest levels of support in the region for a return to communist rule at 41 percent.[4]

In 2003 and 2004, Putin consolidated his authority inside Russia by marginalizing democratic forces and aligning his United Russia with nationalists to obtain a two-thirds majority in the State Duma. As Yuri Levada writes, "In Vladimir Putin's Russia today, there is no place for democrats."[5] The core of Putin's majority in the Duma is United Russia, a party of power based on support for the executive rather than political ideology, the likes of which Kuchma and Yelstin were unable to create. Attempts by Kuchma (People's Democratic Party, For a United Ukraine bloc) and Yeltsin (Russia's Choice, Our Home is Russia) to create parties of power failed. In the 2003 elections, Putin's United Russia won 221 seats, and an additional 67 independents joined its faction, giving it close to a two-thirds constitutional majority (288). United Russia is backed by two extreme right-wing parties,

Table 1. Russia and Ukraine, Election Results Compared

Russia	***Ukraine***
2003 Duma Parliamentary (semi-free) *United Russia 38%*	*2006 Rada Elections (free and fair)* *Party of Regions 32%*
Communist Party 13%	Yulia Tymoshenko bloc 22%
Liberal Democratic Party 11%	Our Ukraine 14%
Rodina 9%	Socialist Party 7%
	Communist Party 3%
United Russia: 221 + 67 independents = 288 deputies in bloc *Pro-Putin majority (Unified Russia, LDPR, Rodina): 363 deputies*	*Orange political forces 43%*
2004 Presidential Elections (semi-free) Putin 71% (CPRF candidate 14%)	*2004 Presidential Elections (free)* Repeat of Round 2, following the Orange Revolution: Yushchenko 52% (Yanukovych 44%)

the Liberal Democratic Party and Motherland, that provide an additional 75 deputies, giving Putin control over 363 out of 450 deputies in the Duma and transforming it into a rubber stamp parliament. In contrast, in Ukraine a series of planned constitutional reforms will increase parliament's powers.

In Russia, pro-reform democratic forces have become increasingly fragmented, demoralized and marginalized. The pro-reform parties, Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces, obtained 4.3 percent and 3.97 percent of the vote respectively in the 2003 elections, failing to cross the 5 percent threshold required to enter the Duma. Extremist opposition groups such as the National Bolshevik Party (NBP), which uses "direct action" tactics, pose a greater threat to Putin's policies than pro-reform parties. Pro-democratic, youth non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Russia's Pora (It's Time) and Oborona (Defense), are weak and ineffectual. One survey concluded that, "the majority of Russian youth are too apolitical, passive, or opportunistic to go out into the streets for the sake of democracy."[6]

In Ukraine, pro-reform, democratic forces won the 2002 elections, and four opposition groups (Our Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko bloc, Socialists, and Communists) controlled over half of the parliamentary seats. Three of these political forces combined to support the Orange Revolution, and they now represent three out of five political forces in the Ukrainian parliament.

In Ukraine, no nationalist parties have ever obtained representation in parliament. Nationalism in Russia has more popular support. It "constitutes a core component of Russia's political culture and provides a foundation for state-building; it is a key component of Soviet and Russian national identities."[7] Two nationalist parties are allied to Putin's United Russia in the State Duma, united by their support for Russian great-power nationalism and "managed democracy." Xenophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism are major problems in Russia.

A similar pattern emerges when comparing the capital cities of Moscow and Kyiv, with democratic forces marginalized in the former and dominant in the latter. Political sentiments in capital cities are crucial in their own right, especially during democratic revolutions. In the 2003 elections, Unified Russia won 12 out of 15 seats in Moscow. Kyiv has always voted for pro-reform democratic forces and against oligarch-controlled parties. The Kyiv clan's Social Democratic United Party (SDPUo) was unable to establish its dominance over Kyiv. Among Moscow and St. Petersburg residents, 52–57 percent hold negative views of Americans, while only 5–13 percent hold positive views.[8] Kyiv city authorities backed the Orange Revolution, providing it with strategically important logistical support. It would be difficult to imagine Moscow's city council giving the same support to a Russian revolution.

Institutions and the Fourth Estate

The 1993 Russian constitution gave few powers to parliament but great authority to the presidency. Under Putin, the Duma has become a rubber-stamp body in which the executive controls 363 out of 450 seats. As Maria Lipman writes, "In Russia, by contrast, the legislature—the Duma—rubber-stamps any decision that the executive branch makes and ignores initiatives coming from opposition deputies."[9] United Russia controls 29 parliamentary committee chairmanships, eight out of 11 seats in the Duma Council that manages parliament's agenda, and seven of 12 deputy speakers. In Ukraine, a compromise between the executive and parliament created a semi-presidential constitution. In 2006, Ukraine's constitution was reformed into a parliamentary-presidential system, moving the country closer to the norm in post-communist states outside the CIS. Parliamentary systems have proved to be better facilitators of democratization in post-communist states than presidential systems, suggesting that Ukraine's constitutional reforms will assist in promoting the country's democratization.

The anti-Kuchma protests created a hard core of young Ukrainian activists who were convinced that it was time for change.

Media freedom is another area in which Ukraine and Russia have diverged. Putin has gradually closed down independent media outlets, and "The real problem with the Russian media is that they do not act as watchdogs. Journalists barely investigate and disclose what the government is up to, and they don't inspire civil society groups to act."[10] Ukrainians, particularly young people, were angered by the murder of journalist Heorhiy Gongadze, which led to the Kuchmagate crisis of November 2000. Few Russians are concerned about media censorship and threats to freedom of the press.

Table 2. Ukrainian and Russian Parliaments Compared

Russia	**Ukraine**
• Weak State Duma in which pro-Western democratic forces have been marginalized. Putin's United Russia is allied with two nationalist parties.	• 2002–2006: Powerful parliament with half of the deputies in the opposition. Yushchenko's Our Ukraine led the largest faction. • 2006–2011: A parliament with a pro-reform majority.

Under Kuchma's competitive authoritarian regime, the media had relatively more freedom than in Russia, a factor that assisted Yushchenko's election campaign and the Orange Revolution. Channel 5 and Era TV, both sympathetic to Yushchenko, played an important role in the 2004 elections in breaking the state's monopoly on information. In the post-Kuchma era, Ukraine has become one of the few CIS states with media freedom, a factor that contributed to the OSCE's declaration that the 2006 elections were "free and fair."[11]

The anti-Kuchma protests from 2000 to 2003 attracted between 20,000 and 50,000 participants, primarily young people. They failed in their main purpose of unseating Kuchma through either a democratic revolution or early presidential elections. At the same time, these protests created a hard core of young activists and dedicated civil society volunteers, reduced apathy among young people, and helped convince many Ukrainians that it was time for change. These changes in society created the backdrop for the Orange Revolution.

Ukraine's vibrant civil society stands in sharp contrast to Russia's passive and inactive civil society.[12] Putin's first term from 2000 to 2004 lacked the sort of political crisis that developed in Ukraine. No growth in opposition activities took place. In fact, the plight of civil society worsened. Opinion polls conducted by the Levada Center and cited by Richard Pipes showed how many Russians supported Putin's managed democracy model. Polls in Russia showed growing political apathy, little trust in the state or belief that people could influence government priorities, widespread skepticism of democracy and multi-party elections, and tolerance of censorship.[13] Young Russians went along with the older generation in supporting Russia's move toward autocracy.

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The Kuchmagate crisis radicalized Ukraine's youth, preparing them for the 2002 and 2004 elections and victory in the Orange Revolution. Russia's youth seem different—more apolitical and materialistic. Some have sought solace in religion or extreme nationalism, while others have focused on materialism. After rock stars, young Russians most admire oligarchs. Young people ages 18–24 largely idolize the successful and wealthy in society, ignoring the manner in which they amassed their wealth. Young Russians therefore have little time for idealism or revolutionary fervor.[14] Young Russians have gone along with older Russians in the mistaken belief that the Orange Revolution was a U.S.-backed conspiracy designed to undermine Russia and its influence in the CIS. Such views provide public support for a recent Russian law that attempts to link NGOs to foreign intelligence agencies. According to one recent poll, 89 percent of young Russians do not want an Orange Revolution in Russia, while only 3 percent favor such an outcome.[15]

Russia's youth back Putin, not democratic revolution, and do not feel empowered to make sweeping political changes. Putin is seen as competent, young, healthy, and respected in the West, in contrast to the drunken, corrupt, and chaotic Yeltsin. A 24-year old Russian said, "As a man he appeals to me. You know, he looks like a trustworthy person. He's always well-groomed, he looks great. And as regards politics, I'm not interested in politics in general."[16]

Given that young people traditionally have dominated civil society in post-communist states, the continued apathy among young Russians is unusual. Many of the same societal problems, including severe economic crisis, have equally affected both Russia and Ukraine. Russian civil society remains feeble, while in Ukraine it was vital to the Orange Revolution's success. "Russian civil society is weak, atomized, apolitical, and heavily dependent on Western assistance for support," one study concluded."[17] Under Putin, the authorities have viewed any activity outside state control as "anti-state," and therefore in need of being co-opted or closed down.

In the 1990s, both Ukrainians and Russians were unhappy with their regimes' democratic failings, the state of human rights, their standard of living, the economic situation, and corruption. Russians also protested Yeltsin's failed military intervention in Chechnya in the mid-1990s. Surveys conducted by the Academy of Sciences found that Ukrainians believed the "mafia and organized crime" had the greatest influence on society.[18] The 1990s were traumatic for citizens of both Russia and Ukraine following shock therapy in Russia and the "muddled" transition in Ukraine.[19] Russia's free-market reforms, which were more abrupt and painful, may have helped turn its citizens against democracy under Putin. In the first half of the 1990s, surveys of attitudes and values in Russia and Ukraine showed that both Russians and Ukrainians were inclined to support democratic and social market reforms.[20] In Russia and Ukraine, citizens ignored their weak states, while elites ignored demobilized and atomized citizens.[21] An unofficial agreement of "You ignore me and I'll ignore you" prevailed.

Attitudes toward democracy among young Russians and Ukrainians began to change in the late 1990s. Russians saw democracy as the problem, associating it with chaos and trauma, while Ukrainians concluded that insufficient democracy was the problem. Russians blamed democracy, while Ukrainians sought it. The two countries began to diverge in 1999–2000 following Kuchma's re-election and Putin's election. One year into his presidency, Kuchma was threatened by the Kuchmagate crisis and a split in the centrist-national democratic alliance. Meanwhile, Putin sought to change the way Russia was governed by bringing back “order.” In 1996, Russia and Ukraine had similar levels of support for democracy, but over the next decade, this support declined in Russia and increased in Ukraine. According to Alfed Stepan’s analysis, 36 percent of Russians and 30 percent of Ukrainians were characterized as “confident democrats” in 1996. By 2005, however, this figure in Ukraine had more than doubled, to 63 percent.[22]

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In the post-Yeltsin and post-Kuchma era, the governments of Russia and Ukraine took different approaches to resolving citizens’ grievances. In Russia, Putin turned public opinion away from democracy to authoritarianism by associating democracy with the “chaos” of the 1990s, including the sharp economic downturn, the enrichment of oligarchs, and the trauma associated with Russia’s loss of Great Power status. While Russia moved toward a “managed democracy,” Ukrainians re-started their stalled democratic transition by backing Yushchenko and the Orange Revolution. As Anders Aslund writes, “Yushchenko’s commitment to freedom and democracy is being reinforced by his calls for European integration, while Putin reminiscences about the ‘vast and great’ Soviet Union.”[23]

Putin rose to power using nationalism against both internal (Chechnya) and external enemies (NATO), a potent cocktail that has led to a climate of fear, xenophobia, and racism. Putin always held critical views of the alleged links between Western intelligence agencies and Russian civil society. Such views are a product of both his KGB background and Soviet political culture: “Putin’s administration and his executive agencies are deeply suspicious of any foreign involvement in internal activities.”[24] These paranoid views ultimately led to the introduction of new laws regulating NGOs in conjunction with a story linking British spies to Russian NGOs. The Russian authorities’ attempts to link these two groups recalls the Soviet era, when Soviet propaganda denounced dissidents as agents of the CIA or Zionism, portraying them as artificial and only in existence because of backing from Western intelligence.[25]

Many of the values that underpin Putin’s managed democracy have been inherited from Tsarist and Soviet political culture.[26] These include the need for an uncontested and powerful leader, a centralized bureaucracy, a weakened rule of law, conformity, collectivism, and emphasis on national security and fortress Russia. Russians place greater emphasis on strong leaders than democracy. They support a paternalistic state, a lack of strong and autonomous institutions, and a state Orthodox church that has always played a subservient role to the state and been imbued with anti-Westernism and great power Russian nationalism. In his quest to restore the country’s great-power status, Putin emphasizes Russian prestige. Under Putin, Russia has focused on great-power nationalism, while Ukraine has sought to “return to Europe.”

Political Culture and Support for Democracy

A major difference between Ukraine and Russia has been the different state policies towards oligarchs and the political attitudes of business people, many of whom were from the younger generation. In summer 2000, Putin offered the Russian oligarchs an amnesty and the right to hold onto their assets in return for their non-involvement in politics. Most oligarchs accepted the generous offer; those oligarchs that did not went into exile (Boris Berezovsky) or to prison (Mikhail Khodorkovsky). In Ukraine, oligarchs lost the 2002 and 2004 elections, but finished first (as the Party of Regions) in the 2006 elections. No Ukrainian oligarchs have been imprisoned or forced into exile, and only two re-privatizations have taken place since the Orange Revolution. Despite different state approaches by Putin and Yushchenko, the oligarchs no longer are a powerful force in either Russia or Ukraine, as indicated in Table 3.

A more perplexing question concerns the different political outlooks of the two countries' business interests. In Russia, the business and middle classes, many of whom are represented by the younger generation, are not backing liberal parties. The bulk of their vote goes to United Russia and, to a lesser degree, to the two nationalist parties (LDPR and Rodina). Russia's bourgeoisie has moved closer to nationalism than to the "foundation of bourgeois democracy."[27] Russia's middle classes are not necessarily pro-democracy, a factor that has assisted in the marginalization of pro-reform, democratic parties, such as Yabloko and Union of Right Forces.

Levels of support for democracy in Russia and Ukraine are radically different. When divided by ethnicity, nearly twice as many ethnic Russians in Ukraine as ethnic Russians in Russia support democracy (43 percent compared to 24 percent). Ukraine's level of support for democracy (57 percent) is higher than that in Latin American states and approaching that of Belgium, a mature democracy (70 percent).[28]

Young people have played a central role in three recent democratic revolutions. In Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, they provided much of the energy for the street protests. Youth NGOs in these four countries helped mobilize protesters, provided logistical support, and often formed the first wave of protesters themselves. In Ukraine, those under 30 years old were three times more likely to join the Orange Revolution than other age groups.[29] The two key social groups that made the Orange Revolution a success were youth and private businessmen.[30] Ukraine's bourgeoisie backed the Orange Revolution, while Russia's has supported Putin's managed democracy.

Russians largely have accepted Putin's parameters for a managed democracy, placing a higher priority on the economy than on democracy. By an overwhelming 81 percent to 14 percent, Russians support a strong economy over a well-functioning democracy. This result holds across gender, age, and socioeconomic level.[31] The move away from support for democracy has grown under Putin, differentiating Russia from other post-communist states to its west and south. In a recent poll, Russians demonstrated the highest support for authoritarian government (42 percent) and the lowest

Table 3. Russia and Ukraine: State Policies Toward Oligarchs

Russia	Ukraine
• 1996: Oligarchs enter politics. • 1999–2000: Transfer of power from Yeltsin to Putin. • July 2000: Putin proposes separation of oligarchs from politics in return for amnesty. • Oligarchs are offered the choice of exile, imprisonment, or political passivity. • Oligarchs are replaced by military and intelligence officers. • 2003: In parliamentary elections, no oligarch-supporting parties are elected	• 1998–99: Oligarchs enter politics. • 2000–2001: Split in elites and rise of anti-oligarch opposition. • 2002 and 2004: Oligarchs lose elections. • Under Yushchenko oligarchs and politics are separated. Two re-privatizations take place. • 2006: In parliamentary elections, Party of Regions receives highest vote total.

Table 4. Support for Democracy in Russia and Ukraine (2004)

	Russia	Ukraine	Ethnic Ukrainians in Ukraine	Ethnic Russians in Ukraine
"Democracy is Preferable to Any Other Form of Government"	24%	57%	60%	43%

support for the notion that democracy is preferable to any other form of government (25 percent). Only 19 percent of Ukrainians preferred an authoritarian alternative, while 59 percent supported democracy as preferable to any other form of government.[32] In Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine, a majority of the population rejects the alternatives to democracy, while in Russia and Belarus the majority prefer a non-democratic alternative. This move away from democracy in Russia has been most pronounced among young people. In 1991, 51 percent of Russians believed democracy was the best form of regime for Russia, but by 2005 this figure had fallen to only 28 percent. This decline has been greatest among the "revolutionary generation" of those who were between 18 and 34 years old in 1991. At that time, 58 percent of them preferred a democratic Russia. Today only 29 percent of Russia's "revolutionary generation" continues to support democracy as the best form of government for Russia.

Russia's turn away from democratic values stemmed from political and economic disappointments during the 1990s transition, which led to an "ambiguous, skeptical attitude toward democracy."[33] Polls showed Russians sought stability and socioeconomic improvements, not change. Such views led to the conservative backlash that Putin manipulated, successfully marginalizing democrats by blaming them for the "chaos" and lack of respect for Russia in the 1990s. In contrast, Ukrainians overwhelmingly sought change in the 2002 and 2004 elections.[34] As Theodore Gerber and Sarah Mendelson have argued, "Russians are twice as likely to express indifference, uncertainty, or hostility toward civil liberties than to strongly support them." Few Russians fear the suspension of, or threats to, civil liberties. More surprisingly, Gerber and Mendelson found that young Russians are *not* more in favor of civil liberties than older generations of Russians.[35]

The turn away from democracy in Russia revived anti-Western sentiment and anti-Americanism in Russia, accompanied by a related belief that Russia should follow its own path rather than blindly copy Western models. Such views reinforced the ideology of Eurasianism, which portrays Russia as a unique civilization that should not seek NATO or EU membership because this would represent an opposing Atlanticist civilization. Anti-American views are prevalent among young people and among residents of Russia's two largest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, places where one would expect fewer signs of these views. Educated young Russians also hold anti-American views, which helps explains their support for Unified Russia and nationalists. By contrast, anti-Americanism is rare among Ukraine's youth NGOs and among educated young Ukrainians.[36]

Soviet Nostalgia

Nostalgia for the Communist era is not a phenomenon confined to Russia, as seen in the former East Germany. However, such nostalgia is lower in non-Russian former Soviet states because membership in the USSR was associated with the loss of national sovereignty. This could explain why nostalgia is lower in the three Baltic states than in central Europe. In Ukraine, the disintegration of the USSR and the drive for independence were intimately linked. No such link exists in Russian consciousness because the Russian SFSR, alone of the 15 Soviet republics, did not declare independence from the USSR. The other 14 republics declared independence from the USSR *and* Russia. Russia celebrates its annual independence day based on its June 1990 declaration of sovereignty, while Ukraine's independence day is based on the Aug. 24, 1991 declaration enshrined in the 1996 constitution as providing legitimacy for the Ukrainian state.

Establishing control in one's own territory, rejecting "occupation" and "colonial rule," and reviving national values, traditions, and language are integrated into the founding myths of post-Soviet, independent Ukraine.[37] Differences between Ukraine and Russia go further. The establishment, or re-establishment, in Ukrainian historical mythology of an independent state opens up the possibility of both national emancipation and democracy. Democracy, as Thomas Carothers points out, "is identified closely with the West."[38] In Ukrainian eyes, the West and Europe are synonymous as the source of democracy, and the only manner in which to achieve this goal is by “returning to Europe” through membership of its two main institutions: NATO and the European Union.[39] Russia has a more complicated relationship with Europe as an “other” and never has counted NATO and EU membership among its goals. Ukraine supported NATO enlargement, while Russia always opposed it.

In Ukraine, nostalgia for the Soviet era, as measured by the success of the Communist Party, has declined since 2000, when economic growth accelerated. Several other factors help to explain this phenomenon. The Communist Party of Ukraine always opposed independent statehood, whereas the Russian Communist Party combined great-power nationalism and communism. Russians see the end of the Soviet era as a tragedy, unlike Ukrainians, who see it as leading to the re-birth of an independent Ukraine. Unlike Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who separated Turkish identity from that of the Ottoman Empire, Putin has continued to blur the differences between Soviet and Russian identity. An opinion poll showed that 78 percent of Russians agreed with Putin s view of the disintegration of the USSR as a catastrophe.[40] Young Russians, like older generations, long for the international recognition and respect that the USSR commanded, which they believe Russia no longer received under Yeltsin.[41] One factor explaining Putin’s sustained popularity is that he has placed achieving great power status at the center of his agenda.

Ukraine’s post-Soviet education system has revolutionized its curriculum. Students learn about the horrors of the Soviet era, such as the 1933 famine that led to an estimated 5 million to 7 million deaths in Ukraine. Since the late 1990s, on the eve of Putin’s ascendancy to power, Russian education has returned to a more nationalistic curriculum that reflects the evolving views of the Russian elites. In 2003, the authorities established the Coordinating Council of Patriots with the aim of inculcating state patriotism and love of the *Rodina* into young people. In 2005 the Duma, concerned about the role of young people in the Rose and Orange Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, respectively, adopted a “Strategy for the State’s Youth Policy in the Russian Federation from 2006–2016.” One component of the program was to establish an All-Russian Construction Brigade, reminiscent of the Soviet Komsomol (Communist Youth League) that would include young people in labor brigades. Such policies follow the creation of Walking Together and its successor Nashi (Ours), youth NGOs aimed at integrating young people into pro-Putin political projects, keeping them out of radical youth groups, and protecting them from the “pernicious” influence of the West. Other more extreme youth groups, such as the Eurasian Youth Union, promise to “stand as human shields in the face of the Orange bulldozer.” Nashi’s goal is to fight those set on changing Putin’s regime: “Their ideology is that everyone who is against the regime are enemies of the Motherland—they must be fought against using force.”[42] Using similar tactics to those of extreme right-wing parties in Western Europe, Nashi draws on soccer hooligans for recruits.[43] Nashi members are imbued with nationalism, anti-Western sentiment, and hostility to democratic revolutions and unspecified "enemies."[44] Kuchma never toyed with the idea of creating Komsomol-style youth groups in support of his regime. Ukraine's youth NGOs were dominated by pro-democracy sentiment and had no competition from pro-regime youth NGOs. An attempt to create an anti-Pora youth group, Dosyt (Enough) flopped.[45] Russia's successful creation of pro-regime youth NGOs has mirrored the efforts of Alexander Lukashenko's autocratic Belarus.

Putin has encouraged the revival of Soviet nostalgia by re-introducing Soviet military insignia, such as the Red Star and the Soviet anthem (albeit with new lyrics). As Peter Baker and Susan Glasser write, "nationalism mixed with Soviet-era symbolism was the perfect balm to the collective bruised ego. Soothing reminders of past glory would sell in a society disappointed with the results of upheaval and mired in intractable conflict about what course the country should take."[46]

In other post-communist states, Communist nostalgia is greater among the older generation, which was socialized in that system and largely constituted the "losers" in the post-Communist transition. This is not true of Russia, where Communist nostalgia has grown among young people, many of whom are too young to remember the USSR. Joakim Ekman and Jonas Linde write that, "The post-communist citizens may be ever so critical, skeptical, dissatisfied and disappointed. Still, a majority of them support the principles of democracy just the same."[47] Ukrainians were as dissatisfied as Russians over the traumatic 1990s transition and yet, like Central Europeans but unlike Russians, did not lose faith in democracy. Disillusionment among young Russians has turned them to Putin, great-power nationalism, and Soviet nostalgia.

> Disillusionment among young Russians has turned them to Putin, great-power nationalism, and Soviet nostalgia.

Nostalgia for the Soviet era began to resurface in the late 1990s as a counter-response to the decade of traumatic transition under Yeltsin. In Ukraine the impact of the transition manifested itself through reduced support for Ukrainian independence. Reactions in Russia and Ukraine to the resumption of economic growth in 2000 proved to be different. In Russia, nostalgia for the Soviet era swept all age groups, including young people, while in Ukraine support for independence revived and that of the Communist Party flagged. Soviet nostalgia in Russia was evident in music, Soviet movies, theater, and fashions: "The most successful new brand in Putin's Russia, it turned out, was the Soviet Union—retooled and updated for the Internet era."[48] It became "cool" to be a Russian patriot and proud of the USSR's achievements, and "un-cool" to be infatuated with the West, as Russia's youth had been in the early 1990s. Russia's youth began to listen to Russian rock and pop rather than Western music, and Russian radio stations playing Russian music became the most popular. By the time Putin was elected, Russian music, mixing traditional and Soviet tunes and lyrics, was more popular than Western music among Russia's youth. The Nashestviye rock festival near Moscow attracted 100,000 young people in August 1998. LDPR leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky, not leaders of pro-reform parties, addressed the festival. Some of the Russian music evolved beyond patriotism toward xenophobic nationalism. Russian presidential staff members have warned Russian rock musicians not to follow their Ukrainian counterparts in aligning with pro-democracy groups.[49] The Pitersky Maidan concert in St. Petersburg, which was to have featured Ukrainian and Russian bands, was cancelled due to political pressure.[50] In Ukraine, the country's rock musicians backed the Orange Revolution with lyrics in support of democracy, citizens' rights and disgust at election fraud.[51]

Soviet nostalgia has led to the rise of nostalgia for the brutal Soviet leader Josef Stalin, who is remembered not for the Gulag but for having transformed the USSR into a superpower and having won the "Great Patriotic War." A poll showed that 50 percent of Russians see Stalin "positively or somewhat positively," and a majority of young Russians believe Stalin did more good than bad. The growth of nostalgia for the USSR and Stalin, based on "absent memory" about the past, has contributed to democratic regression under Putin.[52] In Russia, school textbooks critical of Stalin have been removed under Putin. In 2003 Putin approved the removal from schools of Igor Dolutsky's *National History, 20th Century,* a textbook hailed for its thorough discussion of Stalin's repression. In Ukraine, it would be impossible to build a cult of Stalin because he is associated with the famine, the Great Terror, and deportations. Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak wrote:

> All Ukrainians are unanimous in their negative evaluation of Stalin and his acts of repression; they see him as the main villain in Ukrainian history, the number one anti-hero. And this is exactly what makes them different from Russians (in Russia): a majority of the Russian population (in Russia) considers Stalin in rather positive terms, as a great state builder, who turned the Soviet Union into a world superpower.[53]

National Identities and Nationalism

The main impediment to the growth of democratization in Russia is its national identity. According to Levada and Pipes, in Russia there is a preference for order over freedom, and imperial and great power nationalism over pro-European/Western civic nationalism. "Returning to Europe" is not a foreign policy objective in Russia, as its elites do not support Russian membership in either NATO or the European Union. Since 1998, Ukraine's elites have backed the country's membership in both organizations, either in rhetoric (under Kuchma) or in substance (under Yushchenko). In 2006, Ukraine may be invited to join a NATO Membership Action Plan, leading potentially to an invitation to membership in 2008 and actual membership two years later.

Pro-European civic nationalism played an important role in mobilizing Ukrainians during the Orange Revolution.[54] A similar pattern of civic nationalist mobilization took place in Serbia's 2000 and Georgia's 2003 democratic revolutions. Nationalist groups play no role in Ukrainian politics and have not been elected to parliament. In Georgia the ethnic nationalism of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in the early 1990s has evolved into the civic nationalism of Mikhail Saakashvili. In Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic's regime held a monopoly on extreme nationalism.

Russia possesses strong nationalist sentiment but, unfortunately, it is the "wrong" type of nationalism. Nearly a third of Duma deputies are nationalists, blurring conservative patriotic and "outright neo-imperialist and neo-totalitarian authoritarian impulses."[55] Russia's nationalism is not geared toward building a post-imperial nation-state (as with Atatürk's Turkey) but to building a Great Power. Atatürk's Turkey represented a rejection of the Ottoman Empire in favor of building a Western nation-state. Post-Soviet Russia is unclear what it is building: a nation-state, a Russia dominant within a USSR-lite (CIS) political bloc, or a union with Belarus. For Putin, the disintegration of the USSR was the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century," and he refused to condemn the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Atatürk made no such nostalgic statements about the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.

The merging of nationalist fervor with Stalinism has given Russian nationalism a different flavor from that found in Ukraine. Russian nationalism and democratic dissidents never sought to separate the Russian SFSR from the USSR, unlike their Ukrainian counterparts.[56] Democratic opposition in the non-Russian republics of the USSR was both national and democratic (hence the term "national-democrat"), as it linked regaining national sovereignty, on the one hand, and the replacement of Soviet totalitarianism with democracy, on the other. In Russia, pro-democracy dissidents never sought to establish an independent Russian state, as Russian and Soviet identities were interwoven. The Russian SFSR used Soviet institutions and only began to build Russian state institutions after Yeltsin's election as Russian president in June 1990. Russian nationalism was imperial-saving rather than civic nation-building, a factor reinforced by Russia becoming the legal successor state to the USSR and a partial member of the G7, or G8, as it became known.[57]

Conclusion

Although Yushchenko's election will have a major impact on Ukraine's further divergence from Russia, these two countries already were diverging during Kuchma's second term and Putin's first term. The post-Orange Revolution divergence of Russian and Ukrainian paths follows four years of differing domestic trajectories. This divergence is also a product of different national identities and political cultures. Ukraine has devoted its energy to building a nation-state since the disintegration of the USSR, while Russia has been a more reluctant nation-state builder, nostalgic for the Soviet era and adamant in its attempts to preserve the CIS as a less formal neo-Soviet alternative. The enlargement of the European Union and NATO to

Ukraine's western border from 1999 to 2004 brought physically closer an alternative European model of democracy that contrasts significantly with Russia's managed democracy. Ukraine's national identity and the civic nationalism that propelled the Orange Revolution have been premised on "re-joining Europe." This goal stands in sharp contrast to the tendency in Russian politics to view the West with a mixture of awe and resentment.

In the wake of the Orange Revolution, Ukraine has a president and government committed to what the European Union defines as "common (European) values," while the Russian state is moving in the opposite direction, toward autocracy. Ukraine now has a president committed in word and deed to take Ukraine into the European Union and NATO, while Russia does not seek membership in either structure and continues to look upon NATO from a limited Cold War perspective.

Ukraine's youth have followed a different trajectory from that of their Russian counterparts. Ukrainian youth, as in Georgia and Serbia, played a vital role in backing democratization and democratic revolutions. Russian youth, by contrast, have fallen in line with older generations in turning away from democracy and supporting Putin's authoritarianism, great-power nationalism, and Soviet nostalgia. In the Yushchenko and Putin eras, Russian and Ukrainian youth hold radically different views toward electoral democracy, media freedom, nostalgia for the USSR, backing for nationalist groups, racism, and support for democracy and democratic revolutions. These widely divergent views among Ukrainian and Russian youth toward democracy and political institutions undoubtedly will play a major role in shaping the two countries' future development.

Notes

[1] "Freedom in the World 2006: Middle East Progress Amid Global Gains," available at *www.freedomhouse.org*.

[2] See remarks by Vice President Dick Cheney at the Vilnius conference, *http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/05/20060504-1.html*, and "Russian Federation: Racism and xenophobia rife in Russian society" available at *http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR460182006*.

[3] See A. William Clark, "Communist Devolution: The Electoral Decline of the KPRF," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 53, no.1 (January–February 2006): 15–25.

[4] Jonas Linde, "Coping with Change: Regime Support in Thirteen Post-Communist Societies," Association for the Study of Nationalities convention, Columbia University, 23–26 March 2006, 13.

[5] Yuri A. Levada, "What the Polls Tell Us," *Journal of Democracy*, 15, no.3 (July 2004): 44–51.

[6] Victor Yasmann, "Russia: Radicalized Youth on the Rise," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (hereafter *RFE/RL) News and Features*, 14 April 2005.

[7] Vicki L. Hesli, *Government and Politics in Russia and the Post-Soviet Region* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007): 108.

[8] T. P. Gerber, "Young, Educated, Urban—and Anti-American: Recent Survey Data from Russia," *PONARS Policy Memo No. 267*, October 2002.

[9] Maria Lipman, "How Russia is Not Ukraine: The Closing of Russian Civil Society," *Carnegie Endowment, Russia and Eurasian Project, Policy Outlook*, January 2005, 1–2.

[10] Ibid, 3.

[11] "Press Under Threat in Key Asian, African countries, Study Finds; Longer-Term Pattern of Decline Noted in Latin America and Former Soviet Union" available at *http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=356.*

[12] Matthew Kaminski noted the vibrancy of Ukraine's civil society and media freedom, in contrast to Russia, while travelling from Moscow to Kyiv. See his "Viktor Yushchenko, An Accidental Hero," *Financial Times*, 17 December 2005.

[13] Ibid; Levada. See also Richard Pipes, "Flight From Freedom: What Russians Think and Want," *Foreign Affairs*, 83, no. 3 (May/June 2004): 9–15.

[14] Jeremy Bransten, "Russia: Young Russians Say Cash is King as Rock Stars, Oligarchs Top Survey of Heroes," *RFE/RL News and Analysis*, 22 July 2004.

[15] Sarah E. Mendelson and Theodore P. Gerber, "Soviet Nostalgia: An Impediment to Russian Democratization," *The Washington Quarterly*, 29, no. 1 (Winter 2005–06): 85.

[16] Jeremy Bransten, "Russia: Nation's Youth Are Apolitical and Materialistic," *RFE/RL News and Analysis*, 7 November 2001.

[17] Michael McFaul and Elina Treyger, "Civil Society," in Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russia's Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington: Carnegie, 2004): 135.

[18] Natalya Panina, *Ukrainian Society: Sociological Monitoring, 1994–2005* (Kyiv: Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences, 2005).

[19] See Alexander J. Motyl, "Structural Constraints and Starting Points: The Logic of Systematic Change in Ukraine and Russia," *Comparative Politics*, 29, no. 4 (July 1997): 433–447.

[20] William M. Reisinger, Arthur H. Miller, Vicki L. Hesli, and Kristen H. Maher, "Political Values in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania: Sources and Implications for Democracy," *British Journal of Political Science*, 24, no. 2 (1994): 183–223 and Miller, Hesli, and Reisinger, "Comparing Citizen and Elite Belief Systems in Post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 59, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 1–40.

[21] See Evhen I. Holovakha, "Popular Social and Political Attitudes," in Sharon L. Wolchik and Volodymyr Zviglyanich, eds., *Ukraine: The Search for a National Identity* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000): 199–212.

[22] Alfred Stepan, "Ukraine: Improbable Democratic 'Nation-State' But Possible Democratic 'State-Nation'?", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 51, no. 4 (October/December 2005): 303.

[23] Anders Aslund, "Yushchenko vs. Putin's Soviet heirs," *International Herald Tribune*, 10 February 2005.

[24] McFaul and Treyger, "Civil Society," 164.

[25] Fred Weir, "Russian Government Sets Sights on 'Subversion," *Christian Science Monitor,* 1 June 2005, Guy Chazan, "Russia's Proposed Curbs on NGO's Raise U.S. Fears," *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 November 2005 and Andrew Osborn, "Spying row justifies crackdown on rights groups, claims Putin," *The Independent*, 26 January 2006.

[26] V.L. Hesli, *Government and Politics in Russia and the Post-Soviet Region* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007): 108–122.

[27] Richard Sakwa, "The 2003–2004 Russian Elections and Prospects for Democracy," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57, no. 3 (May 2005): 386.

[28] Stepan, 302.

[29] Viktor Stepanenko, "Chy povernetsia dzyn u pliashku? Osoblyvosti natsionalnoii hromadianskoii aktyvnosti," *Politychnyi Portret*, 33, 2005, 21.

[30] Oleksandr Reznik, "Sotsialno-Politychni peredumovy Fenomenon Pomaranchevoii Revolutsii," *Politychnyi Portret*, 33, 2005, 5–14.

[31] Figures taken from "Russia's Weakened Democratic Embrace, 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Survey" *www.pewglobal.org.*

[32] Linde, "Coping with Change: Regime Support in Thirteen Post-Communist Societies," Association for the Study of Nationalities convention, Columbia University, 23–26 March 2006, 10.

[33] Vladimir Petukhov and Andrei Ryabov, "Public Attitudes About Democracy," in McFaul, Petrov, and Ryabov, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russia's Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington: Carnegie, 2004): 271.

[34] See Taras Kuzio, "Everyday Ukrainians and the Orange Revolution," in Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul, eds., *Revolution in Orange* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 2006): 45–68.

[35] Theodore P. Gerber and Sarah E. Mendelson, "How Russians Think about Human Rights: Recent Survey Data," *PONARS Policy Memo No. 221*, 25 January 2002.

[36] Theodore P. Gerber, "Young, Educated, Urban—and Anti-American: Recent Survey Data from Russia," *PONARS Policy Memo No. 267*, October 2002.

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[39] The Ukrainian case is given in V. Stepanenko, "Natsionalno-derzhavne budivnytstvo i problem sotsiokulturnoii identychnosti," *Politolohichni Chyttania*, 1, 1994, 3–21.

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[42] Peter Finn, "Another Russian Revolution?" *The Washington Post*, 8 April 2005.

[43] Julie A. Corwin, "Russia: Are Soccer Hooligans Being Used by Kremlin?," *RFE/RL News and Features*, 19 September 2005.

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[45] See Taras Kuzio, "Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions: Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 38, no. 3 (September 2006), forthcoming.

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[47] Joakim Ekman and Jonas Linde, "Communist Nostalgia and the Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 21, no. 3 (September 2005): 372.

[48] Baker and Glasser, *Kremlin Rising: Vladimir Putin's Russia and the End of Revolution* (New York: Lisa Drew, Scribner, 2005): 63.

[49] Finn, "Another Russian Revolution?" *The Washington Post*, 8 April 2005.

[50] *Moscow Times*, 5 April 2005.

[51] See Bohdan Klid, "Rock, Pop and Politics in the 2004 Ukrainian Presidential Elections and Orange Revolution," Association for the Study of Nationalities convention paper, 23–26 March 2006.

[52] See Sarah E. Mandelson and Theodore P. Gerber, "Soviet Nostalgia: An Impediment to Russian Democratization," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2005–06).

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[56] See "The Myth of Russian Nationalism," in A. J. Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips With Nationalism in the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990): 161–173 and David Rowley, "Imperial versus national discourse: the case of Russia," *Nations and Nationalism* 6, part 1 (January 2000): 23–42.

[57] Motyl and Rowley.