



**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**A FRAGMENTED UKRAINE: PART OF THE WEST OR
APART FROM THE WEST?**

by

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December 2007

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE December 2007	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A Fragmented Ukraine: Part of the West or Apart from the West		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Michael Madsen		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.	
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution id unlimited		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) <p>This thesis examines the formation of Ukrainian national identity. The formation of this national identity will determine the pace and direction of Ukrainian modernization and unfolds in concert with the unification of Europe; the further progress of NATO enlargement and the revival of Russian nationalism at the end of the first decade of this century. The Ukrainian process is logically suggested by the country's neighbor: Poland. In the Polish model since 1989, national identity and a leading role in a uniting Europe sped the pace of reform.</p> <p>Modern-day Ukraine has all the attributes of a state except a consolidated national identity. The primary internal reasons for the lack of national identity are the interpretations of the history of the Ukrainian people, ethnic composition, and regional loyalties. Furthermore, the interference of Russia on ethnic, linguistic, regional, and economic levels exacerbates the present divisions in Ukrainian society.</p> <p>As this thesis reveals, the process of nation-building is intertwined with state-building. The United States and European Union member states have an important stake in the outcome of this process because it will not only significantly shape Ukraine's foreign policy orientation, but also influence the balance of power on Europe's eastern edge.</p>			
14. SUBJECT TERMS Ukraine, National Identity, Nationalism, Nation-building		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 81	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

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PART OF THE WEST OR APART FROM THE WEST?**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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This thesis examines the formation of Ukrainian national identity. The formation of this national identity will determine the pace and direction of Ukrainian modernization and unfolds in concert with the unification of Europe; the further progress of NATO enlargement and the revival of Russian nationalism at the end of the first decade of this century. The Ukrainian process is logically suggested by the country's neighbor: Poland. In the Polish model since 1989, national identity and a leading role in a uniting Europe sped the pace of reform.

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As this thesis reveals, the process of nation-building is intertwined with state-building. The United States and European Union member states have an important stake in the outcome of this process because it will not only significantly shape Ukraine's foreign policy orientation, but also influence the balance of power on Europe's eastern edge.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

The present work treats the character of Ukrainian nationalism in the recent past and its implications for the making of US and NATO security and defense policy. Generally, scholars view the development of a nation-state as a pragmatic or at least rational process.¹ By the same token, the irrational aspects of nationalism and national identity, as a facet of nation-state development, have been an area of theoretical conflict, when not a matter of abject lack of interest, on the part of scholars in North America and western Europe.² Indeed, before 1989, “nationalism” and “national identity” were vulgar words in the minds of many observers, who associated such notions with fascism. Similarly, “nationalism” struck scholars from the 1970s and 1980s as a relic of the past, of little contemporary interest save to those who believed that fascism endured in the military industrial complex of NATO (a subject too broad for this inquiry).

This summary dismissal of nationalism’s relevance itself became passé after 1989, when two tracks of European identity (and therefore policy) arose and occasionally collided: the advance of supra-national ideals in western Europe and the revival of nationalism in central and eastern Europe in the formation of nation-states, especially post-communist state-building and foreign-policy development. That is to say, nearly all the issues facing Ukraine in foreign policy, economics, and democracy are rooted in the questions of national identity conceived in classical terms that easily can be interpreted through the experience of the 21st century. In other words, there is a strong element of continuity in the romantic, irrational and potential explosive political power of the national idea in conflict with the supra-national strivings of the European past and present.³

¹ Martin Van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35.

² Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 37.

³ For greater discussion of the national idea, see: Ivan T. Berend, Linda Colley, and Hagen Schulze.

Thus, the overall goal of this thesis is to explore the process of Ukrainian national-identity formation. The formation of this national identity will determine the pace and direction of Ukrainian modernization and unfolds in concert with the unification of Europe, the further progress of NATO enlargement and the revival of Russian nationalism at the end of the first decade of this century. Contrary to the Polish experience, which was able to develop a national identity from within, the situation in Ukraine is different for both internal and external reasons. Internally, the differences are not only language, a more heterogeneous society than Poland, but more importantly are derived from a lack of historic nation-state experience and a lack of collective memory. Externally, the interference of Russia on ethnic, linguistic, regional, and economic levels exacerbates the present divisions in Ukrainian society.

Additionally, the question of EU membership had been one of the few nationally unifying issues in modern Ukrainian history. Most non-Communist political parties support EU membership because of the benefits it would bring in terms of democratization and improved standard of living.⁴ Thus, EU membership is not as divisive an issue as potential NATO membership. Indeed, among the populace, NATO membership is perceived differently than EU membership. Decades of Soviet propaganda against NATO, coupled with NATO's intervention in Kosovo as well as the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, continue to cause regional divisions over attitudes towards NATO membership.

The Ukrainian process is logically suggested by one of the country's neighbors: Poland. In the Polish model since 1989, national identity and a comprehension of its place in a uniting Europe determined the pace of reform. This reform helped gain Poland's entry into NATO and the European Union. It begins with a notable national unity—or unifying nationalism. Granted the community of fate that binds especially western Ukraine to Poland—not least as a result of a common Habsburg legacy of multi-nationalism and the heritage of the nationalities of these two formidable former empires—then the record of the Polish experience offers insight into the tumultuous

⁴ Taras Kuzio, "Is Ukraine Part of Europe's Future?" *Washington Quarterly* 29 (2006): 90.

political development of Ukraine in the last five years, even granted that the circumstances facing Ukraine are more conflicted and burdensome than those that faced the Poles from 1989 until 2004.⁵ Among other things, the Ukrainians have not yet fashioned a unitary (or unifying) national program on which to build its international profile.

B. GENERAL HYPOTHESIS

The currently forming, post-communist national identity of Ukraine is rooted in the country's unhappy history in the twentieth century.⁶ In the former USSR (of which Ukraine was a component republic), research into questions of national identity was forbidden as part of communist doctrine.⁷ Moreover, issues of national identity were taboo subjects in Soviet social sciences, suffused as they were in the obligatory "internationalism" of the "fraternity of socialist nations." To this day, Ukraine remains dominated by the reductionist spirit of Marxism,⁸ as such the full range of national-identity research is not taking place in the manner necessary for the country to come to grips with the past—let alone to fashion a non-weaponized, scholarly basis for policy that avoids the demagoguery that has reasserted itself in Europe and Russia with troubling implications for the health of democracy, particularly in the former Soviet bloc. As a result, Ukraine has still not developed a workable national identity since independence in 1991.⁹

Three related questions arise from Ukraine's pursuit of an enduring national identity. First, what are the mechanisms for the formation of national identity? Poland

⁵ See George Sanford, Ilya Prizel, and Aleksander Gieysztor, et al.

⁶ See Anatol Lieven, Bohdan Harasymiw, Ivan L. Rudnytsky, Alexander J. Motyl, Peter J. Potichnyj, et al.

⁷ Volodymyr Zviglyanich, "Ukrainian Identity and Challenges of Modernity," *The Jamestown Foundation* 5 (1999). 23.

⁸ Theoretically, Marxism was an example of reductionism. Marxism reduced the assortment of history, politics, ethnicity, culture into a few categorical pairs: bourgeoisie-proletariat, private-public ownership, etc. Marxism-Leninism provided ideological guidance to Ukraine's political elites for over 70 years. Numerous attempts were made to destroy Ukrainian national identification other than part of the Soviet working class.

⁹ See Mark von Hagen, Anatol Lieven, Bohdan Harasymiw, Ivan L. Rudnytsky, Alexander J. Motyl, Peter J. Potichnyj, et al.

and Ukraine share common Slavic roots, extensive cultural cross-pollination, similar geographic locations, and similar religious challenges, yet they have had obviously different successes at developing a national identity because of the specific circumstances of their awakening as modern nations as well as their process of extraction from the northern courts from the mid-nineteenth century until the recent past. Second, why, with similar challenges to overcome, has Poland been more successful than Ukraine at developing a modern national identity? Finally, and most important, especially in light of the recent parliamentary elections on September 30, 2007 in Ukraine, what is the likely direction of Ukraine's development based on national identity and what are the implications for the making of U.S. security policy granted the turmoil in the European scene in the final years of the present decade?

C. SIGNIFICANCE

It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. In the world today, the fundamental character of regimes matters as much as the distribution of power among them. The goal of our statecraft is to help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.¹⁰

The basis for the *National Security Strategy*, as articulated here, was suggested by the Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington: "Democratic states have commonalities with other democratic states and hence do not fight each other."¹¹ While the current global counterinsurgency being waged by the United States is focused on the Middle East, the former Soviet Republics also represent a challenging proving ground for democracy, particularly in view of the nature of nationalism in central and eastern Europe as visible in the former Yugoslavia and the latent power of integral nationalism in such places as the Balkans, Hungary, Poland and further east. In other words, post-communist

¹⁰ *National Security Strategy of the United States*. March 2006. (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>), accessed 15 August 2007.

¹¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 34.

Ukraine either will get nationalism right or will come off the democratic rails altogether, with enduring ramifications for European and U.S. security and foreign policy.

In the event, the appearance of an independent Ukraine in 1991 was unexpected by political analysts and scholars who had adhered to notions of the 1970s and 1980s that nationalism was a spent force from the early twentieth century. This phenomenon derived mostly from the lack of a well-defined Ukrainian identity, which made the land area now known as Ukraine an unlikely candidate for statehood and revival as a nation. Additionally, Ukraine's statehood also came as a surprise to many observers because of the woeful lack of knowledge of Ukraine and its history, both internally and externally;¹² students of the old “second world” had grown accustomed to thinking of Ukraine as a component of the Soviet Union and, thus, expected Ukraine to remain dependent, if not fully integrated within the new Russia. Ukraine’s unexpected independence in 1991 magnified the problems associated with a state possessing a weak national identity, further weakened by the nation’s non-existent presence in international institutions and among power elites. Moreover, with Ukraine’s political, economic, and security issues, an extended phase of friction with its neighbors has unfolded that can be addressed best by integration in Euro-Atlantic security institutions while simultaneously somehow mollifying Russian irredentism.

For Moscow, Ukraine is the single most valuable territory of the former Soviet empire for reasons that defy any reasonable calculus of policy. Russian ethnicity can trace its roots to Ukraine (or at least the medieval Kievan Rus, which fostered the eastern side of European development after Rome and Byzantium decline a millennium or so ago), and Ukraine today remains home to more than 10 million ethnic Russians. Additionally, Ukraine possessed some of the Soviet Union’s few warm water ports, the bulk of Russia’s infrastructure connection to the West, and most importantly, 1000 miles of buffer from NATO. With Ukraine in Russia’s sphere of influence, a Russian resurgence is possible—and events of 2006 and 2007 since Putin’s speech to the Wehrkund meeting in Munich of early 2007 suggest such a possibility. Conversely,

¹² Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 45.

without Ukraine, Russia as a global power is unfeasible, and its role as a regional power is no longer guaranteed.¹³ For all these reasons, Russia has much of its future invested in a particular outcome of the Ukrainian national development.

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe (second only to Russia); as a potentially prominent power in its own right, Ukraine will have to decide whether to continue to pursue a tumultuous relationship linked somehow with Russia or attempt to “return to Europe” as Poland has done. However, this return to Europe cannot be accomplished until a single national identity is embraced by the several competing sub-groups within the present nation-state.

D. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

This research will explore reasons that Ukraine has failed to develop a consistent national identity 16 years after independence, while Poland, albeit not a former Soviet territory, but with similar background as a rigorously cultivated part of the Soviet Union’s dependent buffer to the west, was able to develop a strong concept of national identity that led ultimately to a “return to Europe.” Poland is now a member of NATO and the European Union, while Ukraine vacillates between Soviet-era diplomatic habits and isolation.

This thesis focuses on Ukraine and Poland because, despite their common Slavic roots and cultural cross-influence, they represent vastly different political entities. At the same time, they share a turbulent history marked by a lack of institutions to anchor their national identities, making them each reliant on their collective memory. At various points throughout their respective (and collective) histories, Ukraine and Poland both were absorbed into larger political empires. This lack of freedom meant that ideas of identity were never fully developed, even in the so-called golden age of nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The contemporary states of Poland and Ukraine had little to no collective memory to draw on once the Iron Curtain fell—allowing both countries to modernize, assuming they could establish their national

¹³ “Geopolitical Diary: The Grab for Ukraine,” Strategic Forecasting, Inc. April 4, 2007. (https://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/read_article.php?id=286764&id=286764&camp), accessed 4 April 2007.

identities as a prerequisite. Comparative analysis of Poland and Ukraine will help isolate the development of a national identity and illuminate factors that contribute to a successful national identity.

Ukraine and Poland are ideal case studies of intra- and interstate comparisons and their relationship to national identity. Medieval Poland was a multinational empire that, in the early modern era, disappeared as anything but a regional designation for 123 years. Yet even from this experience of national non-existence, partition, invasion and dependence, Poland has emerged since the collapse of communism as a state with a strong, consolidated national identity. (Some of Poland's incipient national unity owes a perverse debt to the successive redrawings of its borders and its various masters' racial policies, which left a particularly homogenous people in the Poland of its 1949—and 1990—boundaries.) On the other hand, while Ukraine also went from preeminence in a multinational empire to subject nation within later, stronger regimes--excepting a few short years of its history—a consolidated national identity remains elusive for Ukraine. Post-1990 Ukraine enjoys no such ready-made coherence, even at the geographical level. Agricultural Western Ukraine is composed of Greek-Catholic Ukrainian-speaking ethnic Ukrainians. The Eastern half of Ukraine is industrial, composed mainly of Eastern Orthodox, Russian-speaking ethnic Russians. These social, economic, and geographic divisions derive from Western Ukraine's longer association with Polish and Austro-Hungarian rule and Eastern Ukraine's much longer association with Russian/Soviet rule.¹⁴

E. THESIS ORGANIZATION

The following comparative examination shows how history, culture, and ethnicity affect perceptions of national identity—and thus condition foreign policies—in Ukraine and Poland. Chapter II provides a literature review that focuses on critical research on post-Soviet national identity in general, and on Ukraine and Poland specifically. Chapter II also outlines the context in which to compare the two states. Chapters III and IV are

¹⁴ Stephen Shulman, "The Cultural Foundations of Ukrainian National Identity," *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 22 (1999): 1011-36.

the main chapters of this thesis and delve deeper into the national identity issue in Poland and Ukraine, respectively. Each of these two chapters focuses on the foundations of national identity—notably history, geography, linguistics, religion, culture, ethnicity, and economy. The goal is to determine the role and significance of these different factors on the development of national identity in each country and ascertain the reasons for successes or failures in each case. Finally, Chapter V summarizes the major findings of the research with respect to the major research question: national identity development and the factors that contribute most to success for failure of that development. It also addresses policy implications for the United States in terms of achieving and maintaining positive relations with Ukraine.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. STATES, NATIONS, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

National identity is a complex concept that comprises many different components—ethnic, cultural, territorial, historical, and economic—that often represent bonds that bind a people together. As such, the multi-dimensional notion of national identity clearly sets it apart from the idea of the state. Here we see the first of many inconsistencies in the literature focused on nations, states, and national identity. In conventional culture, it is commonplace for *nation* and *state* to be used interchangeably, despite the significant differences between them. More precisely, the *state* refers to public institutions, differentiated from other social institutions and exercising sovereignty within a given territory; the *nation* refers to a cultural, political, or historical bond uniting a community.¹⁵

In addition to the explanation of the state and nation, Anthony Smith develops the fundamental features of national identity:

- A historic territory or homeland.
- Common myths and historical memories.
- A common, mass public culture.¹⁶

These features are examined in this thesis to determine which are necessary and critical for Ukraine and which have remained undeveloped. Smith suggests that nations and nationalism cannot be completely understood simply as a form of politics or an ideology. Smith argues that nations and national identity must be treated as a cultural phenomenon also. This task is to balance these dynamics.

¹⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 14.

B. THEORIES ON THE EMERGENCE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

A conventional line of thought is that the nation-state is first born in the political awakening of a group of people, or the galvanization through ethnic repression or professed superiority of an ethnic group into a uniform national identity, finally empowering that group with a state of its own. This very general idea provides a common theme and point of departure for general trends developed by many political scientists in the study of national identity: the primordialists and the constructivists.

1. Primordialism Theory

Primordialists argue that the demand for a nation-state and separatism arises from the awakening of ethnic self-awareness.¹⁷ Primordialism is the argument that nations are grown from within and are a natural phenomenon. The implication is that nations cannot be constructed, but rather nations and national identities are like plants that spring up, keeping with in their own specific divine laws.¹⁸ Additionally, primordial attachments rest on perception, cognition, and belief.¹⁹

2. Constructivism Theory

Constructivists argue that the process of national identity formation entails differences between ethnic groups becoming more intense and gaining more symbolic significance, resulting in a desire for group solidarity.²⁰ Thus, constructivism suggests that ethnicity can be used by political elites to further their own agendas by mobilizing large portions of the population to support goals clad in ethnic or nationalist trappings. Constructivists start their analysis of national identity development from a modern standpoint; they suggest the nation is a malleable, modern cultural artifact.

¹⁷ Philip G. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 22.

¹⁸ Primordialism can be traced philosophically to the works of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). He linked national identity and people, not ethnically, but by language and literature. Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations, and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 156-157.

¹⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 21.

²⁰ Roeder, 22-23.

Constructivists also see nations as the result of struggle and suggest that modernization and industrialization drew old isolated groups into larger societies. Furthermore, in these societies, the political elites orchestrated the transition from isolated loyalty-based identities into tradition-based organizations as part of a larger social structure.

There is no consensus among scholars to support either theory as the best model to explain national identity formation. Alexander Motyl suggests that the centerpiece of the constructivist approach—the proposition that national identity is constructed by elites acting in a self-consciously constructivist manner—is at best highly problematic, especially as elites mobilize populations to support their struggle for power.²¹

In his *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict In and After the Soviet Union*, Valery Tishkov argues that there are several institutions, interest groups, and political entrepreneurs struggling for power. Often these political entrepreneurs are interested in mobilizing the people by highlighting ethnic or nationalistic issues. Tishkov demonstrates that the Russian (and Soviet) social science tradition is heavily dominated by the primordial approach with respect to the interpretation of ethnicity or nationality. Ethnicity is seen as a given; an ethnic group as a social phenomenon. Even post-Soviet scholars have remained strongly attached to this primordial vision. Following many Western scholars Tishkov argues for a more constructivist approach: ethnicity as a means employed by a mass in an effort to gain material or political advantages in the social arena and ethnicity based on academic and political myths that are created, propagated, and often manipulated by elites seeking recognition and power.²²

Despite the differences in the explanation, both models above contribute some helpful generalizations; neither the primordialists nor the constructivists should be wholly rejected or accepted. The helpful generalizations are:

1. A sense of belonging to a larger group can evolve over time, whether it is organic or constructed.

²¹ Alexander J. Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 74.

²² Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict In and After the Soviet Union* (London: Sage, 1997). 55.

2. Historical memories based on actual events or myths strengthen national identity.
3. A historical homeland is critical to national identity. The actual location of this homeland is also as important as the homeland itself.

From these generalizations, we can generate a working definition of a nation as a group united by a common mass culture, sharing a historic homeland or territory, with shared memories and myths. Thus a national identity is multifaceted and cannot be reduced to a single dynamic element. This definition also sets the nation apart from the state. In fact, in recent history only about 10 percent of states could claim to be true nation-states in the sense that the state's boundaries coincide with the nation's and that the total population of the state share a single ethnic culture.²³ In the case of modern Poland, the boundaries of the state coincide with boundaries of the nation, and the total population is about 98 percent Polish.²⁴ Whereas the boundaries of modern Ukraine do not coincide with the Ukrainian nation, and the total population includes almost 25 percent of non-Ukrainian ethnic groups.²⁵

The generalizations listed above also lead to the development of a third, more moderate theory to help explain national identity development.

3. Ethnosymbolism Theory

These critiques of primordialism and constructivism give the basis for a third theory, a popular "middle way." This in-between theory is championed by Anthony Smith, who, following the Hegelian dialectic, proposes a synthesis of primordialist and constructivist views, now commonly referred to as ethnosymbolism. According to Smith, in addition to the fundamental features of national identity listed above, Smith also argues that nations are formed through the inclusion of the whole populace, not only the elites;

²³ Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7 (1978): 378-400.

²⁴George Sanford, *Overcoming the Burden of History in Polish Foreign Policy*, (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 197.

²⁵ All Ukrainian Population Census, 2001. <http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/> (accessed 15 October 2007).

constitution of legal and political institutions; nationalist ideology, international recognition and drawing up of borders. Smith stresses the importance of treating the history of collective cultural identities over time.

Taken together, these theories have the potential to clarify the successes and failures of national identity development in general and to provide a deeper understanding to the problem of national identity in state building in Ukraine and Poland. The major debate between primordialists and constructivists falls into place with a distinction that national identity is more complex than ethnicity. Ethnosymbolism points to ways in which early collective memories may be related to modern nations while allowing for certain historical discontinuities (such as the disappearance of the Polish home land for over a century).

C. NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POST-COMMUNIST AREAS

There is a significant literature focused on ethnic issues, national identity, and the influence of these issues on the post-communist countries of central and eastern Europe. Well-known contributors include such scholars as Valerie Bunce, Taras Kuzio, Anthony Smith, Alexander Motyl, Ilya Prizel, Roman Szporluk, George Y. Shevelov, Mikhail Molchanov, Andrew Wilson, and Volodymyr Zviglyanich. Most works by these authors was accomplished after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and acknowledged the evolving world order. They suggest a security vacuum, especially in the democratization process and formation of market economies, in the absence of the previously relatively stable bi-polar world of the Cold War

Valerie Bunce suggests that scholars make national identity a key aspect of the study of democratic transition in post-communist Europe. However, her call to her fellow scholars fell on deaf ears.²⁶ Five years later, Taras Kuzio echoes Bunce's position in *Politics*, by stating that few scholars of post-communist transition have sought to develop a framework that includes national identity.²⁷ When discussing post-communist

²⁶ Valerie Bunce, "Should Transitologist Be Grounded?" *Slavic Review* 54 (1995): 111-127.

²⁷ Taras Kuzio, "Transition in Postcommunist States: Triple or Quadruple?" *Politics* 21 (2001): 101-110.

transition, scholars often only address the problem of creating a market economy simultaneously with democratization, rarely do they discuss nation-building.

Andrew Wilson began to fill a scholarly gap and examined Ukrainian national identity, arguing that Ukrainian national identity was never able to emerge as a mass phenomenon with lasting political impact.²⁸ Modern Ukraine inherited from the Soviet Union regional, historical, ethnic, linguistic and religious differences within the Ukrainian state boundary that severely limit the potential for a modern Ukrainian national identity to emerge and created conditions for a sharp polarization in Ukrainian society.

For all the scholarly work on national identity generally, particular questions of national identity in the modernization of former Soviet states remain a developing field. Although there is diverse body of work on nationalism, literature on the role of national identity in the formation of how a state defines itself and interacts with other state actors remains in an embryonic state as the scholars who study each components rarely cross pollinate. Ilya Prizel notes that sociologists and political scientists who study national identity rarely venture into foreign affairs; conversely, historians rarely follow the process of national identity over a long period of time, except nationalistic outbursts that result in catastrophic events.²⁹

The focus here falls on root causes of the development of a national identity, factors that lead to success or failure. Finally, this thesis identifies which national identity development factors are lacking in Ukraine, why they are lacking and practical implications to political problems that may result.

²⁸Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁹ Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7.

III. POLISH CASE STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION

Certainly in the context of an emergent central European democracy with a solid and functional national identity, Poland provides a paradigmatic case, with special urgency for Ukraine.

Poland lies in central Europe between Russia and Germany; this location, with no geographic obstacles to east-west transit, contributed to an especially turbulent history. Its situation between the Carpathian Mountains and the Baltic Sea also explains Poland being influenced by ten centuries of major migrations and conflicts as well as economic and social upheavals experienced in Europe since the Middle Ages. Poland took shape near the middle of the tenth century. Its golden age occurred in the sixteenth century. Thereafter, the strengthening of the gentry and internal disorders weakened the empire. The loss of independence and partitioning of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria from 1795 to 1918—as well as the “fourth partition” under Nazi occupation and genocide during World War II—contributed to massive population shifts and political boundary changes. Today, as a result, internal ethnic cleavages have ended, allowing Poland to emerge by the 1990s as a relatively homogeneous state.³⁰

Although one of the oldest states in Europe, Poland of today is in many ways a new nation.³¹ First, Poland has very little of what can be called a “usable past” that can be a basis for a new international role and national identity.³² Through all the crises in Poland’s past, no institutions persist on which to anchor a Polish national identity. Thus, the national identity depended on the collective memories of elites as well as history and literature—a stylized but also malleable take on the national past.

³⁰ Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 252-253.

³¹ Aleksander Gieysztor, et al., *History of Poland* (Warszawa: PWN-Polish Scientific Publishers, 1979), 23.

³² Tony Judt, “The Unmastered Future: What prospects for Eastern Europe,” *Tikkun* 5 (1990): 11-18.

Due to Poland's turbulent history, it developed as, or as a part of, a multi-national empire. As a result, the elites of Poland developed an identity that was linked to this multi-national empire.³³ Not until the end of World War II did this collective memory spread beyond the social and political elites to perpetuate an idea of Poland. Finally, the idea of a Polish national identity spread to the masses, but was not fully implemented until the emergence of an independent Poland in the 1990s.

B. *POLANIE*: NATIONAL ORIGINS

Poland's quest for its place in the world following the collapse of the Soviet Union has engaged Poles at all social and political levels—key to Smith's ethnosymbolism and the overall success of the Polish example.

To be sure, the evolution of Poland's national identity is complicated by its geography and geographic location. At different times in its past, Poland has been known as the “bulwark of Christianity,” the “Western bastion of the Slavs,” or the “bridge between East and West.”³⁴ Over the millennium since Poland took shape, the territory ruled by Poland has shifted as greatly as its role. However, most scholars agree that a people called *Polanie*³⁵ settled in an area that became the core of the Polish homeland bounded by the Oder river in the West to the Vistula River in the east and south to the Carpathian mountains.

Authority over this territory was exercised by hereditary rulers; a successful dynasty was established by a somewhat mythical individual known as Piast. Under the leadership of the Piast dynasty, the *Polanie* had withstood the decades of onslaught from the Imperial armies. Moreover, by the later half of the tenth century, in an attempt to gain support against the Roman Empire, prince Mieszko, duke of the Slavic tribe of *Polanie*, converted to Christianity and married a Czech princess in 966. This act had tremendous political implications, as Poland officially appeared on the Christian

³³ Prizel, 2-7.

³⁴ Gieysztor, et al., 17.

³⁵ *Polanie* – commonly defined as a group of people that were “dwellers of the field or plain.” The *polanie* will be discussed in greater detail in next section.

European maps and is generally recognized as the birth of Poland. Mieszko had built Poland into one of the strongest powers in Eastern Europe.³⁶

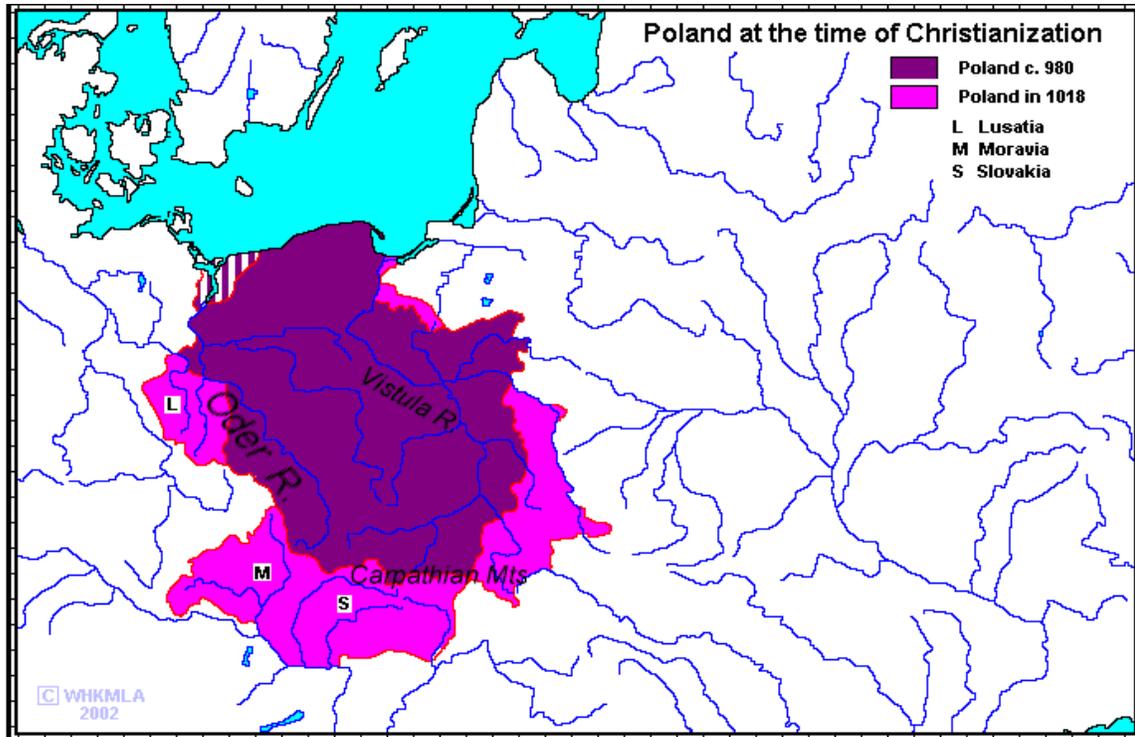


Figure 1. Poland, 980-1018³⁷

By 997, Mieszko's son, Boleslaw the Brave, built on his father's achievements and united all the provinces that eventually came to make up the traditional territory of Poland. Boleslaw the Brave united the Slavs in Lusatia, Moravia, and Slovakia into one large state to meet the threat of encroachment by German feudal lords on Poland's western border (Fig 1.). However, even at this early stage, due to a lack of a unified identity, these Slav lands were only briefly under his control. Throughout his life, Boleslaw implored Rome for a royal crown. Finally, in 1025 he was crowned King of

³⁶ Johnson, 22.

³⁷ Map downloaded from WHKMLA Historic Atlas:
(<http://www.zum.de/whkmla/histatlas/eceurope/poland9801018.gif>) accessed 10 October 2007.

Poland with the Pope's blessing. This coronation was an important step on the road to a consolidated Polish identity as a true kingdom with sovereign territory.³⁸

Boleslaw the Brave died shortly after being crowned, and Poland fell into a period of crisis. Although there were occasionally strong energetic rulers that were able to fight off the German invasions from the West, the earlier stronger kingdom of Boleslaw the Brave disintegrated into a number of smaller feudal organizations, ruled by local Piast princes.³⁹ During this period, the city of Krakow became important and possession of that city was perceived as necessary to rule over the whole territory. Furthermore, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the contending petty duchies were continuously threatened by expansionist policies of German lords, but more importantly, virtually all this territory was devastated by the Mongol incursion into Europe and this area fell under Mongol bondage.

This period also saw one of the most fateful events in Polish history in 1226 when a regional prince invited the crusading Order of Teutonic Knights to Poland. The Teutonic Knights were allowed to settle in an area northeast of Krakow in exchange for protection from raids by pagan Prussians. However, the protector presently became the threat; by 1288, the Teutonic Knights conquered the Prussians and secured their foothold in the area, now posing a threat to the territory of Poland.

The lack of a consolidated Polish identity could not have gone on much longer without permanent implications. Faced by threats on all sides, King Wladyslaw Lokietek managed to consolidate the core state together centered on Krakow. One of his other great achievements was to defeat the Teutonic Order. With the support of the German Empire, the Teutonic Knights dramatically increased their holdings, but when their attention turned south, the Polish forces under Lokietek defeated them. This victory brought present-day Belarus and Ukraine into the Polish sphere of influence.

By the late fourteenth century, the Polish King Casimir died without leaving an heir. It was finally agreed that his nephew, Louis, Hungarian of the d'Anjou dynasty,

³⁸ Stanford, 3.

³⁹ Gieysztor, et al., 19.

would be crowned king of Poland. His rule was brief and he left only two young daughters. The younger daughter, Jadwiga, was proclaimed Queen of Poland and married by arrangement to Jogaila, the Lithuanian ruler. This event had the result of joining Hungary, Poland, and Lithuania into semi-permanent union, which became known as the Jagiellonian dynasty.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries marked the height of the Jagiellonian dynasty—considered a ‘Golden Age’ by most Poles.⁴⁰ This dynasty proved beneficial to Poles and Lithuanians, who comprised one of the most powerful empires in Europe. At its peak, this empire controlled territory of the present day Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland (Fig 2.). This regional concept of Poland has remained powerfully imprinted on the Polish collective memory.⁴¹



Figure 2. Poland, 15th century⁴²

⁴⁰ Stanford, 4.

⁴¹ Johnson, 46-49.

⁴² Map downloaded from The University of Texas Libraries:
(http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/europe_15th_colbeck.jpg) accessed 10 October 2007.

Polish independence ended in a series of partitions by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The First Partition took place in 1772 when Frederick the Great consolidated Prussia by annexing the Polish territories between East Prussia and Western Pomerania (Fig 3.). The Austrians seized the southwestern slice of Poland, including Krakow. Catherine the Great of Russia annexed the northeast.



Figure 3. First Partition of Poland, 1772⁴³

The Second Partition occurred in 1793 when Catherine the Great mobilized her armies against Poland. Poland sought an alliance with Frederick the Great's successor, but the Prussians instead seized more Polish territory (Fig 4.). Poland's final attempt to maintain independence was a result of a sense of nationalistic winds blowing across Europe. The leader of this movement, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, understood that an independence movement had to come from a unified national identity. However, the combined forces of Russia and Prussia were too strong, resulting in the Third Partition of Poland in 1795 (Fig 5.).⁴⁴ The state of Poland disappeared from the map not to return until 1918, a period of 123 years.

⁴³ Map downloaded from The Encyclopedia Britannica:
(<http://www.britannica.com/eb/thumb?id=3555>) accessed 10 October 2007.

⁴⁴ Gieysztor, et al., 325-332.



Figure 4. Second Partition of Poland, 1793⁴⁵



Figure 5. Third Partition of Poland, 1795⁴⁶

It has often been pointed out that the key feature of the partition period was that the Polish nation not only survived but became culturally and socially stronger despite

⁴⁵ Map downloaded from The Encyclopedia Britannica: (<http://www.britannica.com/eb/thumb?id=3555>) accessed 10 October 2007.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

the loss of independence.⁴⁷ The quest for national independence was linked with Romanticism in Polish culture such as the music of Chopin and the literature of Joachim Lelewel, who developed powerful national myths which sustained Polish national identity and were instilled in Polish children. The image of a defeated Poland among nations, whose suffering would be rewarded with independence, reinforced the notion that the Polish nation represented civilization against eastern barbarianism. The tendency for Poles to see their nation and society as a culture of glorious defeat (similar to the World War II period and communist period) has only recently been eased with the modernization involving full sovereignty and democratization after 1989.

Poland regained its independence in 1918 only to be overrun by Germany and the Soviet Union in World War II. In 1939, Germany and Russia signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov non-aggression pact which secretly provided for the dismemberment of Poland. Following World War II, the Yalta agreement stipulated free elections, but those held in 1947 were controlled by the Communist Party. The Polish government-in-exile existed until 1990, and although its influence was degraded, it served as the custodian of the independent Polish identity.

Over its 1000 year history, Poland has been a loose patchwork of feudal duchies, a consolidated ethnically Slav-based federation, a multi-national empire, eradicated from the map, and an oppressed state. However, through that turbulent history, the Polish national identity persisted. Anthony Smith argues that it is the dislocation of the elites (perhaps nobility in the early history of Poland) and creation of a national identity based in the masses.⁴⁸ The Poles outside the nobility were considered part of the Polish national fabric and the concept of Polish national identity became a persisting nineteenth century concept, ensuring the nation's rebirth.⁴⁹ Thus, the ten centuries of geographic

⁴⁷ Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975).

⁴⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holms & Meier, 1983).

⁴⁹ University at Buffalo, State University of New York, "History of Poland" <http://www.info-poland.buffalo.edu/> (accessed October 2007).

turmoil and territorial upheaval, indeed, even the loss of a physical Polish state all contributed to strengthening the Polish national identity. The concept of Polish national identity lived on in the Polish people.

C. COMMON MYTHS AND HISTORICAL MEMORIES

In addition to historic territory, Anthony Smith suggests that a national identity is a result of how it interprets its own history, beliefs, and perceptions.

1. Myths and Memories

Beliefs, perceptions, and memories inherently develop over time. Since the collective memories of societies are inconsistent and selective, using collective memory to define the national identity is dependent to whom in society maintains the collective memory. Indeed, after Poland lost its independence, the key ingredient in the formation of Polish national identity was the creation of a national myth to reconstitute an independent Polish state.⁵⁰ Of particular importance to the successful development of Polish national identity are myths about memories of homeland origin and symbols.

2. Origins of Poland

The true origins of Poland have been lost in the mists of time, but several legends tell of the country's beginning. A mythologized version tells of three brothers, Lech, Czech, and Rus, each set off in a different direction with their tribe. Lech goes to the west. As he came to a clearing in a forest, he noticed a nest of a white eagle. The legend goes that as the eagle was flying over their heads; it spread its wings and soared to the heavens. As the eagle was soaring, a ray of sunshine from the setting red sun illuminated the eagle's wings so they appeared tipped in gold, contrasting with the pure white of the rest of the bird. Lech decided to settle there with his tribe. He named the place Gniezno, while the followers became known as *Polanie*, which means "field dwellers." The eagle became a symbol of his tribe. To this day a white eagle against a red background is the official emblem of Poland (Fig 6.).

⁵⁰ Prizel, 54-55.



Figure 6. The Polish Eagle⁵¹

This myth is critical for the persistence of the Polish national identity because it gives a common, honorable origin to the Polish people, but it also gives a powerful symbol to rally around and with which to identify. Also, nations derive their sense of identity from a myth of common ancestry, which is reflected in this Polish myth. Moreover, it is also interaction with the outside world, primarily the acceptance or rejection of “the other” that allows a nation to develop and maintain a sense of national uniqueness.

3. Rejection of “The Other”

In addition to the creation of national myths, another key ingredient in the formation of Polish national was a sense of grievance against “the other.”⁵² Nationalism scholars argue that a common cultural or constitutional bond is the primary source of

⁵¹ Image downloaded from The Polish Institute: (<http://www.polishinstitute.org.il/English/info.htm>) accessed 10 October 2007.

⁵² Prizel, 54-55.

national identity, but often it is conflict with an outside power that drives national identity development. While armed conflict is the most obvious contact with “the other,” it is a sustained contact with other groups that stirs this awareness. Often it is recognition of this contact that is used by historians to build or sustain a national identity by contrast. For example, the myth of a beautiful Polish queen who chose to kill herself rather than marry a German or the myth of trumpeter watchman who alerted the Poles of coming Mongol danger.

a. Wanda, the Polish Queen

A Polish queen named Wanda, was very beautiful with wisdom and understanding far beyond her years. With all her qualities, her beauty and her wisdom, many princes sought to marry her, but Wanda would accept none of them, for she had not yet found one who was pleasing to her and who would help her to rule wisely and well over her beloved country. Poland was dear to Wanda, above all else, and she spared no effort to make her people happy. She waged war against aggressors who tried to invade her country, herself leading her soldiers in the battlefield.

Wanda's fame spread far and wide, and even a German prince, named Rytigier, heard of her beauty, her valor and, what was even more attractive to him, he heard that the lands of Poland were fruitful and rich. He therefore sent messengers with a letter to Wanda. The messengers were received at Wanda's court with courtesy and hospitality, as was always the custom in Poland. It was noticed that they were rough, uncivilized men who seemed surprised at the luxury and comfort of Wanda's Court. After they had rested and changed their apparel, they were ushered into Wanda's presence. Although on the face of it they seemed respectful, they looked about them with an air of appraising the value of everything they saw before them, as though it would soon be theirs.

Wanda read the letter and turned deathly pale. The contents were clear enough; Rytigier asked her for her hand in marriage, stipulating that as her dowry she should bring him the lands of Poland, and threatening war in the event of a refusal. To

accept Rytigier's proposal of marriage was unthinkable; Wanda could not, would not subject her country to a German rule. She had made her decision. Wanda would sacrifice her life for Poland.

She retired to her private quarters and there prayed to the gods that they would grant Poland freedom from the Germans in return for her sacrificing her life. Her prayer was granted, and Wanda threw herself into the river Vistula. When her body was recovered, she was buried with all honors, and a mound was raised to her memory beside that of her father, Krakus.

b. Trumpeter Watchman

In Krakow, the ancient capital of Poland, there is a Church in the Market Square. It is a tall, graceful building built of brick, in the Gothic style, with a richly adorned interior. It had two towers, one of which is a little higher than the other and more ornate. From the taller tower a fanfare is played by a trumpeter, every hour. It is repeated four times, but always ends abruptly, on a broken note. Here is the legend behind this tradition:

One day in the thirteenth century, an old watchman, keeping watch over the city of Krakow saw in the distance a large army of Tatars galloping towards the city. These invaders from the east had more than once advanced to Krakow and even farther, and they had pillaged and burned, looted and murdered and carried off the people to be slaves.

There was only one thing the trumpeter watchman could do. He must play the Hejnal, over and over. So he played, again and again. At first the people of Krakow were puzzled, but eventually they realized that an attack was imminent. The Polish archers began arriving and rained down arrows on the Tartars. Eventually the Tartars were forced to retreat, and Krakow was saved from the Mongols!

However, a single Tartar arrow had pierced the old watchman's throat and he had died. The trumpet was still clasped in his hands ready to blast out a final note.

The Krakovians never forgot the act of the old trumpeter watchman, and it was decreed that a bugle call should be played each day in memory of the hero. Thus, for hundreds of years the *hejnal* has rung out over Krakow's rooftops for the noble watchman who saved the city.

4. King Boleslaw the Brave

When King Boleslaw died, Poland lost a very able and brave ruler, one who had united her and made her into a really great country. One legend claims that Boleslaw, and his Knights who fought with him for he was a great warrior and earned his title of the Brave, by routing Poland's enemies he went into a mountain called Giewont. This mountain forms part of the Tatra mountain range, and its shape, if seen from a certain angle, is like the head of a sleeping Knight. Within the mountain is a huge dark cavern and there sleeps King Boleslaw and his Knights. They are mounted on horses, with their swords, bow and lances beside them. And if Poland ever needs them, then someone must awake them, and they will ride forth to serve the Polish nation.

Boleslaw the Brave is an important part of Polish mythology as it links the modern Poles to essentially the first leader to consolidate lands into an independent Poland. This myth also links the uniting force of Boleslaw the Brave with Lech Walesa, who united nearly one-third the population under the trade union movement known as Solidarity. The Solidarity movement accelerated the “de-Sovietization” of Poland. Boleslaw the Brave’s uniting of the Slaves to defeat the Germans is reverberated in the Walesa-led uniting of Poland under Solidarity to defeat communism, once more giving Poland its freedom.

D. DIVERSE AND CHANGING ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF POLAND

National identity serves as a link between society and the world while a common mass culture serves as a link between the individual and the society. Indeed, a sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individuals in the world through the lens of a shared, unique culture that enables a society to “know who

they are in the world.”⁵³ Mass culture is often a critical component of successful national identity development. Nations derive their sense of identity from cultural components such as religion and ethnicity

1. Ethnicity

Poland’s multinational diversity was due to domination by the Russian, Austrian, and Prussian empires during the Partitions of Poland. Only two institutions preserved Polish national identity throughout its turbulent past: the Roman Catholic Church and the national elite.⁵⁴ However, from the disappearance of the Polish state in 1795 to its reappearance after World War I, there was a redefinition of the notion of Polish culture. The redefinition was not originally ethnic or religious but was grounded in the collective memory of the culture of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Once the nation realized the old Commonwealth would not be recreated, the notion of Polish national identity became based on a civilization, uniting Poles living across parceled lands. They would be united by Polish culture, defined by Polish language and customs. However, by the dawn of the twentieth century, the notion of Polish culture shifted to one of ethnicity and the myth of Polish unity.

The Entente Powers’ to reestablish an independent Polish state at the end of World War I was contentious at best. The state that eventually emerged was an exceptionally diverse society, divided across many lines (Fig 7.). However, the Polish national identity was still primarily held in the collective memory of a few elites.

⁵³ Smith, *National Identity*, 16-17.

⁵⁴ Johnson, 132-133.



Figure 7. Post-World War I Poland⁵⁵

At the end of The Second World War, Poland was changed again. Poland was moved west and its society changed from one of great diversity to one of great uniformity (Fig 8.). Additionally, much to the prewar political, religious, and cultural elite, i.e. the historic custodians of Polish national memory, were killed or exiled. World War II was a national war, involving every layer of Polish society.⁵⁶ The new Polish society developed a different sense of Poland's place in the world, the elite were gone and the Polish masses picked up the mantle to carry the Polish culture. This tragedy forced Poles to accept the realities about the past and future and enabled the rapid development of a consolidated national identity more easily than most countries.

⁵⁵ Map downloaded from Ancestry: The Polish Connection: (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~atpc/maps/poland-1919.jpg>) accessed 10 October 2007.

⁵⁶ Sanford, 11-13.

Ethnic minorities are now very small, making up less than two percent of the overall population (compared with about 30 percent during the interwar period): about 300,000 Ukrainians, 300,000 Belarusians, 12,000 Lithuanians, and less than 6,000 Jews (only 2,000 belong to a religious community).⁵⁷ Minorities in Poland have been treated well, in general, by the post-1989 governments within a framework of common European standards.



Figure 8. Post World War II Poland⁵⁸

Poland's transformation after 1989 was made up of two dimensions: the first was a shift away from communism and towards democracy and the European markets; and the second was a return to pre-communists traditions. For the first time since the Golden Age of the Jagiellonian dynasty, 1989 represented a return of strong and united elite. This is centered on the transformation towards democratic capitalism. As in France, the

⁵⁷ George Sanford, *Overcoming the Burden of History in Polish Foreign Policy* (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 197-197.

⁵⁸ Map downloaded from Ancestry: The Polish Connection: (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~atpc/maps/poland-1919.jpg>) accessed 10 October 2007.

Polish movement has strong linguistic and cultural implications highlighted by historical memories. Poland's historical struggle to regain and maintain independence integrated cultural and linguistic factors within a form of democracy, but without degenerating into a purely ethnic form.⁵⁹

2. Religion

Poland's evolution of a national identity has been hampered by its geographic location. It is located at the intersection of three branches of Christianity: Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Lutheranism. Poland also was home to more than half the world's Jewish population as well.⁶⁰ In post-1989 Poland, the Catholic majority favored a conservative isolation. However, this was tempered with Pope John Paul II's views expressed in 1997 that the Church should work for an open, moral Europe.

E. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND MODERNIZATION

Economically, national identity supports stipulates control and use of territorial resources. However, the argument heretofore suggests that Poland has little "usable past" and any past it does have was in the repository of a small elite. This argument is only a partial view. Poland has been building on positive aspects of its past, such as the eighteenth century Kosciuszko uprising and the nineteenth century struggles for independence. The importance of historical factors is augmented by the unparalleled speed of modernization during World War II and the current Europeanization in the form of market reforms.

In the aftermath of World War II, the linking of Poland's economy to Nazi Germany's military-industrial complex resulted in significant and rapid industrialization of Poland, which previous attempts at industrialization had actually caused rifts in Polish society.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Andrzej Walicki, *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

⁶⁰ Prizel, 39-40.

⁶¹ Jan T. Gross, "The Experience of War in East Central Europe: Social Disruption and Political Revolution," *East European Politics and Society* (1989): 2.

As the Polish national identity emerged at the end of the Cold War, it became apparent that in order to facilitate its long-term economic prosperity, Poland would need to integrate itself into Western Europe. The ability of Poland to develop an enduring consolidated national identity has allowed policy makers to adopt a “return to Europe” direction.

Poland crossed a dangerous transitional period from the fall of communism to its integration in the Euro-Atlantic system.

F. CONCLUSION

The case of Poland demonstrates that neither the primordialist nor constructivist approach should be used entirely nor rejected wholly to understand the process of Polish national identity development. In fact, it is the ethnosymbolic theory that can best be used to explain the success of Polish national identity formation. The Polish nation regained a distinctive ethnic and territorial identity when the borders were adjusted at the close of World War II. The research shows that the process of developing a national identity in Poland is similar to the process in European countries, where the national identity was based on peoples sense of belonging to a larger group within a historic homeland.

The current Polish national identity also represents a convergence of the value of anti-communist independence along with post-1989 economic reform that produced widespread support among the masses for the elite view of a ‘return to Europe.’

As indicated above, Poland has had an exceptionally turbulent history, marked by loss of independence, severe threats during World War II as well as the communist era. Poland’s persistent national identity is due in part to its geographical position between more powerful Russia and Germany. Poland is a historic nation with an indigenous elite and a powerful sense of cultural distinctiveness. However, this collective memory remained for a long period of time in the custody of small social and political elite that sustained the idea of Poland: one based in a commonwealth with Lithuania that covered areas now known as Ukraine and Belarus. It was not until the modern era that the Polish national idea spread to the popular consciousness, a key element in Anthony Smith’s

ethnosymbolism theory. Indeed, Poland has developed an enduring, collective national identity with the elites and the masses *sharing* common national cultural attributes. Thus, the development of Polish national identity was dependent on the transfer of the collective memory from the elite to the masses.

In the absence of the state for over 120 years, the *nation* and the national collective memory became the primary container for Polish history and forming Polish identity. Moreover, it was this domination by foreign rulers that cemented Polish loyalties to provincial regions and developed into an abstract notion of the “nation.”

Ethnosymbolism also stresses the importance of examining the histories and cultural identities over long periods of time. Poland was able to develop and maintain a common national identity because of its center of gravity, that is, the collective memory of its homeland and mass culture.

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IV. UKRAINIAN CASE STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, this thesis identified factors that led to the emergence of a strong and consolidated Polish national identity that paved the way for “return to Europe” for Polish policymakers. The Polish case study indicates that Poland was able to develop a consolidated and coherent national identity from within, based on an ethnically homogenous population with a shared historical memory, shared religion, common language, a well-defined territory, and a common mass culture.

Ukraine’s national identity development differs in significant ways from the Polish experience. Poland possessed a political elite, a distinct language, a historic homeland, and a common collective memory. Ukraine lacked these unifying aspects. As such a Ukrainian national identity did not fully emerge until the end of the nineteenth century, and even then, national independence was viewed as unattainable. Indeed, even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the appearance of an independent Ukraine was unexpected by many scholars and analysts due to the ill-defined Ukrainian identity, making Ukraine an unlikely candidate for statehood.

Ukraine today has all the attributes of a state, but a consolidated national identity remains elusive. This chapter seeks to analyze interpretations of the history of the Ukrainian people, ethnic composition, religious affiliation, and regional loyalties to determine which factors are most important for national identity. Where Poland was able to develop a national identity from within, Ukrainian national identity has been hindered by internal and external factors.

B. KIEVAN RUS’: NATIONAL ORIGINS

The contest for the inheritance of Kievan Rus’ represents one of the oldest bones of contention in Russian-Ukrainian cultural and political relations. This contest began among the Eastern Slavs in the second half of the eleventh century and culminated in the famous controversy between the “Northerners” and “Southerners,” that is between Russians and Ukrainians. The controversy over who is the legitimate heir to the Kievan

tradition continues to the present day in the form of Russian ideological campaigns waged to sow the seeds of discord between Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the East and South and the nationally conscious Ukrainians in the West. This has a profound impact on the development of Ukrainian national identity, cultural self-perception, historical awareness, national consciousness, and national mythology.

The points at issue between the Ukrainian nationalists and Russian nationalists extend from the ninth century through the Middle Ages and the Russian Empire concluding in the Soviet Era. As witnessed in other multinational states in the 1990s, often the most bitter insults that nationalists can hurl at each other are not drawn from contemporary disputes, but rather from historical crimes and suffering. Obviously, the Ukrainian population is less affected by these sentiments than Yugoslavia, but as the Polish model demonstrated in the previous chapter, a shared history, mythology, and homeland are all critical ingredients to formulating an enduring, consolidated national identity.

Starting in the ninth century, East Slavic tribes come under the rule of the Varangians, Scandinavian warriors and traders. The ruler of Novgorod, Riurik, gave his name to the subsequent dynasty of Kievan Rus'. By 878, Oleg Helgi, a Varangian prince of Novgorod, captured Kiev and makes it his seat of power. The lands under his control came to be called 'Rus.' Vladimir the Great ruled from 980 to 1015 and converted his domain from paganism to Orthodox Christianity as a means of unifying a diverse population. (After considering other options from among the predominant religions of the day, including Islam, Vladimir followed his preference for Byzantine culture and oriented his kingdom squarely towards the Byzantines.) In 1037, the Orthodox metropolinate of Kiev was founded. The area of Kiev's domination covered present-day Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia west of the Ural Mountains (Fig 9.). The Kievan polity began to disintegrate starting in the eleventh century.

During their great sweep of Eastern Europe, the Mongols rode up before the gates of Kiev in the thirteenth century. Originally—and uncharacteristically for this campaign—the Mongols meant to capture the city, the largest Christian center they had yet encountered, without bloodshed. However, the warriors of the Golden Horde had

been preceded by their reputation. After the terror-struck Kievans killed General Subatai's envoys and dropped their bodies over the city's wooden walls, the Mongols destroyed it, galloping through the narrow stone streets in a murderous fury. The gold-domed chapel of St. Sophia was one of the few buildings to survive the onslaught, with a few burghers and clerics hidden in its underground vaults, though the invaders stole or destroyed most of the chapel's treasures and relics. Five years after the Mongol attack, visitors to Kiev reported the plains around the city were still strewn with human remains; indeed Kiev never regained its preeminence.



Figure 9. Kievan Rus' 11th century⁶²

⁶² Map downloaded from Ancestry: The Encyclopedia Britannica: (<http://updatecenter.britannica.com/eb/image?binaryId=3844&rendTypeId=4>) accessed 10 October 2007.

The historical acrimony between Ukraine and Russia begins with the Mongol invasion. In part in response to the Kievan example—though political interests figured as well—the princes of Novgorod and Moscow (brothers, in fact) took a more quiescent tack with the Mongols. The years of Mongol domination saw the advent of Moscow as the social and cultural focal point of the region. Whether or not the Muscovy princes actively aided the invaders in their destruction of Kiev, the results and ramifications of the event provided the basis of the bad feeling that has worked its way into the problem of Ukrainian national identity.

Who can claim to be the legitimate heir to which legacy of Kievan Rus'? There are three schools of thought or historical interpretation forwarded by modern scholars about the inheritance of Kievan Rus'. One version favors the Russian claim, while another rejects anything but Ukrainian identity. The third school, current in the Soviet Union, sought to combine the two competing ideas, though to the ends of the regime's ideology and doctrine on ethnicities and nationality.

1. Exclusive Russian National History

This theory was developed in the eighteenth century and continued to the Russian national-imperial school in the nineteenth century. Essentially, this theory relies on historical-ideological claims formed in Muscovy between 1330 and 1550. This theory was based on the notion of the transfer of the religious institution of the Kievan metropolitan from Kiev to Moscow. This represents the uninterrupted dynastic continuity of Riurik.⁶³ This also is the basis for the Russian claim to be the true ethnic origin of all Slavs, including Ukrainians.

2. Exclusive Ukrainian National History

This theory was advanced by Ukrainian national historiography between the 1840s and the 1930s. The Ukrainians draw an uninterrupted dynastic line from Kiev to

⁶³ J. Pelenski, "The Origins of the Official Muscovite Claims to the Kievan Inheritance," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 1 (1977): 29-52.

Cossack Ukraine (Cossacks were a traditional community of people that inhabited the southern steppes of Eastern Europe) and utilized mainly territorial, ethnic, and social arguments.⁶⁴

3. Official Soviet Theory

This theory gives equal rights to the three East Slav nations: Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. However, even with the equal rights, this theory more closely resembles the Exclusive Russian National History theory and its forceful support of Russian national interests at the expense of the other two groups. This theory also preferred research on Kievan Rus' that was conducted in Russia, by Russian scholars.

While many members of the Ukrainian and Russian populations view this issue with little interest, there is still much debate. Among Ukrainians there is a perceived need to build up the historical bases for their statehood. Many Ukrainians argue that Ukraine represents a continuity of ethnic and cultural traditions in the old Kievan Rus' heartland and that Russians are descended from Finno-Ugric tribes. Russians argue that Ukraine is the old Kievan territory, but the inhabitants were changed over the centuries by the impact of Lithuanian and Polish domination, implying that true Kievan culture was continued in Russia.

The most extreme claim stemming from this suggestion is that the Ukrainians do not really exist as a nation and are merely "Little Russians." Most prominently, the imperial Russian state espoused this position until the Revolution.⁶⁵ A milder version taught during the Soviet Era held the Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians as historically "brother nations," all descending from Kievan Rus' and closely linked by language, religion, culture, and a shared history.

The years since Ukraine became independent from the Soviet Union have seen an increase in the number of interpretations of its history. On the eve of Ukrainian

⁶⁴ M. Hrushevsky, "The Traditional Scheme of Russian History and the Problem of a Rational Organization of the History of Eastern Slavs," *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S.* 2 (1952): 355-364.

⁶⁵ Anatol Lieven, *Ukraine and Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), 13-4.

independence, the Ukrainian *nomenklatura*⁶⁶ viewed its relationship with Moscow as a source of legitimacy. However, following the rapid reforms in the Soviet Union, it became clear that association with Moscow threatened the elite's hold onto power. The Ukrainian elite shifted focus to supporting full independence. Most Ukrainians supported independence, and most intellectuals believed Ukraine's three centuries under Russian and Soviet rule unnaturally detached Ukraine from its natural cultural orbit, which was that of central Europe and not of the Russian influence.

With this move toward independence, Marxism-Leninism was replaced by scientific nationalism. However, the first government learned that the notion of Ukraine as part of central Europe did not sit well with large sectors of the population. The Ukrainian government's attempt to generate and revive national myths and symbols proved a painful process that deepened the cleavage over the essence of Ukrainian identity.⁶⁷ This cleft was especially visible among the millions of Ukrainians that grew up during the Soviet era and believed Moscow to be the heir to Kievan Rus' and believed in the "brother nations" concept. Thus, another Ukrainian concept arose: a "national Slavic concept."

The national Slavic concept, which began in the pro-Russian areas of eastern and southern Ukraine, differed from the Central European concept in several ways. In general, the national Slavic concept believed in Ukraine's distinct culture. However, this concept also argues that regardless of which country is the heir to Kievan Rus', Ukraine and Russia are bound by Orthodox Christianity, common ancestry, three hundred years of

⁶⁶ The *nomenklatura* were a small élite subset of the general population in the Soviet Union who held various key administrative positions in all spheres of the Soviet Union: in government, industry, agriculture, education, etc. Without exception, they were members of the Communist Party and were the pre-approved candidates to various positions. *Nomenklatura* had more authority and claimed higher privileges of precisely the same kind as the ruling class which communist doctrine denounced in the "Capitalist" West. Liu, Yan, "Constructing Civil Society in Transitional China: Case Studies of One Private University and One Non-Governmental Institute for Peasant Education" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2007), 62.

⁶⁷ Zenon Kohut, "History as a Battleground: Russian-Ukrainian Relationship in Historical Consciousness in Contemporary Ukraine," in *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 112.

common statehood, and such shared experiences as the tragedies of World War II. As such, there is a commonality on many levels that can not simply be discarded for either Central Europe or the West.⁶⁸

The current cleavages in Ukraine are over the meaning of Ukrainian statehood and identity. As the Polish case study demonstrated, for the development of any contemporary consolidated enduring national identity, it is important to have common historical memories and myths that can help unify a nation. Additionally, in the Polish case the carriers of the national identity were a small number of social and political elites, concerned with their national position relative neighboring states. Ukraine's search for a common history while attempting to base an identity on ethnicity gives inconsistent results.

C. ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY OF UKRAINE

1. Ethnicity and Language

In contrast to Poland, Ukraine is not a homogeneous country, though at the same time, there has been little ethnic conflict. The peculiarity of the national structure of the population of Ukraine is its multinational composition. According to the 2001 All-Ukrainian Population Census data, the representatives of more than 130 nationalities and ethnic groups lived on the territory of Ukraine.⁶⁹

According to the same research, ethnic Ukrainians make up the largest group in the national structure with 77.8 percent of the population. Ethnic Russians are the second numerous ethnic group of Ukraine, representing 17.3 percent of the population. The remaining 4.9 percent of the population was made up of the remaining 128 ethnic groups, the largest of which include: Belarusians, Moldavians, Tartars, Bulgarians, and Hungarians. Additionally, only 74.7 percent of the families in Ukraine are ethnically homogeneous.

⁶⁸ Orest Subtelny, "Russocentrism, Regionalism, and the Political Culture of Ukraine," in *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

⁶⁹ All Ukrainian Population Census, 2001. (<http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/>) accessed 15 October 2007.

Linguistically, only 85 percent of ethnic Ukrainians claimed to speak Ukrainian exclusively, while almost 96 percent of ethnic Russians in Ukraine spoke Russian as their native language.

The primary and most significant ethnic division is between Ukrainians and Russians (Fig 10.). However, through high rates of intermarriage, the high percentage of Ukrainian-speaking Russians, the high level of fluency in Russian of Ukrainians, and a long history of cohabitation, the relationship between Russians and Ukrainians has been stable.



Figure 10. Ukrainian Ethnicity⁷⁰

The conventional wisdom of ethnic relations in Soviet Ukraine had been one of a division of labor, with Ukrainians placed in lower-status occupational jobs, while Russians filled the higher-status positions. Ukrainians alleged discrimination in access to

⁷⁰ Ukraine is Divided on the issue of Russian.
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/ukraine/images/ukraine_rus-02.gif accessed October 2007.

education, process of urbanization (the development and population growth of urban areas, often due to workers moving to the urban areas for employment), and immigration.⁷¹ The assumption was that the ethnic groups were in conflict, but no evidence has ever been presented. In fact ethnic Ukrainians' social standing was not inferior to ethnic Russians' when considered in a comparative perspective.⁷² Interestingly, there was a Soviet structural factor that allowed Ukrainians to be blocked from one job in Ukraine but eligible for another opportunity elsewhere in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union-wide system of personnel management exported trained Ukraine personnel who were willing to repress nationalist dissent and were loyal to the Soviet system from which they benefited.⁷³ Thus, from Soviet days, educated Ukrainians were trained and rewarded to repress nationalistic tendencies.

On the eve of independence, Ukrainian policy makers also realized that relations between ethnic groups might become problematic if post-independence governments were to introduce legislation favoring Ukrainians, thereby possibly politicizing and inciting the minorities. To alleviate this concern, the Ukrainian parliament issued a Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine, which guaranteed citizens of all nationalities equal rights, including preservation of their traditional settlements and the freedom to use their native languages in all aspects of life in Ukraine.⁷⁴

To a large degree the policies pursued by Ukrainian policymakers has prevented ethnic/linguistic based conflict, but perhaps at the expense of building an enduring national identity. Ukraine's approach perpetuates the right of the non-Ukraine speaking populace at the expense of nation-building. While this may have been a critical aspect of

⁷¹ Bohdan Harasymiv, *Post-Communist Ukraine*, (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2002), 18.

⁷² Alexander J. Motyl, *Will the Non-Russians Rebel? State, Ethnicity, and Stability in the USSR*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 66-8.

⁷³ Bohdan Harasymiw, "Political Mobility in Soviet Ukraine," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 2 (1984): 160-181.

⁷⁴ Interestingly, this legislation allowed citizens the right to use the Russian language, but it did not guarantee that right. It also provided that in polyglot regions another acceptable language could be used along with Ukrainian.

lack of ethnic conflict, the language issues appears to emerge as a polarizing force during periods of local and national elections (Fig 11.).

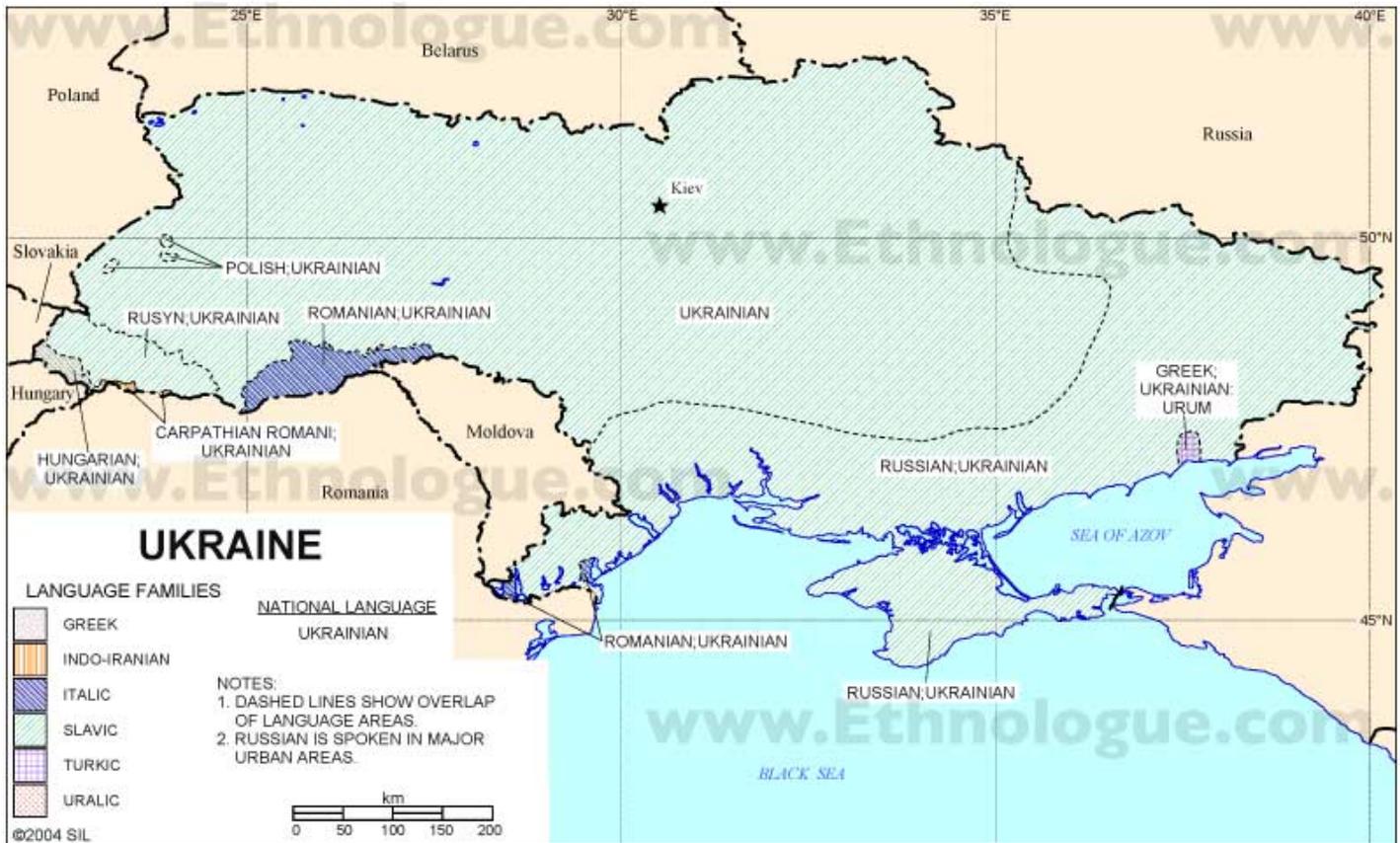


Figure 11. Ukrainian Languages⁷⁵

2. Language in Politics

The language issue has had little saliency, except during the 1994 and 2004 presidential election campaigns and the 2006 parliamentary elections. The Razumkov Center warned on the eve of the 2004 elections that the language issue in of itself would be unlikely to head to “serious social conflict,” but they added, “politicization of this question could lead to negative consequences.” Party of Regions leader Viktor Yanukovich and his Russian political advisors politicized the issue in the 2004 elections.

⁷⁵ Ukrainian Language Families (http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ukraine_rel93.jpg) accessed June 2007.

The spark that ignited the popular fire that is now known as the Orange Revolution was election fraud. Nonpartisan exit polls during the November 21, 2004 presidential runoff election had given Yushchenko a commanding lead, with 52 percent of the votes, compared to Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's 43 percent. Yet when the official results came in, Yanukovich, the favorite of Ukraine's corrupt elite, had supposedly beaten the challenger by 2.5 percent.

This tally was immediately challenged. When the polling stations had first closed, the Central Election Commission (CEC) had reported that voter turnout in Ukraine's Russian-speaking eastern districts was consistent with the nationwide average of 78 to 80 percent. But four hours later, after a prolonged silence, the election commission radically increased the east's turnout figures. The eastern Donetsk region--Yanukovich's Russian-speaking home base--went from a voter turnout of 78 percent to 96.2 percent overnight, with support for Yanukovich at around 97 percent. In neighboring Luhansk, turnout magically climbed from 80 percent at the time the polls closed to 89.5 percent the next morning, with Yanukovich winning 92 percent or more of the votes. Indeed, in several eastern districts, turnout was as much as 40 percent greater than during the first round of the presidential election three weeks before. This "miraculous" last-minute upsurge was responsible for approximately 1.2 million new votes--well over 90 percent of which went to the regime's favorite, giving him enough for a comfortable 800,000-vote margin of victory.⁷⁶

Millions of Ukrainians staged nationwide nonviolent protests that came to be known as the "Orange Revolution." The entire world watched, riveted by this outpouring of the people's will in a country whose international image had been warped by its corrupt rulers.⁷⁷ By the time victory was announced--in the form of opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko's electoral triumph--the orange revolution had set a major new landmark in the post communist history of eastern Europe, a seismic shift Westward in the geopolitics of the region.

⁷⁶ Adrian Karatnycky, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *The New York Times*, April 12, 2005, sec 1A, 6.

⁷⁷ Paul Quinn-Judge and Yuri Zarakhovich, "The Orange Revolution," *Time*. November 28, 2005.

However, time and again, Ukrainian parties often focus on the language issue when they want to mobilize their electorates. Similar to the 2004 Presidential election, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's Party of Regions (PRU), again, quite successfully played the language card in the run-up to the March 2006 parliamentary election. One of its main election promises was to give Russian official status.⁷⁸ The Party of Regions and Communists are alone in their support for elevating the status of the Russian language. A large proportion of the centrist camp that backed the corrupt Leonid Kuchma regime continues to support the 1989 law and 1996 constitution that make Ukrainian the sole state language but provides for official tolerance of local language diversity.

However, the Orange Revolution seems to make one thing clear: Ukrainian civil society has shown its resolve to no longer be politically manipulated by corrupt political forces. Indeed, of the ten most acute problems facing Ukraine, the Russian language was mentioned by only 8 percent, a figure due primarily to the 25 percent interest level in the Crimea and Donbas. North and east of these two regions only between 2.5 percent and 4 percent saw it as an issue.⁷⁹ Two-thirds of the 8 percent who consider the Russian language an issue reside in the Donbas and Crimea, two areas that are bastions of support for the Party of Regions and Communists and ironically where Russian is not in any way challenged, let alone threatened. Linguistic identity is a sensitive issue in a society divided roughly in half along linguistic lines.

Yushchenko, addressing in the Russian-speaking Crimea in February 2007, said that the Ukrainian legislation does not provide for the status of regional language. Meeting young Ukrainian scientists in Kyiv a day earlier, Yushchenko said that those who do not want Ukraine to be free are the ones who do not accept the single national language. "There is no nation without a language," he said.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Pavel Korduban, "Ukrainian Language Card is Played Again," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4 (2007).

⁷⁹ Taras Kuzio, "Tolerance Reduces Need for Russian Language Law in Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4 (2007).

⁸⁰ Pavel Korduban, "Ukrainian Language a Priority for Yushchenko," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4 (2007).

While Yushchenko has lost much of the momentum of the Orange Revolution, and his first administration was unable to merge the Ukrainian constituency into one consolidated national identity, the recent elections may offer the opportunity to reconstitute an Orange Coalition. That the citizens of an ethnically and linguistically diverse Ukraine have been able to use democratic means to voice preferences is due primarily to Ukraine's inclusive policy. While this policy may, in fact, preclude the emergence of a consolidated national identity based on ethnicity or language, it also guarantees no political discrimination or isolation along ethnic lines.

Rather than overall social ethnic composition and language cleavages as well as the potential for creating cleavages that would hamper development of a national identity, the real problem appears to have been regionalism.

D. REGIONALISM

Just as independence was finally coming to Ukraine, there were several claims for regional autonomous areas based on ethnicity and territorial claims. The most serious was in Crimea, which eventually won a wide-range of autonomy granted by the Ukrainian Constitution. The success of the Crimea led many other regions to seek autonomy at the expense of national unity. The other centrifugal tendencies started to appear in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine and southern Ukraine, where the idea of "New Russia" began.

Crimea gained autonomous status that was acknowledged by the government of Ukraine. In fact, Crimean elites also warned of further secession on the threat of "forced Ukrainization."⁸¹ Political elites in other areas were emboldened by this move, and the quest for regional autonomy spread.

In the Donbas region and other southern parts of Ukraine, where ethnic Russians lived and the Russian language was predominant, movements supporting autonomy emerged in the 1990s. The issue of autonomy remained politically relevant for Crimea

⁸¹ Bohdan Harasymiw, 20-21.

and Donbas, but subsided in other regions. The regional autonomy issue obviously serves as an obstacle to a unified national identity.

In 1991, Ukrainians faced a referendum vote. Voting ‘for’ the referendum meant support for Ukrainian independence, while a ‘no’ vote indicated a desire for regional splintering and remain part of the Soviet Union. The referendum passed with 90.3 percent of the vote, suggesting that at that time, national unity was stronger and the secessionist movement was weaker than political discussions indicated.⁸²

In fact, the regional autonomy issue caused more fractioning of the Ukrainian society. The Western Ukrainians view the south and east as overly Russified and, thus, it would take more resources to develop a consolidated Ukrainian national identity. Conversely, the Ukrainians in the east have widespread suspicions of the westerners, manifested in the Crimean’s fear of “forced Ukrainization.” This policy has been deemphasized in recent administrations, but Yuschenko’s current administration has not significantly changed policy with respect to ethnic groups. This “don’t-rock-the-ethnic-boat” policy has maintained a degree of stability, but at the expense of national identity.

An important aspect of national policy is the institutional relationship between the central government and the regional power players. One might argue that due to the ineffectiveness of the central government to consolidate a national identity, a conservative model of regional governance emerged. Hence, local authorities gradually consolidated regional power over the regional financial-industrial groups (FIGs). These FIGs have successfully lobbied for their own interests; of course, this is not Ukrainian patriotism, rather a love for "one's own" and "one's own must be protected.”⁸³

⁸²Bohdan Harasymiw, 22-23.

⁸³Ihor Demyanchuk, “Will Oil Make it from Odessa to Brody?” *Svoboda*, April 3, 2004.

E POLITICAL CLIMATE

In addition to limited history to draw upon to fashion a lasting national identity, Ukraine has little self-governance history to draw on as well. Ukraine's political experience in recent history is limited to domination by the Russian empire and then by Soviet Russia.

As is often the case in post-colonial countries, the old elite, emboldened by the departure of the old imperial power, proceed to exert their authority. The elite no longer had to account to the external power nor to its own citizenry, thus the Ukrainian communist elite reinvented themselves. On the eve of independence, the old communist elites were able to hold on to power by playing conflicting agendas of the splintered regions of Ukraine.⁸⁴ The Ukrainians in the west and in Kiev advocated democracy and reversal of decades of Russification. The industrial Donbas region wanted to slow modernization that would reduce Soviet/Russian subsidies. However, the Ukrainians in the Donbas region soon moved toward the political center.

This movement allowed the *Rukh* (Ukrainian popular Movement), one of the first liberal political parties in Ukraine, to build a coalition made up of nationalists, moderates, and workers from the Donbas region.⁸⁵ The nationalists wanted independence to preserve Ukrainian culture and language. The moderates believed independence would end exploitation by Moscow. The success of *Rukh* in bridging diverse interest and identities would not be repeated.

The Communist Party of Ukraine Secretary for Ideology, Leonid Kravchuk, built a coalition in an attempt to strengthen the state. Kravchuk's commitment to social justice appealed to eastern Ukrainians, who feared modernization would erode their position of economic power. Kravchuk's understanding of nationalism allowed him to engage western Ukrainians who insisted on independence. The industrial and agricultural old guard believed that Kravchuk, as a member of the old guard himself, would not meddle

⁸⁴ David R. Marples, *Ukraine under Perestroika: Ecology, Economics, and the Worker's Revolt*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 32.

⁸⁵ Lieven, 110-111.

in their interests. Ukraine's communist elite built a new power base, but without changing any policies, thus hampering Ukraine's national identity development.

The widening gulf over national identity was obvious in the election of 1994, when Ukrainians elected Leonid Kuchma over the former Soviet Kravchuk. During the campaign, Kuchma stressed the necessary relationship with Russia, while Kravchuk emphasized efforts to build a distinct Ukrainian state under the Central European Ukrainian idea.⁸⁶ In short, the political right in Ukraine stresses the European heritage of Ukraine and the political left stresses the factors that Ukraine shares with Belarus and Russia.

When Kuchma was elected in 1994 on a pro-Russian platform, his strategic foreign policy was disconnected. By the time he took power, he shifted to a pro-Western position. By 1998, Kuchma outlined Ukraine's desire to join the EU, placing it on a drastically different path than Russia or Belarus. However, by 1999, Kuchma once again reverses course and reorients towards Russia. This reflects a 'multi-vector' approach, which has plagued Ukraine since independence.⁸⁷ Ukraine waivers between Russian and Euro-Atlantic orientation due to a lack of national identity on which to anchor its perception of itself and other states.

Yushchenko came to power on the wave of the Orange Revolution and immediately announced an end to Ukraine's multi-vectorism. He promised that Ukraine's foreign policy would be consistent and predictable.⁸⁸ However, as early as June 2005, Yushchenko held out prospect of Ukraine's participation in the Russian-led Single Economic Space (SES) project. This discourse, addressed mainly to Russia and to certain economic interest groups in Ukraine, is diverging from that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, who firmly adhere to the EU option in the knowledge that it is incompatible with

⁸⁶ Prizel, 359-361.

⁸⁷ Bohdan Harasymiw, 20-21.

⁸⁸ Taras Kuzio, "Is Ukraine Part of Europe's Future," *Washington Quarterly*, 29 (2006): 89-90.

participation in the SES. This disagreement within the government exacerbates the national identity issue. Adding to this instability is the distribution of power within the government.

Following the Orange Revolution of 2004, constitutional reform and the 2006 parliamentary elections made pro-Russian Prime Minister Yanukovich the most powerful man in Ukraine, clashed between him and President Yushchenko over distribution of power and almost daily occurrence.

A transitional period is by definition often unstable, which would be worsened with no common political culture. The duration and magnitude of the crisis is based on the ability of the government to propose a course of action that is agreeable for the society and to consistently maintain that course of action to provide stability for the society. The transition marked by the Orange Revolution, while representing a move towards democratic measures, did not foster a political culture for social stability. In fact, political differences within the Orange coalition between Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko, the other main leader of the Orange Revolution, have prevented the consolidation of an effective government.

In retrospect many of the hopes that drove the Orange Revolution were overly optimistic. The Orange coalition was a reflection of Ukrainian society, in that it was a heterogeneous collection of disparate groups ranging from pro-Western nationalistic forces in the west to Socialists on the left. After the March 2006 parliamentary elections, the same inertia was apparent when Yushchenko spent three months forming a government and only at the last minute agreed to reconstitute the Orange coalition. The long delay further eroded trust between Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party and Tymoshenko's Bloc Yulia Tymoshenko party. However, this reconstituted coalition was short lived.

In July 2006, Socialist party leader Olexandr Moroz, upset because he was not awarded the speaker of the parliament, defected and joined with Yanukovich's Party of Regions. This gave the Regions party enough votes to form an "anti-crisis coalition" led by Yanukovich with a parliamentary majority. Due to this, Ukraine has had two

diverging foreign policies: Yushchenko's attempts at Western integration and Yanukovich's "multivector" strategy designed to balance between pragmatic ties to the west and close relations with Russia.⁸⁹

F. EXTERNALITIES

1. Russian Influence

Geographically, Ukraine is situated between the former Soviet bloc states and Russia. The former are, by and large, democratic and members of the European Union while Russia continually attempts to extend and solidify its influence beyond its borders in an attempt to regain superpower status.

The relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine are an important component of the international situation in the area of the former Soviet Union. In terms of population and GDP in the region, Ukraine is second only to Russia. The majority of Russian elites and society have never come to terms with the loss of Ukraine, believing that it is the eternal part of the Russian empire and that control over it is a precondition for Russia's strong international position. Finally, both states remain closely interconnected, which allows the stronger partner, which is Russia, to exert pressure on the counterpart, and thwart its attempts at independent policy making.

Most analysts note another important factor strongly affecting Ukrainian-Russian relations: Ukraine's economic dependence on Russia. The Ukrainian economy depends heavily on Russian energy exports. The external obstacle to national identity, Russian interference, should be emphasized. Russia's strategy of ideological and economic (especially energy related) blackmailing has slowed the process of national identity development in Ukraine. These strategies are most effective in the Eastern and Southern parts of Ukraine with strong pro-Russian sentiment.

2. Western Influence

The Ukrainian policy in the period immediately following independence sought to build a Central European identity similar to movements in Poland at the same time. This

⁸⁹ F. Stephen Larrabee, "Ukraine at the Crossroads," *The Washington Quarterly* 30(2007): 45-6.

policy was based on the image of Ukraine held mostly by those in the western part of the country, where national identity is nearly as strong as it is in Poland.⁹⁰ However, until the Orange Revolution in 2004, the years have been marked by inconsistent and multi-vector policies by elites. Yushchenko announced the end of multi-vectorism and promised that Ukraine's foreign policy would be ideologically committed to Euro-Atlantic integration.⁹¹

a. European Union

After the Orange Revolution, Yushchenko has stepped up efforts to join the EU. First, he argued the EU should recognize Ukraine as a market economy, which it did in December 2005. Second, he wanted the EU to support Ukrainian accession to the WTO, which would allow Ukraine to create a free-trade area with the EU. Third, Yushchenko wanted the EU to upgrade Ukraine to a status of association membership as a final step before EU membership. The door to the EU, however, had remained closed. Under the previous administration, the EU was concerned about offending Russia; the EU argued that it could not invite Ukraine without also inviting Russia.

The question of EU membership had been one of the few nationally unifying issues in Ukrainian history. Most non-Communist political parties support EU membership because of the benefits it would bring in terms of democratization and improved standard of living.⁹² Thus, EU membership is not as divisive an issue as potential NATO membership.

The EU, however, has adopted a policy of ambiguity. It hopes to string out a series of small rewards to encourage reforms in Ukraine without committing fully to Ukrainian membership in the EU. The issue is that membership is the ultimate incentive for countries to carry out painful reforms. Without the prospect of membership, even in

⁹⁰ Stephen Burant, "Foreign Policy and National Identity," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47, November 1995, 1126.

⁹¹ Taras Kuzio, "Is Ukraine Part of Europe's Future," 89-90.

⁹² Taras Kuzio, "Is Ukraine Part of Europe's Future?" 93-4.

the long-term, current and subsequent Ukrainian governments may be unwilling to bear the short-term burdens of reform that EU membership requires.

The EU's hesitation leaves Ukraine stranded with no institutional anchor in the West. This will make it more difficult for pro-western politicians to develop a consolidated national identity or muster domestic support to undertake reforms needed for EU membership.⁹³

b. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

In accordance with his new policy, Yushchenko managed to initiate a breakthrough in Ukraine's relations with NATO. In April 2005, NATO invited Ukraine to join the Intensified Dialogue on Membership, one of the first steps to NATO membership. In the Spring of 2006, NATO members discussed the possibility of offering Ukraine a Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the Riga summit. However, Yanukovich's return to power in August 2006, preempted those plans. In contrast to Yushchenko, Yanukovich adopted a much slower paced approach to NATO membership. He sought to set limits to Ukrainian involvement with NATO and announced Ukraine would not seek a MAP, citing a lack of public support for NATO. Indeed, among the populace, NATO is perceived differently than EU membership.

Ukraine's relations with NATO have emerged as a particularly divisive issue since the collapse of the Orange coalition. Decades of Soviet propaganda against NATO, coupled with NATO's intervention in Kosovo as well as the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, continue to cause regional divisions over attitudes towards NATO membership. Three of the five party factions in the newly elected parliament are against NATO membership.⁹⁴

One of the key problems is that support for NATO membership in Ukraine is much lower than other new NATO members from eastern Europe. According to polls

⁹³ Larrabee, 51-2.

⁹⁴ Taras Kuzio, "Is Ukraine Part of Europe's Future?" 95-6.

in October 2006, only about 17 percent of Ukrainians support NATO membership.⁹⁵ Also, that same poll indicated that over 50 percent of the population would vote against a referendum on NATO membership. This is largely due to the Soviet legacy as well as the anti-NATO campaign conducted by Yanukovich in the 2004 presidential election. Support for NATO membership is highest in the western and central parts of Ukraine and lowest in the pro-Russian eastern and southern Ukraine.

However, as much as 45 percent of the population in the western region has no opinion on NATO membership. Many of these “undecideds” could be mobilized to support NATO membership if the Ukrainian government developed an effective education program, as many other eastern European countries did prior to joining the alliance.

In light of the political differences in the Ukrainian leadership and the lack of public support for NATO membership in Ukraine, membership in NATO is likely to be put on hold for the near future. Cooperation will continue, but there will not be a large push for Ukrainian membership until popular support for membership is stronger.⁹⁶

c. U.S. Policy

Historically, the U.S. has been one of Ukraine’s strongest supporters of western integration since independence. However, the U.S. is not preoccupied with other geopolitical issues such as Iraq, Iran, China, and North Korea. Keeping Ukraine high on the list is important, but may prove to be challenging.

Ukraine’s development will have a critical impact on the overall balance of power in the post-Soviet space and on developments in Russia, Georgia, and Belarus. For all its challenges, Ukraine is far more open and democratic than Russia or Belarus. For this reason, the U.S. should develop a maintainable and in-depth policy to promote economic and political reform that will help anchor Ukraine to Western institutions. The U.S. and the EU should encourage Ukraine to take the reforms necessary to qualify for

⁹⁵ Andriy Bycenko, “Public Opinion on NATO and Ukraine’s Accession to It,” *National Security and Defence*, 9 (2006): 20-1.

⁹⁶ Larrabee, 50.

EU membership. Perhaps Ukraine could be rewarded for short term reforms will participation in some EU activities such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy to start increasing the bonds with the West.⁹⁷

NATO membership should remain an option. Ukraine's membership should not be accelerated, but membership in this security organization would add to stability and again, help tie Ukraine to the West, especially since Ukraine's potential for joining the EU is relatively slim at this time. The U.S. should encourage and assist the Ukrainian government to develop an education campaign aimed at educating the Ukrainian population about NATO membership.

G. CONCLUSION

Modern day Ukraine has all the attributes of a state except a consolidated national identity. The primary internal reasons for the lack of national identity are the interpretations of the history of the Ukrainian people, ethnic composition, and regional loyalties. Ukraine, with all the potential for independent statehood remains in a state of limbo. Therefore, the project of nation building should be considered the most important national agenda, given that Ukraine has no clearly dominant ethnic group, little usable historical experience as a nation-state, and splintering regional politics.

The primordialist approach noted in Chapter II, suggests that nations cannot be constructed artificially, but must be grown organically. Constructivist theory argues that nations are modern creations, usually by elites, based on myths and memories. In contrast, ethnosymbolism is a middle ground between the two previous theories, and suggests nations are formed through the inclusion of the whole populace, not only the elites and the importance of treating the history of collective cultural identities over time. Thus the case of Ukraine suggests that none of the theories is adequate to understand the complex process of Ukrainian nation building.

Contrary to the Polish experience, which was able to develop a national identity from within, the situation in Ukraine is different for both internal and external reasons.

⁹⁷ Larrabee, 60.

Internally, the differences are not only language, a more heterogeneous society than Poland, but more importantly are derived from a lack of historic nation-state experience and a lack of collective memory. Externally, the interference of Russia on ethnic, linguistic, regional, and economic levels exacerbates the present divisions in Ukrainian society.

While Ukrainian vote for independence in 1991 was not primarily aimed at a question of a “return to Europe,” most supported the vote for independence as a means to shed the yoke of Russian servitude as opposed to independence as an end itself. Additionally, the growth of regionalism continues to undermine the development of a consolidated national identity. Regionalism in Ukraine may well lead to an even greater control of the regions by local political ‘clans’, each with their own agenda. The autonomous Crimea may well be the first issue to break the tenuous cohesion of Ukraine. Crimea has been managed well, but the root issues have never been resolved, and may deepen the divide in Ukrainian society on whether a compromise with Russia is desirable.

The persistent absence of a clear vision for Ukraine’s future by the political leaders and society at large will continue to hinder a consolidated national identity. Furthermore, the rise and strengthening of regionalism exacerbates the divisions within society.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. THEORY

This thesis examined the formation of national-identity through a comparative analysis of Poland and Ukraine. The research suggests that it is impossible to apply a purely primordialist or constructivist approach to explain national identity formation. However, these two theories give the basis for a popular, third theory, ethnosymbolism. As discussed in Chapter II, primordialism suggests that nations are organically grown entities which cannot be constructed or artificially created. In contrast, constructivism argues that nations are modern creations based on common myths and memories; belonging to an ethnic group is often a matter of perception. The middle ground of ethnosymbolism suggests that a nation is born by including the entire population in a historic territorial homeland with common historical myths and memories linked by a common culture.

Despite the differences in the explanation, the models above contribute some helpful generalizations; none of the above theories should be wholly rejected or accepted. The helpful generalizations are:

1. A sense of belonging to a larger group can evolve over time, whether it is organic or constructed.
2. Historical memories based on actual events or myths strengthen national identity.
3. A historical homeland is critical to national identity. The actual location of this homeland is also as important as the homeland itself.

B. NATIONAL IDENTITY

The overall goal of this thesis was to explore the process of national identity formation in Ukraine. The Ukrainian process is logically suggested by one of the

country's neighbors: Poland. The bottom line from the analyses of these two countries is that, while there are common Slavic roots and cultural cross-influences, they represent vastly different political entities.

Poland's national identity has persisted despite loss of independence and severe threats during World War II and the communist era. This is due in part to its geographical position but also due to an organic political elite and a powerful sense of cultural distinctiveness. However, it was not until the modern era that the Polish national idea spread to the popular consciousness, a key element in the ethnosymbolism theory. Indeed, Poland has developed an enduring, collective national identity with the elites and the masses *sharing* common national cultural attributes. Thus, the development of Polish national identity was dependent on the transfer of the collective memory from the elite to the masses. Poland was able to develop and maintain a common national identity because of its center of gravity, that is, the collective memory of its homeland and mass culture.

Conversely, Ukraine has all the attributes to be a nation-state, yet remains in a state of uncertainty. Therefore, nation building, based on a consolidated national identity, should be the most important national endeavor.

The appearance of an independent Ukraine in 1991 was unexpected by most scholars due to the incomplete and ill-defined Ukrainian national identity. However, once an independent Ukraine appeared, the country's leaders have declared a commitment to market transformation, political unity, and democratic reforms. Yet, these developments have been slow or nonexistent due to factors described in this thesis.

The most important factors identified in this analysis are: Ukraine's geographic location, which leads to external pressures on national identity formation; the absence of "usable" history; and regional differences in culture, language, and ethnicity. As described in this thesis these issues are the reason for a lack of a unified Ukrainian national identity.

Externally, Russian interference conducted by Russian ideologists and historians attempts to undermine Ukrainian efforts of nation building by building discord between the Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the South and East with those nationally conscious Ukrainians in the West.

Additionally, another important external factor is Western influence. Recent Ukrainian leaders have declared a foreign policy directed at Euro-Atlantic integration, yet this has proven to be overly optimistic.

The external factors outlined above should be considered the major cause of regional differences within Ukraine. As this thesis reveals, the process of nation-building is intertwined with state-building. The United States and European Union member states have an important stake in the outcome of this process because it will not only significantly shape Ukraine's foreign policy orientation, but also influence the balance of power on Europe's eastern edge. Only the development of a consolidated, distinctly Ukrainian national identity will determine if Ukraine will "return to Europe" or be pulled to an increasingly authoritarian Russia.

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