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On Relevance and Irrelevance of Nationalism in Ukraine

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As this year is the 70th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine, which resulted in the deaths of an estimated 4-7 million people, the Ukrainian community worldwide has initiated a campaign to ensure that it becomes widely recognized across the world. One aspect of this campaign has been to compel *The New York Times* to withdraw the Pulitzer Prize it awarded in 1932 to its Moscow correspondent, Walter Duranty for his reporting from the Soviet Union.

A Flight of Bumblebee, in a Ukrainian Way

There are two important newsbreaks about nationalism in Ukraine. One is good. One is bad. They are similar, and differ only in their emphasis and implication. The good news is that nationalism does not play a major role in UKRAINE. The bad news is that nationalism DOES NOT PLAY a major role in Ukraine.

A problem with short statements is that they require extensive explanations. Otherwise there is a risk that they will be misunderstood. This is especially true with a statement on nationalism, which is in itself a rather vague term. Depending on circumstances, it may communicate different meanings. In the most conventional sense, it is used as a derogatory term -- as a synonym for chauvinism and ethnic intolerance. East Europeans have contributed to this image. While Western Europe is considered an example of good and civic “nationalism”, Eastern Europe supposedly presents a historical record of “ethnic” and “bloody” nationalism. Ukrainian nationalism fell into the latter category, as a typical Eastern nationalism[1]. With the only difference, that the Ukrainian image has been constructed in stark contrast not with the Western model, but with a model of Russian and Soviet patriotism. As Norman Davies succinctly put it, Ukrainians “were usually presented to the outside world as “Russians” or “Soviets” whenever they were to be praised, and “Ukrainians” only when they did evil”.[2]

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[1] For a distinction between Western and Eastern types of nationalism and its relevance see: Rober Brubaker, 'Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism', John A.Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation. Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 298-301; Athena S. Leroussi, ed, *Encyclopedia of Nationalism* (New Brunswick, US and London, UK, 2001), pp. 62-64; Mark von Hagen, ‘Does Ukraine Have a History?', *Slavic Review*, 54, 3 (Fall 1995), pp.661-2.

[2] Norman Davies, *Europe. A History* (Oxford, New York, 1996), p. 54.

Recently, Ukrainians ceased to be Russians or Soviets, and became Ukrainians once more. However, they did very little, if anything, to confirm their demonized image, even though expectations were to the contrary. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were fears that the winning Ukrainian nationalism might lead to a nuclear war between Ukraine and Russia. In 1993, amidst the deepest Ukrainian economic crisis, CIA came up with a prognosis about the possible break up of Ukraine and a bloody civil war between its Ukrainian speaking West and its Russian speaking East.[3] This image was reiterated later by Samuel Huntington, who in his *Clash of civilization* identified Ukraine as an archetype of a "cleft country".[4] Luckily enough, all those fears and expectations proved to be false. In this sense, this is the good news about nationalism in Ukraine.

There are, however, more neutral and academic definitions of nationalism. Among them, an absolute champion in terms of frequency of references, is a definition given is by the late Ernest Gellner. He defined nationalism as an ideological and a political movement that believes that the nation and the state should be congruent.[5] Gellner was a very influential thinker. He made a profound impact on current academic discourses about nationalism. Gellner perceived nationalism as a very modern phenomenon that emerges during the transition from agricultural to industrial societies. According to him, nationalism is closely intertwined with the industrial society, as "if nationalism was a piece of machinery that needed the oil of nationalism to function".[6]

On first glance, the post-Soviet Ukraine meets Gellner's criteria: it has a large Ukrainian ethnic majority (77,8 % in 2001),[7] and the Ukrainian ethnic territory mainly corresponds with the Ukrainian political borders. The ethnic landscape changes, however, dramatically when one introduces the linguistic component. According to language spoken in public, Ukraine's population is split among two groups: Ukrainian and Russian speakers, and the former make slightly less than half.[8] Moreover, the linguistic differences largely coincide with regional cleavages and political preferences: few years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainian speaking West preferred total independence, whereas the Russian speaking East opted for a closer alliance with Russia.[9]

Thus, in the Ukrainian case, the Gellner equation between nation and state is somewhat problematic. The second part of the Gellner formula – an equation between nation and modernity -- does not to seem to work either. On the one hand, Ukraine is a very modernized society. Some 40-50 years ago, it has crossed the so called "threshold of modernization", when urban population represents a majority. Today urban inhabitants include two thirds of the Ukrainian population (67,2% in 2001)[10]. On the other hand, number of Ukrainian speaking Ukrainians is smaller the larger the urban area. They create a majority in the countryside, about 80% in small towns, about a half in middle size towns and a minority in large cities. Moreover, Ukrainians are strongly underrepresented in strategic sectors of modern political and economic life. Say, in their share in administrative offices (24%), they lag behind Jews (63%) and Russians (32%), and very close to such minorities group in Ukraine, as Belarusians (25%) and Poles (23%).[11]

To summarize, the idea of Ukrainian nation-state as an implementation of Ukrainian nationalism has serious intrinsic flaws. This constitutes the bad news about nationalism in Ukraine. As British historian Andrew Wilson put it, Ukrainian nationalism is "a minority faith", i.e., it was and still is a preoccupation of small and politically rather insignificant groups of intellectuals. Contrary to claims of Ukrainian historiography, Ukrainian nationalists rarely managed to mobilize any significant group of local population in any region, with the only exception of Western Union, which stayed outside of direct Russian and Soviet influences until WWII.[12]

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3 Williams D. and Smith R.J. ."U.S. Intelligence Sees Economic Flight Leading to Breakup of Ukraine", *Washington Post*, January 25 1994. P.7.

4 Samuel Huntington, *Clash of civilization* , p. ???

5 Ernest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), p. 1.

6 A remark made on the Gellner's theory by Benedict Anderson in his recent interview: Ab Imperio, 2003, p. 64-65.

7 Pro kilkist ta sklad naselennia Ukrajiny za pidsumkamy Vseukrajins'koho perepysu naselennia 2001 roku. Povidomlennia Derzhavnoho komitetu statystyky Ukrajiny (http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/Perepis/PidsPer.html (last visited February 6, 2004))

8 For different patterns of correlation between language and ethnic identity in Ukraine see: Andrew Wilson, "Elements of a theory of Ukrainian ethno-national identities', *Nations and Nationalism* 8 (1), 2002, pp. 33-36.

9 Roman Solchanyk, 'The Post-Soviet Transition in Ukraine: Prospects for Stability', in: Taras Kuzio, ed. *Contemporary Ukraine: dynamics of post-Soviet transformation* (Armonk, N.Y., 1998), pp. 30-31; Viktor Nebozhenko and Iryna Bekeshkina, 'Politychnyj portret Ukrainy (Skhid, pivden')', *Politychnyi portret Ukrainy*, Vol.9 (1994), pp. 44-45.

10 Pro kilkist ta sklad naselennia…(http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/Perepis/PidsPer.html (last visited February 6, 2004).

11 Tetiana Rudnyts'ka, 'Etnichni osoblyvosti profesiino• "tabeli pro rangy". Prosuvannia sluzhbovoiu drabynoiu i natsional'nist' '[=Ethnic pecualarities of professional "table on ranges". Professional promotion and nationality], *Den'*, 1998, No 91 (May 19), p. 4. A comparative analysis of Ukrainians in Ukriane and Ukrainians in the US and Canada reveals the same tendency, which proves an impact of historical and cultural peculiarities, rather than social factors (idem).

12 Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in 1990s. Minority Faith* (Oxford, 1996).

And yet, the Ukrainian nation-state proved to be very viable. It can hardly be labeled as an efficient or democratic political entity, and until recently, its economic performance was not extremely impressive. Still, in contrast to all other former Soviet republics, it has not experienced any serious ethnic conflicts.

The last decade of Ukrainian history presents a certain paradox. Its essence was probably best formulated by Simon Heemans, the British ambassador in Kyiv during the early 1990s. In his words, the Ukrainian case proves the famous "bumble bee paradox": "an engineer of aerodynamics will tell you that a bumble bee cannot fly, but it does."[13] According to numerous academic and political discourses both in the West and in the East, Ukrainian nation-state as an implementation of the Ukrainian nationalism was doomed to fail. And yet it exists. And, most likely, will continue to exist in the foreseeable future.

There are two possible solutions to this paradox: either we have a wrong kind of a bumble bee, or laws of aerodynamics have to be critically reconsidered. My hypothesis – which I hope to prove by the end of my presentation – is that the problem has very little to do with the bumble bee. Rather it is our views on nationalism and its relevance that have to be seriously adjusted.

Beyond a revolving door of dominant discourses

Since Gellner's seminal book, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), nationalism studies exploded in an extremely rich and diverse academic field. An analyst who enters this field for the first time may find himself or herself at a total loss when confronted by a huge number of recently emerged definitions and interpretations of what nationalism is about. Ironically, the current situation does not differ significantly from the situation that was long before, and when it comes to nationalism, we can subscribe to every word of what Walter Bagehot wrote in 1887, a hundred years before Gellner: "We know what it is when you do not ask us, but we cannot very quickly explain or define it".[14]

I have no intention to contribute further to this wholesale confusion. Historians have their own way to deal with badly defined phenomena. They do know that sometimes "what men think is more important in history than the objective facts".[15] So instead of going in the discussions on what really nationalism is, I suggest to confront discussions on nationalism with a salience of national identities in the Ukrainian society. Among those, who deals with Ukraine, there is a hardly a historian, a political analyst or literary critic who did not write at least once on national identities and nationalism in Ukraine. The authors may differ in their interpretations. Still, they have something in common: they treat the national issue as the central issue of post-Soviet Ukraine. According to them, a relatively weak or underdeveloped national identity of a large segment of the Ukrainian population may have disastrous effects on the political stability of the country. The weak Ukrianian natonalism is held responsible for Ukrainian economic stagnation, a lack of political reforms, the weakness of the opposition, and so on and so on. Name any serious defect of Ukraine's recent political, economic and cultural performance, and you will always find several influential analysts who would point their finger at the weak nationalism as the main culprit.

This seems to be the way of thinking of numerous Ukrainian politicians as well. A former US Ambassador to Russia, Jack F. Matlock, recollects his visit in 1995 to Kyiv. He accompanied a team of several former members of the US National Security Council staff to discuss with Ukrainian officials the process of decision-making on questions of national security. When he finished his presentation, the Ukrainian chairman observed that in the US "national security" means defense and foreign policy. "Here, however", he continued, "our problem is different". He then unfolded a large map with each province in Ukraine shaded from light to dark. The westernmost provinces – some bordering on Poland – were white those in the center gray, and those bordering with Russia and in the south in solid black. "These are shaded to indicate the degree of dissatisfaction with the Ukrainian government. As you can see, for us national security is not about foreign policy, or even about defense. Our problem is how to create a nation, when most of the people in some regions don't feel themselves part of it".[16]

To what extent this mode of thinking is well grounded? Most discussions on Ukrainian nationalism focus on narratives that were produced by its adherents and opponents, i.e., people who were already engaged in nationalist discourses. One can accept it as a legitimate approach for intellectual history of any nationalism. One can not escape a feeling of being trapped within a revolving door, when new narratives replace old ones, without replacing the same focus of discursive practices. This focus is a contention that nationalism and national identity make the central axis that all the modern world is whirling around. Or, as Ernest Gellner would put it, "[a] man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in any of these particulars [...] is [...] a disaster

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[13] Quoted after: 'Where the wild things are', *The Economist*, 7 May 1994.

[14] Walter Bagehot, Physics and Politics (London, 1987), pp. 20-21; quoted after: Eric J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney, 1990), p. 1.

[15] A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle of Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 (Oxford and New York University Press, 1991), 17. Quoted after: Piotr Wrobel, Double Memories..., p. 561.

[16] Jack F. Matlock, "Nowhere Nation", New York Review of Books, pp. 41-42.

of a kind"[17]. This is a norm. If the norm is not met, then something is definitely wrong. Abnormal. Backward. Wicked. Uncivilized. You name it.

My suggestion is, however, that this statement is not an axiom. This is a hypothesis that is still to be proven. To prove or to disprove it, one has to move beyond the "revolving door" in which everyone goes around and gets out exactly where they got in. Researchers who are studying nationalism are often blamed – and rightly so – for presenting a restricted scholarly agenda by failing to locate national identity within a range of possible types of collective identity.[18] During the last decade, I was involved in a project that tried to do the contrary, i.e., place Ukrainian and Russian identities within a broader spectrum of collective identities and group loyalties in the post-Soviet Ukraine. The project focuses on a comparison of the two largest cities of Western and Eastern Ukraine, namely L'viv and Donets'k. L'viv is the most Ukrainian city in the country, both in its language and urban culture. Ukrainians make here ca. 80% of the whole population; and the same number of local population regard Ukrainian as their native language. Donets'k is a center of Donbass, the most industrialized and Russified region of Eastern Ukraine. According to the 1989 census, Russians here made a largest group of some 50-55%, followed by Ukrainians with 40%. If one is to add the language criterion, then the Russian characters of Donets'k became even more explicit: the percentage of Russian-speakers amounts to 80%.[19]

The two cities represent opposite poles of political mobilization in Ukraine. Suffice it to say that our survey revealed that the most disliked group in L'viv were communists, and in Donets'k it was Ukrainian nationalists. Those two cities make two opposite extreme limits among which the post-Soviet Ukrainian nation is being built.[20] Or, if to use the image of the map painted in different colors, these are points drawn, consequently, in solid white and solid black. In any case, the focus on L'viv and Donets'k is very useful for exploration of an inner cohesion within that nation.

Our project focused on group identities in both cities. The questions about respondents' identities were formulated in two different ways. In both cases they were asked to choose an identity that described them best. In the first case they were given the list with 28 possible answers, which covered different national, social, gender, age, professional, and religious identities. The interviewees were asked to choose as many identities as they wished to describe the way they thought about themselves. In the second case the range of possible answers was limited only to four identities. Besides "Ukrainian", "Russian", and "other" as threee possible options for national identification, we decided to introduce a fourth one that is not related to ethnic and linguistic differences. It was a "Soviet" identity. Some earlier researches suggested that Russians in large cities outside the Russian Federation tend identify themselves exactly in these terms.[21] It was natural to expect that such identity would find some adherents at least in Donets'k.

The results, however, exceeded our expectations. As a matter of fact, in Donets'k the Soviet identity in 1994 proved to be one of the most popular identities on the both lists. This was not the case in L'viv, where the Ukrainian identity was on the top of the list. In any case, the data provided undermine the above-mentioned perspective that the issue of identity in Ukraine should be perceived in a Russian/Ukrainian dichotomy. Both Russians and Ukrainians are suffering from a crisis of identity, and therefore neither group is homogeneous. To a large extent, the Russian identity in Ukraine suffers from a deeper crisis than the Ukrainian identity does. Donets'k may be a very Russian city in terms of the language spoken on the street. But there is no strong correlation between language and identity, as it is the case in L'viv.

To be sure, any case study involves a risk of having too loose a generalization. To minimize this risk, we tried as much as possible to relate our data to other projects that were done on a much larger, Ukrainian and/or Eastern European, scale. The first one, done simultaneously with the 1994 L'viv-Donets'k project, included the same set of questions on identity, but it was carried out on a national scale. A first glance at the national survey (See Table # 3) basically confirms the hypothesis that L'viv and Donets'k make two opposite poles of political mobilization in Ukraine. Another revealing point is that the Ukrainian identity is the largest among other popular group identities. In terms of popularity, the Ukrainian identity in Ukraine could be matched only by social identities of "workers". In regional dimensions, the Ukrainian identity was losing in popularity to others in the South and East. But then again, in

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[17] Gellner, Op. cit., p. 6.

[18] For the most recent criticism see Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter, "Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities – A Comparative View", in "Early Modernities", Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 127, No. 3 (Summer 1998), p. 14.

[19] Data of L'viv and Donets'k city statistic departments; compiled by Victor Susak. According to our survey, the 1994 situation was not different: 77, 7 % in L'viv and 73,7 % in Donets'k claimed respectively Ukrainian or Russian languages as their native. The usage of the Russian language in Lviv and Ukrainian in Donets'k was clearly declining from an older to a younger generations: 79,4 per cent of parents in Lviv spoke Ukrainian with their children, while this number for Russian-speakers in Donets'k ammounts to 89,6 per cent.

[20] Dominique Arel and Andrew Wilson, "The Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections," RFE/RL Research Report, July 1, 1994, p. 7; Louis Jackson, "Identity, Language, and Transformation in Eastern Ukraine…", 100-101; Roman Solchanyk, "The Post-Soviet Transition in Ukraine: Prospects for Stability", in Taras Kuzio, ed., Contemporary Ukraine…, pp. 17-40.

[21] Russkije. Etno-sotsiologicheskije ocherki (Moskva, 1992), p. 415.

the East it lost to social identities, while remaining the largest among national identities. And only in the South it lost both to social and national identities, being second among others to the Russian identity.

The data also reveal that the Russian identity in Ukraine is less intensive than the Ukrainian one. One may say with a certain approximation that every third Ukrainian considers his or her Ukrainian identity as the most important, while among Russians every fourth does so when it comes to his or her Russian identity. In one sense, these data both confirm and deny the validity of Andrew Wilson's point: Ukrainians really do make up a minority in their own country. But then again, it is the largest possible minority. No other national identity can match it on an all-Ukrainian scale.

Another project was carried out in 1999 in L'viv and Donets'k to reveal any significant changes in ways people feel about themselves five years later (See table # 3.). In the case of L'viv, we encounter a rather striking stability in the hierarchy of group identities. And this hierarchy is crowned by the Ukrainian identity as the most important. It proves the image of L'viv as a "nationalized" city where people think about their national identity as the most important one. Here both identities and their hierarchy are as carved in stone. Donets'k proved to be different in two ways. First, the hierarchy of identities there is not so stable, and they are in flux. Especially striking is a decrease of "worker" and "Soviet" identities. Secondly, it is hard to state that the city has a national character as L'viv does: only slightly less than half of the population feels its national identity as being very important for them.

There is another project that provides a broader framework – both spatially and temporally – for comparisons. This is a large ongoing survey of group identities in post-Soviet Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine. It revealed a general tendency toward a decrease of national identities and an increase of social identities within all of this mega-region. So, most of the people of the European part of the former Soviet Union tends to identify in a way Donets'k does. This tendency, however, is less relevant for Lithuania and the Western Ukraine, where national identities are considered as the most important ones, as it is the case in Lviv.[22]

A glimpse at a European barometer on nationalism (See Table # 4.) gives an impression that this "West-East" divides in the intensity of nationalism is part of a broader pattern. But it works in quite a different way from what can be read in some classic works on nationalism: it is Eastern Europe that is a relatively less "nationalized" region than Western Europe.

Ukrainian nation: beyond the pocket level

Data of numerous surveys do challenge the image of Ukraine often presented in dominant academic and political discourses. There is a belief that Ukraine as a nation exists only, so to say, on the "level of the pocket". If there are any values or attitudes that all Ukrainians commonly share, despite regional and linguistic differences, these are a deep dissatisfaction with their economic status. A dissatisfaction with Ukrainian politics is another important denominator, where the Ukrainian "East" meets the Ukrainian "West". Kuchma's rating plummeted to the bottom, and if Bush, Putin or even Lukashenko would be allowed to candidate in the next Ukrainian presidential elections, they would easily beat him. Most Ukrainians have very little trust in any political or civil institution, and if they were to rely on somebody, these would be more often than not members of their family and their colleagues at work.[23]

At first glance, there seems to be no common middle ground, no shared identities that would unite the population of Ukraine in a positive sense. If one may refer to the famous Max Weber distinction between an ethnic group and a nation, Ukrainians' common shared negative attitudes do not make them yet a nation. As any other ethnic group, Ukrainians know what they are not before they know who they are. But to be a nation, they have to have a meaningful identity of a positive nature that supercedes a local, regional, clan, or tribe level.[24]

These statements should be taken, however, with a grain of salt. They do not necessarily reflect reality. Or, rather to say, they reflect a special kind of reality, what people think is real, rather than so-called "hard facts". Most Ukrainians complain about a decline of their living standards. Still, if you ask them whether they bought a flat, a house, a car, etc. in recent years, you find out that most of them have done so. So their complaints do not say that much about the deterioration of the economic situation; they rather reflect a state where their consumerist expectations supercede a rise of their living standards.[25] Or, in the same vein, they are extremely dissatisfied with their national politics and President Kuchma, but they are not that eager to participate in acts of political protest[26]. They

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22 Arthur H. Miller, Thomas F. Klobucar, William M. Reisinger, and Vicki L. Hesli, "Social Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania", Post-Soviet Affairs, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1998), p. 255.

23 Ukrajins'ke suspil'stvo, 1992-2002 (sotiolohichnyj monitorynh). N. V. Panina, ed. (Kyiv: Instytut sotiolohiji, 2003) (Ukrainian Society, 1992-2002 (Sociological Poll)), pp. 23-28.

24 W. Connor, Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding (Princeton, 1994), p. 103.

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26 Ukrajins'ke suspil'stvo, 1992-2002, p. 21.

manifested this tendency during the 2001 national wave of protests against Kuchma: they turned their back to the opposition, even though they were in solidarity with its demands to kick the current president out of office.

Following the same line of argument, one may state that there is a certain discrepancy between what Ukrainians really say about their national identity and the way they identify themselves on numerous occasions. To put it in the way of a metaphor, besides a large sea of despair and negative attitudes one may identity, however, some growing islands of national agreement in a positive sense. These islands of agreement could be traced even in the issues that raise the strongest controversies in Ukraine, such as the language issue and historical memory. In the language issue, one of the biggest differences between West and East is revealed in attitudes toward the statement: “Those who live in Ukraine must learn to speak and use Ukrainian in public”. Most people in L’viv agreed with this statement while most people in Donets’k disagreed. Two qualifications, however, should be made here. First of all, there is a common agreement in the two cities that it does not matter what language people speak as long as they support Ukraine. Secondly, in Donets’k we traced a willingness to accept the Ukrainian language on a premise that the Ukrainian language will be the language of “a strong master” who will get control over affairs in Ukraine.[27]

This proves a hypothesis made elsewhere that in Ukraine the Ukrainian language is not a vehicle of nationalism, but rather has symbolic meaning for the social status of those who are speaking this language.[28] If we were to move beyond the polar dichotomy of the “L’viv-Donets’k” axis to an all-Ukrainian dimension, we may identify three more or less equal groups: two groups that speak either Ukrainian or Russian in public, and the third one of those who speak both Ukrainian and Russian, depending on circumstances. The general balance changes, however, when it comes to the issue whether Russian deserves the status of a second official language: then the group that stands for the Russian language gets slightly less than half (even though it has slightly decreased since the middle of the 1990s). But then again, when asked, “What language must be taught in schools and universities in Ukraine besides Ukrainian?”, there is a clear and overwhelming majority of 80% who stands for… English.[29] On the other hand, Western Ukraine seems not to have any immunity against the Russian language. It is the language that one may hear on local FM radio stations, in bars and restaurants, and among teenagers of the so-called bedroom communities in L’viv – much to the chagrin of the local government, which tries to reduce the sphere of public use of Russian in the city.[30] Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the first Ukrainian platinum disc was won by pop star Andrij Danylko, better known under his stage name of “Vierka Serdiuchka”, who sings in a peculiar mix of Ukrainian and Russian.[31] Or, by that token, the most popular writer in Ukraine is Andrij Kulakov, author of crime stories, who writes exclusively in Russian. He was born in Russia, graduated from a university in Kyiv, married an English woman, speaks 11 languages, and was translated into 18. And still, he insists that he is a Ukrainian writer.[32]

Besides language, historical memory is another major bone of contention in Ukraine. Ukrainians agree to disagree on many things when it comes to their present. But their disagreement rockets to the sky when asked about their attitudes toward the past. One may discern a certain tendency: the closer historical events are to the present, the stronger are regional differences in their evaluation. Ukrainians tend to agree on a positive evaluation of Kyivan Rus’ and the Ukrainian Cossacks. The Ukrainian Cossacks’ leader Bohdan Khmel’nytskyi is the most popular historical figure throughout all of Ukraine. But Ukrainians disagree strongly when it comes to an evaluation of the most recent developments, such as World War II or the Soviet legacy. There is, however, one important exception: Ukrainians, both in the West and in the East, are unanimous in their negative evaluation of Stalin and his acts of repression: they see him as the main villain in Ukrainian history, a number one anti-hero (See Table # ?.). And this is exactly what makes them different from Russians: a majority of the Russian population considers Stalin in rather positive terms, as a great state-builder, who turned the Soviet Union into a world superpower.[33]

Our most recent “L’viv-Donets’k” survey (made in 2001) revealed another significant change when it comes to the most recent history: both cities seem to converge in their positive attitude toward the proclamation of Ukrainian independence in 1991. This

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[27] Yaroslav Hrytsak, “National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of L’viv and Donets’k”, Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk, ed. Zvi Gitelman, Lubomyr Hajda, John-Paul Himka and Roman Solchanyk (Harvard Ukrainian Studies, vol. 22), p.?

[28] Roman Szporluk, “Reflections on Ukraine after 1994…,” passim.

[29] Ukrajins’ke suspil’stvo, 1992-2002, pp. 63-65.

[30] Oleksandr Hrytsenko, Valentyn Solodovnyk, Proroky, pirtaty, polityka i publika. Kul’turni industrii j derzhavna polityka v suchasnij Ukrajini (Kyiv: K.I.S., 2003), pp. 102-106; Tetiana Khoma, “Dity spal’nykh rayoniv”, Postup (L’viv), No. 32 (1341), February 10, 2004, p. 10.

[31] Halyna Huzio, “‘Diamantovyj’ rejtynh Vierky Serdiuchky”, Vysokyj Zamok (L’viv), December 2004, p. 6.

[32] Andrij Kurkov, “Pys’mennyk pochynajetsia ne z piaru, a z knyzhok”, Vysokyj Zamok (L’viv), December 25, 2003, p. 10.

[33] Sotsiologi ob otnoshenii rossijan k Iosifu Stalinu”, http://www.svoboda.org/hotnews/2003/03/04/42.asp?newstopic (downloaded March 5, 2003). Compare also Ukrainian materials that were published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Stalin’s death (March 2003): Vasyl Zilgalov, “Pro osoblyvu ‘liubov’ Yosyfa Stalina do ukrajintsiv (do 50-richchia z dnia smerti ‘bat’ka narodiv’, http://www.radiosvoboda.org/programs/history/2003/03/20030303154544.asp (downloaded March 5, 2003); Nina Khrushchova, “Stalin i pamiat’. Try typy stavlennia do mynuloho”, Den’, N 41 (March 5), 2003.

tendency can be traced also on an all-national level. The recent return of mass support of Ukrainian independence might be labeled as a most striking phenomenon. During the December 1991 referendum, 91% of those participating voted for the separation of Ukraine from Russia and the Soviet Union. If the referendum would be held again, the level of support would be around the same 90 percent. The surveys made on that subject reveal, however, that the reasons of this recurrent support are to be found not in Ukrainian politics, but in recent Russian developments. The way the Kremlin deals with Chechnia and more specifically the recent rise in terrorist acts in Moscow endorse the willingness of Ukrainians to keep their country away from Russia.[34] We received the same result when we interviewed focus groups in Donets'k in 1996. When asked what they consider the most important positive political development since Gorbachev came to power, a group of Russian speaking women chose the proclamation of Ukrainian independence. Their reasoning was simple but very persuasive: now that Ukraine is independent, they do not have to send their sons to Chechnia, as they sent them to Afghanistan under the Soviet Union.[35]

For our discussion, a focus on historical memory may be instructive in another way: it helps to reveal a certain tendency in mass attitudes in post-Soviet Ukraine. To illustrate this tendency, I would like to draw your attention to the most popular historical figures. Together, they make a very strange company, to say the least. As I mentioned above, the most popular historical figure in Ukraine is the Cossack revolutionary leader Bohdan Khmelnytskyi. He is followed by Peter the Great, the first Russian emperor and founding father of the Russian empire. Together, Khmelnytskyi and Peter the Great make rather a strange company. The strange things do not, however, end there. Khmelnytskyi and Peter the Great are followed by two other figures whose images in historical narratives were mutually exclusive. Mykhailo Hrushevsky was the dean of Ukrainian national historians and founding father of the moder Ukrainian state in 1917, and his name was banned through most of the Soviet period. He shares his popularity with Brezhnev, leader of the Communist Party. There is a reiteration of this pattern with the next pair of the most popular figures: Chornovil, a leading anti-Communist dissident, and Lenin. And list is closed by another Cossack leader, Ivan Mazepa, a historical figure who symbolizes an anti-Russian Ukrainian separatism. It has to be noted that the first four figures got more than half the vote, and it proves definitely that there were respondents who gave their simultaneous support for each of them.

The same is true for historical figures which provoke the most negative response: Stalin is followed by Gorbachev, whose name does not require a special introduction, and by Stepan Bandera, the leader of the most radical faction of the Ukrainian nationalist movement on the eve of and during World War II. Bandera's low ranking might reflect regional differences: he is a very popular historical figure in the West and an anti-hero in the East. It seems not to be the case with the other figures: here ambivalence in attitudes is an all-Ukrainian phenomenon. This is shown in responses to the question on Ukrainian geopolitical orientation that was included in the same survey: both geopolitical scenarios of the future of Ukraine – joining the European Union and union with Russia – get the same percentage of support, that is, 69 percent. So at least 20 percent wants simultaneously to go West and East.

A large part of Ukraine's population tends to accept mutually exclusive political concepts and ideas. In the words of Ievhen Holovakha, a Kyiv-based social researcher, "a person with an ambivalent type of consciousness, and being totally in a sound mind, can go simultaneously for an idea of a multiparty system and against new-born parties, for freedom of movement and for restrictions of the visa regime, for a free market economy and for state-regulated prices […], for independence of one's [national] state and for a restoration of the Soviet Union".[36] Or, as an anonymous Kyiv cab-driver confessed several years ago to an American political analyst: "I would like everything to be as it used to be before. I want the [Ukrainian] independence, and I want the Soviet Union, too, but without the communists. In any case, I will vote for Khmara [Khmara is a radical Ukrainian nationalist.], because he's a real guy [potomu, shto on nastojashchij muzhyk]".[37]

Therefore Samuel Huntington-like image of Ukraine divided into two antagonistic parts is not really tenable. Instead of an image of two Ukraines, one may speak about twenty-two, or, if you wish, two hundred twenty-two Ukraines. As the case of L'viv and Donets'k suggests, the differences between the two cities are not that crucial, and in a longer perspective, they seem to subside. To be sure, they are significantly different, but mostly they are still on the same side of the barricade. To simplify but not to distort the picture, one may say that while L'viv tends to occupy one pole, Donets'k is more to the center of the scale, and its attitudes are shrouded by ambivalence. The rest of Ukraine – which is, in fact, a major part of Ukraine – is posited somewhere in between.

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[34] V. I. Paniotto, V. Ye. Khmel'ko, "Dynamika stavlennia naselennia do nezalezhnosti Ukrajiny ta faktory, shcho jiji vyznachajut'" ("Dynamics of Population Attitudes toward Ukrainian Independence and Factors That Determine Them), I. Burakovski, ed., Desiat' rokiv sotsial'no-ekonomichnykh peretvoren' v Ukrajini: sproba neuperedzhenoji otsinky (Kyiv, 2002), pp. 23-28

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[36] E.I. Holovakha, "Postkomunisticheskoie razvitie Ukrainy i Rossii (sravnitel'nyi analiz sotsialno-politicheskikh protsesov)", in T. I. Zaslavskaia, ed., Kuda idet Rossiia? Sotsialnaia transformatsiia postsovetskogo prostranstva., T. 3, Mezhdunarodnyi simpozium 12-14 ianvaria 1996 g. (Moskva, 1996), p. 56.

[37] As quoted in -----------.

There is no way to present contemporary Ukraine in sharp contrasting lines and colors, in the style of Picasso or Modegliani. Another technique, the technique of impressionists, seems to be more in tune, with its blurred and different-sized patterns that overlap and superimpose each other and belie clear-cut identities.

One may foresee that in a long run, this ambivalence will gradually fade away. For the future of Ukraine, a critical issue is whether it would be replaced by a new Ukrainian identity. Results of our project leave a space for limited optimism: as data on Donets'k reveal, there seems to be a new momentum there. New attitudes and identities are emerging there that may be branded Ukrainian in political rather than in ethnic sense. And this tendency affects younger generation above all.[38]

Whether this tendency will prevail depends on many factors. One is the Russian factor, or rather to say, the messages that are sent from the Kremlin, and, more importantly, the “real politics” Moscow is engaged in, especially vis-È-vis Chechnia and the Muslim world. But of no lesser importance is the willingness of people in L’viv to perceive Donets’kites as their co-nationals, even though they do not speak Ukrainian in public and have a different vision of the Ukrainian past.[39] To simplify, there are two parties for whom a recognition of Ukrainian character of Donets'k would mean the defeat of their particular vision of what is Ukraine. Both, even though from totally different reasons, seeks to build a maximum distance between the Ukrainian core and unarticulated Russian speaking population. For one of them, the only possibly accepted solution is "either Ukrainian speaking Ukraine, or no Ukraine at all", while the other opts for "no Ukraine, even Russian speaking Ukraine".

And paradoxically as it may sound, it is exactly an ambivalence that may provide Ukraine with a unique opportunity: it opens a window for creative politicians to embark on and to strengthen that part of the ambivalent public opinion that corresponds to the interests of a long-term and sustained Ukrainian development without antagonizing the other part, thus avoiding the risk of a social confrontation.[40] In recent years, in the Ukrainian politicum there emerged a new type of an opposition, that unites former rivals, nationalists, liberals, socialists, and, until recently, communists. Such an union was unconceivable several year ago. This is again a new sign that Western-Eastern differences, at least at this stage, are residing. But this opposition also thrives on ambivalent attitudes of larger part of Ukrainian population that is united in its strong dislike of the current political regime. Mirroring this ambivalence, opposition leaders try to avoid taking sides on controversial issues that may antagonize a larger part of Ukrainian population.

Probably Victor Yuschenko, the leading opposition figure, is the best example of such tactics. One of his slogan sounds: "Donets'k+ L'viv= Victory".[41] In his public appearances and speeches, he is emphasizing a new concept, a concept of dignity, in a sense that Ukrainians, no matter what region they live in and what language they speak, deserve a better and dignified life.[42] He talks much, waves his hands in well-designed gesticulation, makes a wise face and nice appearances, to please both L'viv and Donets'k, especially the women part there -- and still, in his talks one can hardly hear a clear message. He is not articulated, as majority of Ukrainians is. Most of his talks are tailored along the formula "on the one hand"... "on the another hand". And such tactics contributes to his success: since the last two years, no other politician in Ukraine can match him in his popularity.

The Kuchma regime sees, however, that ambivalence zone as its own exclusive political domain. To undermine Yushchenko's popularity, Kuchma forces him to move out of the shadow and to articulate a clear-cut position. The party of power throws bones of discord into the opposition, by organizing discussion on historical events about which attitudes of nationalists, liberals, socialists and communists would necessary be split. Thus, it suggested to organize a celebration of the Pereialsav Treaty, an union of Ukraine and Russia in 1654, that irritates national democrats. Then it came with an idea of celebration of the last secretary of the Ukrainian Communist party, Volodymyr Shcherbytsky, who was responsible for repression against dissidents and Ukrainian cultural figure in 1970-1980s. Or, on another occasion, it started a discussion of a status of soldiers of nationalistic Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which, according to the Soviet paradigm, was nothing else but a bunch of Nazi collaborators. And as the most cynical act, during a Yushchenko visit to Donets'k in the October of last year, the local administration spread leaflets in the city that depicted Yushchenko dressed as a Gestapo officer. There is a special term coined "nashist" as to Yuschenko and his party, to allude to a similarity between Ukrainian nationalism ("nashism") and fascism.

Conclusions

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39 This point has been made by Roman Szporluk in his analysis of the 1994 elections in Ukraine, see:

40 E.I. Holovakha, op. cit., p. 51.

41 "Donets'k+L'viv=Peremoha", Bez Tsenzury. Hromads'ko-Politychnyi tyzhnevyk, N 34 (October 31-November 6, 2003), p. 1.

42 Victor Yushchenko, "Hidnist' demokratiyi", Krytyka, VII, 12 (74), December 2003, pp. 2-5.

I do not want to conclude with a discussion of how much nationalism Ukraine really needs. To my opinion, it is rather an issue of taste, and, as we all know, de ***gustibus non disputandem est***. For those, who have a good appetite for nationalism, there will be never enough of nationalism. And to the contrary, for those who suffers from allergy on nationalism, even a tiny dose will be too much.

I would claim that Ukraine has exactly a right amount of nationalism to provide a minimum of political stability in the country. The future of Ukraine is shrouded in ambivalence. But this ambivalence refers not to the mere fact of an existence of Ukraine as a nation-state. It refers to a question of what kind of a nation-state will it be. Probably, in no other time in its history Ukraine was so close to its chance to embark on a way of democratic and economic reforms. And since the break-up of the Soviet Union, it has been hardly so close to a danger of a final receding into an authoritarian rule of corrupted elite. The next presidential election in the fall of 2004 may be crucial for a dispersal of these clouds of ambivalence.

It goes without saying, that at this fruitful moment, nationalism has to be given its due. It has to be discussed and revised, to provide a base for a wider compromise of a national scale. But contrary to what has been written and said by many political analysts, I would say that nationalism is not a of crucial importance in the post-Soviet Ukraine. It is ***an*** issue. But it is not **the** issue. My contention is that it has been used, misused, and abused by numerous Ukrainian politicians to cover their lack of professionalism, integrity and, if you wish, imagination. By putting nationalism in the center of public discourses, they misplace the focus of discussion and use it as a smokescreen for their own poor performance.

To undermine those discourses, one has no choice but to move "beyond national". This is a new academic agenda that I am trying to formulate and to substantiate during the most recent period. I have a feeling that I am not alone in my endeavors. It is a kind of an academic flue that me and my colleagues are experiencing at this particular moment. There are some signs that we are going to survive it. And on that optimistic note let me finish my presentation.