

Turning Ukrainians into a separate nation

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Abstract

Ukraine's national identity was born out of historical events which impacted the regions in Ukraine differently. In western and central parts of Ukraine, the people tend to be more pro-Western, while in the eastern and southern parts of the country, the people are more pro-Russian. This difference emerged from two approaches to the Ukrainian identity. The pro-Western part of the country believes that they were a separate nation from the Russians and should break ties with Russia. The pro-Russian part believes that the Ukrainians and the Russians are the same nation or two brotherhood nations that should stand together against outside threats.

This paper will analyze which key historical events were the roots of the Ukrainian national identity and where the differences between the regional approaches are laying. This difference between pro-Western and pro-Russian attitudes influenced the Ukrainian political landscape from its independence until 2014. After the Revolution of Dignity, the occupation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas, the political situation started to change towards more pro-Western policies. The invasion in 2022 could be the final nail in the coffin of the Ukrainian-Russian brotherhood, and it might erase the last difference between the two parts of Ukraine.

Keywords

ethnoscymbolism; history of Ukraine; Revolution of Dignity

Introduction

After the French revolution, the idea of modern nations was born. Throughout the 19th century, nations around Europe entered the national awakening stage. However, the process was not the same for every nation since some started to form a nation earlier than others. Moreover, the problem arose regarding the grounds on which a future nation could be built –a religion, a language, a shared cultural identity, or something else? In some cases, the question of borders between two nations overlapped, which resulted in conflicts. In other cases, there were separation problems between two groups because some nations claimed that other nations were nonexistent and, instead, were part of their nation.

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During the 20th century, many nations became independent states, but they incorporated areas with other national minorities. In some regions, however, the minorities formed a local majority. Furthermore, the neighboring country was considered the homeland of that minority, which led to secessionist movements, whose aim was to incorporate the concerned region into their nation-state. Today, in Europe, international conflicts can be divided into a few groups. Some of these conflicts are only fought in the political arena, for example, the Catalanian independence struggle. In other cases, the activists are fighting for greater autonomy, such as Flanders in Belgium. It is important to note that some of these autonomous movements are also, in part, independence movements, so a sharp distinction between these two goals cannot always be drawn. Finally, there are the so-called frozen conflicts or countries with limited recognition. The region is officially out of the central government's control, such as Transnistria.

In the case of Ukraine, there are two theories about Ukrainian nationhood. According to the first theory, Ukrainians and Russians are the same nation or, at the most, closely related fraternal nations that should stay together. Opposite to this theory is the belief that the Ukrainians are a separate nation and should build their future without Russia. One of the ways that can be used to analyze the development of the modern national identity is through the elections that follow the independence. In most cases, the political situation in Ukraine could be divided between pro-Western parties in the western and central parts of Ukraine and pro-Russian parties in the eastern and southern parts of the country. In the analysis, the focus will be on the parties' performance since there were a lot of independent or self-nominated candidates who won parliamentary seats, and the analysis of their affiliation with the pro-Western or pro-Russian side is outside of the scope of this paper. This "status quo" was maintained until 2014, when The Revolution of Dignity overthrew President Viktor Yanukovich, which led to the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the war in Donbas. After these events, pro-Western parties started to perform better than ever in the former pro-Russian parts of the country. These actions suggest a change in the way of thinking among the people about their definition of national identity. Therefore, the invasion in 2022 could be seen as the final separation between the two.

For a better understanding of Ukrainian history and its nationalism, this paper draws on the works of John Armstrong (Armstrong 1980), John Himka (Himka 1984; 1999), Paul Magocsi (Magocsi 1996; 2001), Serhii Plokhyy (Plokhyy 2015), and Orest Subtelny (Subtelny 2009). For the theoretical approach to nationalism, the primary source is the work of Anthony Smith

and the theory of ethnosymbolism. Finally, for the different official election results, the main source is the Central Election Commission of Ukraine.

ETHNOSYMBOLISM

There are many different approaches to the definition of nationalism. One of the most popular is ethnic nationalism or ethnonationalism. This view believes that the nation possesses: genealogical ties – connection with common ancestors; vernacular culture – connection with a specific culture; nativist history – special interpretation of history; and popular mobilization – gathering support among people to create a new national community (Smith 2008, 17). Although this definition is one way to explain the nation, it does not answer the question of how a nation has come into existence. There are three main perspectives on nationalism. The first is primordialism, according to which nations are a natural phenomenon, but this theory is almost nonexistent among scholars today (Coakley 2018). The second is the modernization theory, which states that nations emerged in the late 18th century during the process of modernization, and it considers the nation as a socially constructed community (Anderson 1983). The third perspective is ethnosymbolism, which argues that historical, cultural, and symbolic elements of the community also play a role in forming the modern nation. Ethnosymbolism is the middle ground between the first two perspectives (Smith 2009).

According to Smith (1998), there are three routes to nationhood: bureaucratic incorporation, vernacular mobilization, and immigrant nations that consist of the fragments of other ethnies. Ethnies are considered premodern ethnic communities, in which distinctive myths, memories, symbols, and values are a cohesive factor for a cultural population unit (Smith 1991, 29). Bureaucratic incorporation is the process in which the national identity develops from the culture of the upper classes of society, such as the court, the aristocracy, or the clergy, and then it is first accepted by the urban middle class and later by the rest of the society (Smith 1998, 193–94). One example of this kind of nationhood could be England, where the development started during the Tudor period at the court, through the English Civil War, and ended in the early 19th century when the masses accepted this discourse (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). In other cases, some countries such as Australia or the United States of America are nations that were created from many different ethnies, so it is a melting pot of different communities. Still, for Ukraine, the best explanation for statehood is vernacular mobilization. Vernacular mobilization is the process by which native intellectuals rediscovered and reinterpreted selective written and oral

myths, symbols, traditions, and history, which became roots for the nation (Smith 1998, 194). Some historical figures are rediscovered, and their deeds are often exaggerated to glorify the ancestral civilization, although probably they did not know anything about the nation that is reclaiming them (Smith 1991, 128). Space of living also plays a vital role in connecting people. Some natural features, such as rivers or living places, can be connected with the nation (Smith 1991, 127). In other words, the regional history, language, and culture became the mobilizing factor of the society.

However, the same place can be interpreted as a symbolic area for two or more different national communities. The ethnies take shape over long periods of time, and they have their own interpretation of the living space. Someone could argue that Gellner's understanding of a "high culture" could help. Gellner follows Plamenatz's theory of two kinds of nationalism, the Western and the Eastern (Plamenatz 1973; Gellner 1983, 99). Eastern nationalism did not have the "high culture" concept but was still competing among similar competitors and trying to assimilate competitors to achieve a close relationship between state and culture (Gellner 1983, 100). Because of that, other nationalism movements partly developed by rejecting the official state policy. In other words, ethnosymbolism could use a constructivist approach to cultural similarity as a base for political legitimacy. Still, Gellner's idea about the nation is centered around the industrialized society, and the Russian Empire was not one of them. So, the Russian nation was formed through the vernacular mobilization and crystallization of the "high culture." The Ukrainian nation also underwent the process of vernacular mobilization but rejected the assimilation into the Russian "high culture" since they were developing their own one.

Ukraine before the 19th Century

The first lasting state in Eastern Europe was the Kievan Rus'. It was founded in the ninth century by the Varangians (Vikings), and it was ruled by the Rurik dynasty, which also had Varangian origins, whose ruler Oleh declared it the mother of all the Rus' cities (Subtelny 2009, 26–27). In the late tenth century, the next important step happened in the history of Eastern Europa. The Grand Prince of Kyiv, Volodymyr the Great, accepted Christianity around the year 988 from the Byzantine Empire, which would bring the Kyivan Rus' into the eastern Christianity sphere of influence (Magocsi 1996, 72). In late 1240, the Mongols besieged the city of Kyiv and, after a few days, sacked it (Subtelny 2009, 41). This event would have a long-lasting impact on the people in Eastern Europe. It would mark the beginning of the division between the Ukrainians,

Belorussians, and Russians in the national sense since the three principalities would become the roots for their future countries. The Vladimir principality became the successor of Kievan Rus' and later the Muscovy principality for Russians; the Polatsk principality became the root for the Belorussians, while the principality of Galicia-Volhynia became the same for Ukrainians (Plokhi 2015, 51). Although there were other principalities, these three could be seen as the base for nation-building. Furthermore, in the coming centuries, each of them would experience different events, which would leave a mark on their national narratives.

In the next few centuries, the Ukrainian territory was divided between Muscovy, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Golden Horde, later the Crimean Khanate. The rivalry between the first two states would shape the history of Central and Western Ukraine since Muscovy's rulers wanted to expand westward. Religion played an important role in this conflict since the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was Roman Catholic, while the local population was Orthodox. This problem was dealt with in 1596, by the Union of Brest, where part of the clergy would create the Ruthenian Uniate Church (Magocsi 2002, 10). In other words, they kept their Eastern Greek rites but accepted the Pope as their leader, believing it would grant them the same rights that the Roman Catholic nobility enjoyed. In the 15th century, Muscovy subjugated other principalities in their region, while also spreading the idea of the Third Rome (Subtelny 2009, 77). This doctrine claims that after the fall of Rome and Constantinople, Moscow became the Third Rome and that they are now spiritually leaders and defenders of Orthodoxy. At the same time, they laid claim on the area of the former Kievan Rus'. Although they controlled some territory in present-day Ukraine, the Russians gained a real foothold in the middle of the 17th century, mainly because of the Cossacks. The Cossacks, mostly runaway peasants fleeing serfdom, settled around the Prypiat and Dnieper rivers (Plokhy 2015, 77). They lived from raiding, especially the Crimean Khanate areas, while also having some benefits as the soldiers protecting the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth's heartland. In the religious sense, they were Orthodox, and they wanted to protect their faith.

Under Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the Cossacks in Zaporozhia started an uprising and found allies in the Tatars from the Crimean Khanate (Magocsi 1996, 199). Soon, the Cossacks found a new ally. In 1654, the Pereiaslav Agreement was reached, in which the Cossacks put themselves under the protection of the Muscovite Tsar (Subtelny 2009, 134). The war between the Muscovites and Poland–Lithuania led to the signing of the Treaty of Andrusovo. The river Dnieper became the border between the two countries since the right

bank remained in Poland–Lithuania, while the left bank was given to the Muscovite side along with Kyiv, and the Zaporizhia was placed under joint protection (Magocsi 1996, 227). This treaty also marked the declining power of Poland–Lithuania and the growing power of the Muscovite state, which would soon be renamed the Russian Empire. In 1686, the Metropolitanate of Kyiv came under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Moscow (Subtelny 2009, 194). Officially, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople only gave Moscow the right to govern on His behalf over the Kyiv Metropolitanate, but the Russians interpreted it as giving them total control over it. Soon, Russia would turn its attention toward the Crimean Khanate, the Ottoman Empire in the south, and Poland–Lithuania in the west. Still, the Cossacks were not happy with being divided between two countries; so, for their divided homeland, they started to use a new name – Ukraine (Plokhi 2015, 122).

The 18th century would finally see the fall of the Khanate and Poland–Lithuania. The first partition of Poland happened in 1772, when the Habsburg Monarchy, Prussia, and the Russian Empire divided the parts of Poland–Lithuania, in which the area of Galicia was granted to the Habsburgs (Himka 1999, 6). Furthermore, the Ruthenian Uniate Church came under the Habsburg rule, and it became known as the Greek Catholic Church. After that, the Right Bank, Volhynia, and Podolia were given to Russia during the second partition in 1793 and the third partition in 1795 (Magocsi 1996, 285). In the south, Russia had to fight against the Tatars and the Ottomans. In 1783, the Russians annexed the area of Crimean Khanate; however, from their point of view, it was a reunification since they believed that the Tatars came with the Mongols and occupied Crimea and South Ukraine (Uehling 2004, 34). In the struggle against the Ottomans, Russia extended its border to the river Dnestr in 1792 (Sicker 2001, 82). In 1812, the river Prut became the new border (Aksan 2013, 282).

Ukraine in the 19th Century

In the Habsburg Monarchy, most Ruthenians lived in Galicia, Bukovyna, and Carpathian Ruthenia; most of them were members of the Greek Catholic Church. After the Revolution in 1848, the Ruthenians started to separate into three groups: the Old Ruthenians (*starorusyny*), the Ukrainophiles (*narodovtsi*), and the Russophiles (*moskvofily*) (Magocsi 2002, 22). The Old Ruthenians believed that they were part of Eastern Slavdom, but they imagined a national homeland restricted to Habsburg Galicia (Magocsi 2002, 22).

The Ukrainophile group considered themselves Ukrainians, a separate nation from the Carpathians to the Caucasus (Magocsi 2002, 22). They looked at

themselves as a part of a larger nation. The Russophile group believed that they were part of the Russian nation, the so-called *obshcherusskii narod* (Magocsi 2002, 22). One of the well-known supporters was Ivan Naumovich, a Greek Catholic priest. He argued for the cultural union of Galicia with the Russian Empire (Savino 2014, 50). At the same time, the Poles were the ruling class in the Galicia society, so they tried to polonize Ruthenia with little success.

During the Habsburg rule, Galicia, or the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, was composed of Western Galicia (Krakow and southern parts of Poland) and Eastern Galicia (Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano–Frankivsk regions). The first viceroy of Galicia, Agenor Gołuchowski, was a Polish noble who used the system to empower the Poles in Galicia (Magocsi 1996, 418). The election system, the so-called curial, in the Monarchy, was designed to keep Galician Poles in power since they were the upper class (Subtelny 2009, 332). Gołuchowski's most significant success was blocking the province's division between the Poles and the Ukrainians (Magocsi 1996, 418). The number of Ukrainians in the province was between 40% and 50%, up to 62% in the eastern half (Subtelny 2009, 308), but they controlled only 15% of seats in Sejm (Subtelny 2009, 304). This is one of the main reasons why so many Ruthenians accepted the ideas of Russophiles.

Still, the Ukrainophiles ended up victorious since a couple of things played in their favor. First, in the 1860s and 1870s, the Russian Empire started to promote its Great Russian ideas, so some Russian Ukrainians moved to Galicia. In 1873, they founded the Shevchenko Literary Society (Subtelny 2009, 321). Secondly, in 1868, Anatol Vakhnianyn, with other students, founded Prosvita – a society for the education and promotion of the Ukrainian national identity (Subtelny 2009, 321). Moreover, the Austro-Hungarians and the Russian Empire started to distrust each other, so the Austrians started to look favorably at the Ukrainians. In 1882, they put many prominent members of the Russophile group on trial under the charge of secession sentiment and promoting Orthodoxy (Magocsi 2002, 113). The charges were eventually dropped, but the damage had already been done. The support for the Russophile side started to despair because people did not want to be connected with an antigovernment group. Furthermore, Mitropolit Joseph Sembratovych resigned because he was considered friendly toward the Russophiles (Himka 1999, 93).

Andrey Sheptytsky became the new Metropolitan (Himka 2002, 225). He would transform the Greek Catholic Church into a key institution of the Ukrainian national movement. The only University in Lviv held lectures only in Polish, and Poles did not want to open the University in Ruthenian

(Ukrainian) languages (Prymak 1987, 59–60). He was trying to get universal manhood suffrage in the province, which was introduced in the 1913 elections (Himka 2002, 255), while the University was approved in 1914 (Himka 1984, 445). However, because of the First World War, its opening was postponed. The election reform resulted in an increase of Ukrainian representatives in the parliament. Then, in early September 1914, Russian troops occupied Lviv and Galicia, after which they planned the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church (Magosci 1996, 465). Sheptytsky was deported to Russia and kept in captivity in Suzdal (Subtelny 2009, 342–43). Many Ukrainians from Galicia joined the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen in the Austro-Hungarian army.

In other regions of the Monarchy, the Ukrainian national movement had different results. For example, in Bukovyna, the Romanians were numerical, but in Transcarpathia, they were politically dominant and promoted Magyarization (Subtelny 2009, 235). In Transcarpathia or Carpathian Ruthenia, the Greek Catholic Church was founded after the Union of Uzhhorod in 1646 (Magosci 1978, 23). The Uniate clergy fell under the Hungarian–Latin cultural domination since they were educated in Trnava, Eger, and Vienna (Rusinko 1996, 424). The Church leaders also supported the Hungarian integration policy into the Hungarian nation (Subtelny 2009, 335). The result was the emergence of Rusyn particularist nationalism. This national movement accepted that they were distinct Slavic people and held a very similar view to the Old Ruthenians in Galicia.

During the reign of Tsar Nicholas I (1825–55), the Russian Empire endorsed the motto of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality, a policy sometimes known as the Official Nationality (Riasanovsky 1969, 52). This meant that the unity of the Empire could be achieved through Orthodox Christianity and the Russian Orthodox Church, unconditional loyalty to the House of Romanov, and the national spirit – recognition of the founding role of Russian nationality. The position on Orthodoxy was particularly interesting since, from Peter the Great, the Russian Orthodox Church did not have a patriarch but rather the Most Holy Governing Synod, who was under the Tsar's control (Knox 2005, 43). The other important factor for Russian nationalism was the Slavophile movement. The members of this movement believed that Russia should base her future development on their own medieval Rus' tradition and not on Western models (Magosci 1996, 322). Furthermore, they also started to extend their influence with the idea of Pan-Slavism. Russian Panslavs wanted all Slavic nations to merge with the Great Russians in cultural or political terms (Magosci 1996, 368). For the Russians, the Ukrainians were

part of their nation since they had the same religion, a very similar language, and were under the rule of the Tsar.

In opposition stood the Little Russian movement, which was the name given to those who believed that Russians (the Great Russians) and Ukrainians (the Little Russians) were two separate nations. They started as a group of literate artists, the most famous among whom was Taras Shevchenko. Shevchenko published his poetry in the Ukrainian language. Some literary critics found Shevchenko's verse hard to understand, believing that poetry and literature should only be written in Russian (Plokhly 2017, chap. 3). However, his poetry would leave an everlasting impact on the Ukrainian identity, and, today, he is considered one of the Ukrainian national heroes. He was the poet who started the cultural revival of the Ukrainian people and their need to overthrow injustice (Grabowicz 2014, 437). The idea of national liberation in the 19th century was a prevalent motive among the nations that did not have their own country. In 1874, Tsar Alexander II issued the *Ems Ukaz*, which forbade Ukrainian languages in schools, plays, books, or other written forms (Plokhly 2017, chap. 3). Consequently, the Ukrainian intelligentsia were arrested or exiled, or they left the country. The prosecution of Ukrainians continued until the Empire's collapse since they were considered the opponents of Official Nationality. After the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Russian Revolution, Tsar Nicholas II was forced to call up the parliament (Duma) and at least officially end the absolute rule. The pro-Ukrainian delegates formed the Ukrainian Labor Club in 1907, which demanded the introduction of the Ukrainian language into schools, establishing a university department of Ukrainian studies, and local autonomy (Magocsi 1996, 380). Nevertheless, Nicholas II retained real power, and little changed until the fall of the dynasty. The Ukrainian national awakening had a different impact on the nations depending on the country where they lived. In both cases, the input for national awakening came from the writers, but the development was different. In the Habsburg Monarchy, the Greek Catholic Church was the institution where the Ukrainophiles found support to develop their ideas. Moreover, the government tolerated their activities since they could be used to counter the Poles. The falling out between the Habsburgs and the Romanovs only helped Ukrainians establish themselves as the winners in the competitions between them and others – the Rusyns and the Russophiles.

Modest success was achieved in Bukovyna, but the Church was under Romanian influence. In Carpathian Ruthenia, the Hungarian government successfully controlled the Greek Catholic Church, so the Rusyns' national identity was much stronger here than in other parts inhabited by the

Ruthenians. Furthermore, the government actively tried to create the Hungarian nation from the Carpathian Mountains to the Adriatic Sea, so they used every opportunity to weaken any national awakening. In the Russian Empire, the Ukrainians had the worst position. They were Orthodox, so religion was not the factor i differentiating them from the Russians. Moreover, the government took action to crack down on any deviation from the official policy, spreading the idea of a separate Ukrainian nation and started with the Russification of people by banning the use of Ukrainian.

Ukraine in the 20th Century

The 1917 fall of the Romanov Dynasty created a complicated situation. Officially, Russia was still at war with Germany and Austro-Hungary, while, at the same time, there was infighting between different factions. The Central Rada was established after the February Revolution and the downfall of the Tsar. At first, they wanted autonomy within the Russian Republic but later changed their position toward full independence. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks took power in the country. Still, they did not enjoy support in Kyiv, so they moved to Kharkiv, from where they tried to take control over Ukraine. After their failed attempt, they recognized the independence of the Ukrainian National Republic (UNR). Still, this did not mean that they had given up, and, in 1920, they finally succeeded (Yekelchuk 2007, chap. 4).

One of the reasons why the UNR failed was that they did not have strong support among the city's population in the important centers of industry and communication, as well as among the skilled personnel since they were Russian or Russified; so they had a strong anti-Ukrainian sentiment (Subtelny 2009, 354). As the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was founded, the Ukrainian Soviet Republic (UkSSR) joined as a founding member. The new government was formed in 1923 with a policy of indigenization or *korenizatsia* (Subtelny 2009, 387). The policy's goal was to include non-Russians in state affairs and the cultural development of other nationalities. Almost all the children (97%) were educated in the Ukrainian languages, and the literacy rate rose from 15% in 1917 to >50% in 1927 in the countryside, while in the cities, at the same time, the literacy rate rose from 40% to 70% (Subtelny 2009, 388–89). Industrial development brought many peasants to the cities, which also changed the ethical situation. In 1920, there were 32% of Ukrainians in the cities, while, in 1939, there were >58% of Ukrainians (Magocsi 1996, 540). However, the situation in the USSR was not good because it was a one-party communist state. Joseph Stalin wanted to turn

the country from an agrarian into a highly industrialized and urbanized one; so, the state confiscated grain, exported it, and invested the profit back into the industry. One of the consequences of this policy was the Great Famine or the Holodomor. Since there was not enough grain left for the peasants, a few million died from starvation in 1932–3, while the official authorities denied any problem (Magocsi 1996, 559). Furthermore, Stalin reversed the pro-Ukrainian reforms, so the Russian language and culture were considered the best option to promote the Soviet ideology (Subtelny 2009, 422). A new wave of Russification began.

In the former Austro-Hungarian part of Ukraine also, the situation was complicated. At the end of 1918, Austro-Hungary was dissolved, and the fight between the Poles and the Ukrainians for control over Galicia began (Plokhyy 2015, 212). On November 1, 1918, the Ukrainians took control over Lviv, but soon the Poles retook it (Magocsi 2002, 27). The Ukrainians established the West Ukrainian People's Republic and continued the fight in Galicia until mid-1919, when the Polish army finally drove them out (Magocsi 1996, 516). During these months, the West Ukrainian People's Republic and Ukrainian Peoples Republic representatives met and declared unification, but both continued to have separate governments (Magocsi 2002, 27). Still, one important thing happened for Ukrainian nationalism for the first time – they united under one state.

In the interwar period, Galicia was part of the Republic of Poland, and the Poles divided this region into four provinces (*województwa*): Krakow, Lviv, Stanyslaviw (today Ivano-Frankivsk), and Ternopil (Magocsi 2002, 28–29). The international community accepted the annexation of Galicia into Poland after the Poles promised to respect Ukrainian rights (Subtelny 2009, 427), a promise that the Poles never truly honored. In 1924, the Grabski Law was passed, restricting the Ukrainians' right to be educated in their language (Fellerer 2017, 117). The Ukrainians organized into political parties, of which the strongest one was the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance (UNDO). UNDO's program was a mixture of Catholic, liberal, and socialist ideologies (Armstrong 1980, 18–19), with their final goal being the independence of Western Ukraine through "organic development" (Subtelny 2009, 435). In other words, they believed that, initially, they must build their institutions inside the Polish state and then pursue the dream of independence. The Greek Catholic Church was the only Ukrainian institution that the government was afraid to touch; so, under the leadership of Mitropolit Sheptytsky, it became a bulwark of Ukrainian distinctiveness. Since nationality was not included

in the census, the Greek Catholic identity became the definition of the Ukrainian identity (Plokhyy 2015, 238).

In November 1918, the population of the Subcarpathian Rus' was divided about its future. Some wanted independence, while others wanted to join the Galician Ukrainians, some wanted to join Czechoslovakia, and some wanted to stay as the autonomous region in Hungary (Magocsi 1978, 91). After the peace treaty, the area was given to Czechoslovakia (Magocsi 1978, 100). Support for the Ukrainian cause was very low since most of the population did not identify as such. For example, in the 1937 referendum, around 73% of the people refused to have their children taught in Ukrainian (Magocsi and Pop 2012, 512). After the Munich agreement, this region gained its autonomous status, but, soon, it was incorporated into the Hungarian state (Magocsi 1996, 614–15).

During the Second World War, Ukraine was hit hard by fighting. From 1941 until 1944, numerous military operations took place on its soil, leaving the country in ruin. The end of the war brought some territorial gains for Ukraine. Galicia and Subcarpathian Rus' were united with the rest of the country. In Galicia, the Greek Catholic Church was under tremendous pressure. The new Metropolitan Josyf Slipyj was arrested on charges of collaboration with the Germans, while many other priests were arrested, exiled, or killed (Magocsi 1996, 650). Moreover, the Soviet controlled-synod in Lviv united the Church with the Russian Orthodox Church (Schelkens 2011, 684). Many Galician Ukrainians joined the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and continued to resist the Soviet authorities (Plokhyy 2015, 295). After Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev became the new leader of the USSR. His regime most affected Ukraine by ceding Crimea from Russia to Ukraine. The majority of the population was Russian (71%) and 22% were Ukrainian, while the Tatars, who made up about 25% of the population before the Second World War, had been expelled from Crimea after accusations of collaboration with the Germans (Magocsi 1996, 653). Furthermore, the 300th anniversary of unification between Russia and Ukraine was celebrated, and Ukraine received better treatment, being considered the second among the equals (Subtelny 2009, 499).

After the fall of Khrushchev in 1964, Leonid Brezhnev seized power. Moderate Russian nationalism was tolerated in this period, but non-Russian nationalism was not. In Ukraine, much national consciousness was prosecuted. The final crackdown on Ukraine happened in 1972, when the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Petro Shelest, was arrested under the accusation of idealizing Ukrainian Cossackdom and other nationalist deviations (Subtelny 2017, chap. 5). The only successful thing, from the language

perspective, was spreading the Russian language throughout the USSR. In 1989, about 215 million out of 290 million USSR citizens had proficiency in the Russian language, while most of those who did not claim proficiency lived in Central Asia or the Caucasus (Subtelny 2017, chap. 5). Mikhail Gorbachev tried to reform the USSR, but his efforts led to the dissolution of the Union. In 1991, the Ukrainians voted in favor of independence (92%), including the eastern oblasts (80%), and the lowest “yes” vote was achieved in Crimea at 54% (Magocsi 1996, 674). Still, many voters in these Oblasts stayed at home and did not participate in the referendum.

Ukraine After Independence

The newly independent Ukraine faced many challenges. From the economic perspective, the country had to go through the phase of transition toward a market-based economy. The political life also changed from the one-party state into a semipresidential representative democratic republic and a multiparty system. Still, the biggest problem for the new state was internal division not only between the Ukrainians and other minorities, such as the Russians, but also among the Ukrainians themselves. The Ukrainian national identity showed some regional differences. In Galicia, the Ukrainian identity is strongly connected with the Greek Catholic Church, which was harshly prosecuted during the Soviet period. Moreover, the Russian Orthodox Church strongly resented Greek Catholicism, so many people in the western part of Ukraine had deep distrust toward Russia and anything connected with the Russian culture. Central Ukraine, the area around Kyiv, had pro-Western sympathy, but it took its inspiration from Khmelnytsky and the Cossack state since they stood for a united state. Eastern and Southern Oblasts had much more pro-Russian sentiment (Figure 1). The long period of Russification led to much more sympathy toward Russia. This does not mean that they did not consider themselves Ukrainians but that their identity was not connected with something that the other parts of Ukraine would consider important. For example, in 2001, in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, 74.9% and 68.8%, respectively, of people said that Russian is their native language, while the same was true in the Odessa, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts (41.9%, 44.3%, and 48.2%, respectively; State Statistics Committee of Ukraine: “About number and composition population of Ukraine by All-Ukrainian population census: 2001 data.”). It is important to mention that the number of Ukrainians in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts was near 60%, while in the other three oblasts, it was well >60% (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine: “About number and composition population of

Ukraine by All-Ukrainian population census' 2001 data.”). In other words, the number of citizens professing Ukrainian nationality was higher than the number of Ukrainian citizens claiming to speak Ukrainian as their native language. Crimea is the third region with a distinctive background. Since it was the last part incorporated into Ukraine and most of its population is ethnic Russian, its population also showed above-average affection toward Russia. With its Rusyn population, the Zakarpattia Oblast developed its own regional identity. Every political leader had to balance these differences to keep Ukraine between the West and Russia since getting closer to one side would provoke a revolt from the other.

In the first presidential election after independence, Viacheslav Chornovil, a dissident during the Soviet times, received the majority of the vote in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and the Ternopil Oblasts, while the remaining population voted for Leonid Kravchuk (Lapychak, 1991). Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma faced each other in the 1994 presidential elections. Kuchma had been considered pro-Russian, so the western and most of the central oblasts voted for Kravchuk, while the remaining population of the country voted for Kuchma (Kravchuk and Chudowsky 2005, 137). The 1999 elections were the only elections where one candidate received support from all parts of Ukraine. Kuchma won, while his opponent Petro Symonenko finished second and gathered support across Ukraine, except in the western oblasts. Symonenko was the Communist party candidate, and he wanted close ties with Russia (Klobucar et al. 2002, 325). In 2004 and 2010, Viktor Yanukovych did not perform well in the western and central parts of the country (Figure 1), in which Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko enjoyed more support. Yanukovych, whose election rally Vladimir Putin once attended, was seen as the pro-Russian candidate (Gidadhubli 2005, 107). In the 21st century, the parliamentary results followed almost the same pattern as the presidential results.

In November 2013, Yanukovych rejected an European Union agreement for future integration, sparking widespread protest in Ukraine (Fisher 2014). Soon, across Ukraine, pro-Western supporters started their rallies. The events are known as the Revolution of Dignity or the Maidan Revolution since the main protest happened on the Maidan Square in Kyiv. Yanukovych resigned and left Kyiv, but Russia intervened in Crimea. In March 2014, Crimea held a referendum about being an independent country or joining the Russian Federation, and 96.7% voted in favor of annexation by Russia (Somin 2014). Still, there was evidence of intimidation and violence by pro-Russian forces and the armed groups that controlled the voting areas (Anderson 2014). In the

Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, a fight between the Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian separatists erupted. The ceasefire agreement, Minsk II, was signed in Minsk (Gibbons-Neff 2015) but never came into full effect. The fight between Russia and Ukraine also entered the religious sphere. The question about the autocephaly (independence) of the Ukraine Church from Moscow became one of the focal points. Finally, the Ecumenical Patriarch signed the Tomos in January 2019, in which he recognized the Orthodox Church of Ukraine as autocephalous (Interfax-Ukraine 2019). He reasoned that in the 17th century, the Ecumenical Patriarch only temporarily gave control over Kyiv to Moscow and never legally renounced his claim over Kyiv. The Russian Orthodox Church refused to accept this. Ukraine continued to defy Russia's wishes, which resulted in the Russian President Vladimir Putin deciding to crush the pro-Western government in Kyiv. In his speech, Putin justified his actions by claiming that Ukraine is under the control of extreme nationalists and neo-Nazis, so the Russian forces are actually liberating the country, and they also must protect the Russian citizens and the ethnic Russians in Ukraine (The Kremlin, Moscow, "Address by the President of the Russian Federation.").

The Parliamentary and Presidential Elections After the Revolution of Dignity

Following the Revolution of Dignity, the occupation of Crimea, and the beginning of the war in Donbas, a new wave of nationalism swept across Ukraine. Between 2014 and 2022, two presidential and two parliamentary elections took place. The parliamentary election in 2014 showed that support for pro-Russian parties had faded in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. In 2012, the Party of Regions was the first party, by popular vote in the party list, in every electoral constituency in Crimea, Odessa, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and the Luhansk Oblasts, while the Communist Party won one district in the Kherson Oblast. The Party of Regions also won some districts in Zakarpattia, Chernihiv, Sumy, Kirovohrad, Poltava, and the Zhytomyr Oblasts. The party, in single-member constituencies, also performed very well in the region where the party list was strong but also won seats in additional Oblasts: Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia, Rivne, and Kyiv. In 2014, the new pro-Russian party, the Opposition Bloc, emerged, but support for it was not the same as for the Party of Regions. Because of the war in Donbas and the occupation of Crimea, some seats were left empty since the elections could not be carried out in Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. The Opposition Block had been the largest party, in the party list of the constituencies, in all Kharkiv and Luhansk Oblasts electoral districts, while winning the most districts

in Donetsk Dnipropetrovsk, the Zaporizhzhia Oblast. All districts in the Kherson Oblast went to the Poroshenko Block; in the Mykolaiv Oblast, only the city of Mykolaiv stayed loyal to the Opposition Block, and in the Odessa Oblast, five out of eleven districts. The Opposition Block won two seats in the single-mandate constituencies, i.e., one in the Luhansk and one in the Donetsk Oblasts. In 2019, the pro-Russian Opposition Platform won all districts in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts and one district in the Odessa Oblast, while in the single-mandate constituencies, they won the majority of these two Oblasts. The Opposition Block also won some seats in the Donbas region, including one seat in Kharkiv and one seat in Zaporizhzhia (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine. "Election of people's deputies of Ukraine.").

A similar trend can be seen in the presidential elections. In the first round, in 2010, Viktor Yanukovich won all districts in Crimea, Odessa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Donetsk, and the Luhansk Oblasts, while also winning a majority of districts in the Zakarpattia Oblast and one district each in Chernihiv, Sumy, Kirovohrad, Poltava, and the Zhytomyr Oblasts. The second round had similar results, except that Tymoshenko won in Chernihiv and some districts of the Zakarpattia Oblast. In the presidential elections, in 2014, Petro Poroshenko won in the first round, winning the most votes in all electoral districts except one in the Kharkiv Oblast, which was won by Mykhailo Dobkin from the Party of Regions. In the 2019 elections, Yuriy Boyko ran as an independent, but he was a former member of the Party of Regions and won 11.67% in the first round, finishing in the fourth place but winning the majority of votes in all districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, one in the Kharkiv Oblast, and two in the Odessa Oblast (The Central Election Commission of Ukraine. "Election of the President of Ukraine.").



Figure 1. Oblasts of Ukraine (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], “Ukraine: Administrative map.”*).

It is observable that after all the occurrences in 2014, pro-Russian sentiment declined. The idea of two fraternal nations had been broken since the Russian Federation occupied the Crimean Peninsula and supported the rebels in Donbas, showing that Russia placed its national interest above good relations with Ukraine, and Ukraine is considered not as equal but as a junior partner. Southern and Eastern Russians often have a deeper understanding with Russians – they are of the same faith; Russian is the mother tongue to the majority of them, and they have a stronger cultural connection with Russia than with Western Ukraine.

Still, the actions from 2014 onward showed that the Ukrainians in these Russified areas started to redefine their relationship with the Ukrainian national identity. The election results show that more and more people are turning toward the idea of Ukraine as an independent nation. The pro-Russian politicians had one major disadvantage after 2014. Until then, they could promise that having a good relationship with Russia would guarantee the security of the Ukrainian state. Now, Russia is considering Crimea as part of their state, so in part, the pro-Russian parties are seen as entities that would recognize this status if they came to power.

Furthermore, since the 2022 invasion, those who support cooperation with Russia have come to be seen as traitors. At the same time, Russian nationalism cannot cope with losing Ukraine since it is the birthplace of their nation. Kyiv is the place from which Russian Tsars and the Patriarchs claimed their origins. According to Russian nationalism, fueled by the idea of the Third Rome or Greater Russian concept, Russians are the chosen ones destined to save the faith or Europe from decadence. The Ukrainians are their little brothers whom the decadent West seduces since, on their own, they could never dream of leaving their Russian counterparts. This is where Russia has fallen into a trap. Kyiv has symbolic importance for Ukrainians and Russians but how they look at its importance makes the distinction between the two nations. The Russian Empire was trying to assimilate other nations based on their cultural similarity with Russians. The orthodox faith was one feature that could help assimilate Ukrainians. At the same time, Ukrainians were developing their identity, which was not corresponding with the official Empire policy. Rejecting Official Nationality became part of Ukrainian identity. The birth of the Ukrainian nation was a long one, and it is still ongoing since the national consensus about some issues was hard to reach. However, after the Revolution in 2014, things started to change.

Conclusion

For Ukrainians, Kyiv became the symbol of their identity. The Metropolitanate of Kyiv, in Kievan Rus', was the place from which modern Ukrainian Greek Catholic and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine can track their tradition and existence. Kyiv became the historical landscape that unites the people. Khmelnytsky did sign the treaty with Russia, but he is considered a freedom fighter in the modern sense. The Cossacks had to fight for their freedom and faith against different and much stronger nations. Those moments where they were loyal subjects of the Tsar have been forgotten, or at least people turn a blind eye to them. Khmelnytsky became the hero who fought for the right cause and is the ancestor of the Ukrainian nation. Furthermore, the Dnieper River became, for the national identity, the natural feature that united the Ukrainians throughout history. Shevchenko established the Ukrainian language in the literary world, so that the Ukrainians could be proud of their language. He showed that there is no shame in using an eastern-Slavic language other than Russian.

The long period under the Russian domination and the Russification of the Ukrainian lands brought some misunderstanding between different parts of Ukraine. For western and central parts, staying as far away as possible

from Russia was the best thing Ukraine could do. On the other hand, the independence of Ukraine was a good thing for the eastern and southern parts, but that did not mean they could not stand together with their Russian brothers. In other words, although they all considered themselves Ukrainians, they interpreted part of their identity differently.

After 2014, things started to change since people understood that Russia was not the bigger brother but rather the bigger bully. Some people continued to have hope that things would eventually calm down and that the war would not erupt between Russia and Ukraine. Those dreams were shattered on February 24, 2022. Still, those who believed that the pro-Russian Oblasts would welcome the Russians as the liberators were wrong. Instead, a new wave of patriotism swept across the country. So, it may be said that Putin unintentionally did one good thing for Ukraine: developing more substantial unity between the western and eastern parts of the country whose national identity was Ukrainian but had structural differences. This invasion became the most substantial uniting factor for the Ukrainians. At some point, it might become the founding narrative in building the Ukrainian national identity for the 21st century. The nation is born in war but forged in the stories.

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