

**The Politics of National Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine:  
1991-2004**

**DILAVER FAHRIYEV**

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1991-2004**

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**DILAVER FAHRIYEV**

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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Prof. Dr. Sencer AYATA  
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

---

Prof. Dr. Meliha ALTUNIŞIK  
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

---

Assist. Prof. Dr. Oktay F. TANRISEVER  
Supervisor

**Examining Committee Members**

Assoc.Prof.Dr. A.Nuri YURDUSEV	METU, IR	_____
Assist.Prof.Dr. Oktay F.TANRISEVER	METU, IR	_____
Assoc.Prof.Dr. İlhan UZGEL	AU,SBF,IR	_____

**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

Name, Last name: Dilaver FAHRIYEV

Signature :

## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Politics of National Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine: 1991–2004**

FAHRIYEV, Dilaver

M.S., Department of International Relations

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Oktay F. TANRISEVER

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This thesis analyzes the role of Ukrainian mythological discourses in the formulation of Ukrainian national identity. The main purpose of the present thesis is to explore the interaction between mythological discourses, which are defined as sets of popular beliefs, presuppositions and the patterns of self-identification rooted in the consciousness of ethnic collectivities, and the process of national identity formation in post-Soviet Ukraine. The main focus of the thesis is on the ways of the use of Ukrainian mythological discourses by post-Soviet Ukraine's political and intellectual elite preoccupied with the task of implementing their nation-building project in Ukraine. This thesis consists of six chapters. Following the introductory first chapter, the second chapter explores the concept of "myth" in nationalism studies. The third, fourth and fifth chapters discuss the nation-building process of post-Soviet Ukraine by examining cultural, political and social aspects. The concluding chapter discusses the main findings of the thesis.

Keywords: National Identity, Nation-Building, Myth, Political Culture, Ukraine

## ÖZ

### Sovyet-Sonrası Ukrayna'da Ulusal Kimlik Politikaları: 1991–2004

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Bu tez çalışması, Ukrayna ulusal kimliğinin oluşturulması sürecinde Ukrayna mitolojik söylemlerinin rolünü incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın ana amacı, etnik toplulukların bilincinde kök salmış popüler inanç, varsayım ve kendini tanımlama biçimlerinin oluşturduğu sistemler şeklinde tanımlanan mitolojik söylemler ile ulusal kimliğin oluşturulması süreci arasındaki etkileşimi incelemektir. Bu tezin odak noktası, Ukrayna mitolojik söylemlerinin Sovyet-sonrası Ukrayna'da ulus-kurma projesini gerçekleştirme görevi edinen siyasi ve entelektüel seçkin kesimi tarafından kullanılmasıdır. Bu tez çalışması altı bölümden oluşmaktadır. Giriş niteliğindeki birinci bölümü izleyen ikinci bölüm milliyetçilik çalışmaları bağlamında mit kavramını incelemektedir. Üçüncü, dördüncü ve beşinci bölümler kültürel, siyasi ve toplumsal boyutları ele alarak Sovyet-sonrası Ukrayna'daki ulus-kurma sürecini tartışmaktadır. Son bölüm tezin temel bulgularını tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ulusal Kimlik, Ulus-Kurma, Mit, Siyasal Kültür, Ukrayna.

To My Dear Sisters,  
My Infinite Source of Wisdom and Life Energy

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

National myths have always played an important role in the formulation of the national identity of any ethnic collectivity and shaping its national consciousness. It is through myths that ethnic collectivities have expressed the most inner layers of their identity, it is through myths that the image and perceptions of an ethnic community have reached their most concentrated, vivid and crystallized form.

It was concentrated and compressed because the formation of any mythological discourse took millennia to reach its most developed form and could not be changed at a wish of one generation of national intelligentsias. Rather, it bore the traces of centuries-long historical experiences of an ethnic community and represented the final product of a painful process of the formation of the national image. It was painful because it made necessary many re-evaluations and re-interpretations of the various aspects of national image depending on various historical experiences and stages of development of ethnic community, but in the end, these re-interpretations have only served to crystallize national images.

National myths also represent the most vivid expression of the image of any ethnic collectivity since they include both oral and written forms of expression. National myths also constitute a form of expression that is the most accepted and internalized by the members of an ethnic collectivity. No ethnic myth can be wholesome and radically questioned or transformed at a wish of one generation of the national entrepreneurs since it represents the final product of national self-questioning and a centuries-long quest for its genuine and authentic character. In this sense, it is the most concentrated will of an ethnic collectivity. Even though some aspects of certain national myth can be intentionally exaggerated and brought to an agenda by national intelligentsias depending on the requirements and specificity of a historical stage of development, its concentrated character prevents it from being radically abandoned or altered.

Yet, saying that no ethnic myth can be radically transformed or abandoned by the attempts of ethnic entrepreneurs does not mean that national myths represent a never-changing layer of identity. The formulation of the national identity of any ethnic collectivity and national myths has never been a static process. It is always a quest for renewal; it always runs under the impact of ever-changing pressing social and cultural needs requiring constant redefinition and reproduction. It is being open to the reconstruction and reshaping that enables ethnic boundaries to be re-created and perpetuated, that paradoxically ensures the authenticity and originality of a national identity. The quest for an authentic, genuine national identity has always been characterized by a constant reformulation and reinterpretation of the distinguishing symbols and features of ethnic collectivity or key moments in its history.

Neither national identity is a concept that can be explained in a purely rational and objective terms. The work of ethnic entrepreneurs has frequently to do with the concepts heavily loaded with symbolic meanings. The political actions and decisions relating to the process of the formation of national identity can not be explained within the paradigm of the realist school. According to a proponent of the realist paradigm, the action or policy of any political actor, be it in the internal political realm or an international actor, has predominantly been considered to be guided by rational considerations and objective factors such as economic or political interests. The actor is seen as a rational subject taking the logic of profit-maximization as a guiding principle in his behavior.

Yet, no political decision can be regarded as being isolated from a wider socio-cultural and symbolic context in which it is given. Indeed, as George Schöpflin points out in his pathbreaking article on the functions and taxonomy of myths, even though politics is often “...conceptualized as governed by strictly rational and transparent considerations of a purely utilitarian kind, in which costs and benefits are the classical model”<sup>1</sup>, the reality concerning political actions is somewhat different. According to Schöpflin:

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<sup>1</sup> George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 27.

[W]hat the analysis of myth suggests is that politics is an aspect of the overall cultural system. Every political action is embedded in a wider cultural context. Cultural presuppositions and values may not be seen as narrowly political ...and symbolic action is not perceived as a central means of interaction between political elites and public opinion, yet they do have this role. In this sense, myth creates a field in which interests are conveyed in a symbolic fashion or with considerable symbolic baggage.<sup>2</sup>

Stressing inadequacies of the rationalist methods and approaches in analysing the process of the formulation of national sentiments, George Schöpflin has contended that “there are certain aspects of our world that cannot be encompassed by conventional rationality. Various processes, ideas, values, mechanisms and so on remain hidden from customary modes of scrutiny...”<sup>3</sup> George Schöpflin makes reference to Mary Douglas, who points out that “[a] good part of the human predicament is always to be unaware of the mind’s own generative powers and to be limited by concepts of the mind’s own fashioning.”<sup>4</sup> According to George Schöpflin, the indispensability of the myth analysis consists in the fact that “[m]yth, and the analysis of myth is one of the ways of looking....at the covert part of thinking and the biases, slants and prejudices that are....a necessary part of the way in which collectivities define their universe.”<sup>5</sup> Anthony D.Smith has also underlined the importance of national myths in the formulation of ethnic identity: “...[N]o national movement and no persisting ethnic identity can emerge without a bedrock of shared meanings and ideals, which guide action and determine the direction of social change.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On this point George Schöpflin makes reference to Ladislav Holy, *The Little Czech Nation and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Cited in George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by George Schöpflin from Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings* (London: Routledge, 1975), p.xiv. Cited in George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power. The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power. The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony D.Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 57.

The author of the thesis is of view that it is not sufficient to look at objective factors in the quest to explore the underlying dynamics of the formulation of Ukrainian national identity. It is true that objective considerations tend to acquire importance when the history of bilateral relations between certain states is not compounded by the overlapping historical and moral claims and when the ideological and cultural clash between these states is not the case. For instance, when the objective on the part of both states is to develop economical, geostrategical relations or to cooperate in the security field, subjective factors are likely to retreat to a second plan. But when bilateral relations carry the imprint of the centuries-long cultural, psychological or ideological dominance of one state over another, when the long history of interactions is marked by the overlapping civilizational, cultural or moral claims, then it is possible to discern an invisible but, at the same time, important process of shaping the popular stereotyping models or perceptions of one state by the population of another. In such cases discursive level of reasoning tends to acquire much more importance than the reasoning based purely on the consideration of national interest and symbolic meanings and the cultural reproduction gains prominence to an extent never acceptable if we are accustomed to thinking in the conventional realist paradigm. The images of another state become heavily loaded with symbolic meanings and self-perceptions and self-identification begin to proceed through the process of cultural reproduction. In such cases there is a tendency for utilizing the process of cultural reproduction for the purpose of identifying themselves being based on our difference from the state we have had a long history of complicated and strained relationships. In other words, in such cases one state tries to formulate its own identity boundaries not vis-à-vis states with which it had almost no common historical experience, but vis-à-vis the state with which it has shared something in the past. To put it more succinctly, the Ukrainian nation is genuine and authentic not because it is different, say, from the Dutch, but because it is different from its cultural and civilizational competitor, the Russians.

One might argue that the national myth represents a category that has to do with the cultural field and may be irrelevant in the political realm and external affairs of the state. However, taking into consideration the fact that national myths constitute a value system, it is inevitable that those responsible for the foreign decision-making mechanism take decisions within the confines of this value

framework. They simply cannot escape the fundamental impact of this framework no matter how rational and unbiased they claim to be. Therefore, national myths are important in the political realm as well.

One of the chief assumptions of the thesis is that national myths constitute a mental framework consisting of certain beliefs, assumptions, biases, prejudices and can also be defined as a set of self-images and the patterns of self-identification. The point here is that this framework has a considerable impact on the process of the formulation of Ukrainian national identity.

Second assumption of the thesis is that national myths of Russia and Ukraine and their mutual perceptions and images influence the formulation of Ukrainian national identity to a far greater extent than it has been assumed in the academic community.<sup>7</sup>

The third assumption of the thesis is an emphasis put on the subjective character of national myths and the fact that they do not actually represent the objective reality. The author would, rather, define these myths as the reflection of the objective truth in the mirror of the popular memory and national consciousness. However, no matter to what extent the mass consciousness tends to distort the objective truth or present it in the light and in the form that best suit national-building projects, this does not mean the absence of such a truth. An emphasis is just on the way of the reinterpretation of this truth.

The argument of the thesis is that despite the existence of the view that post-communist states should be defined as “nationalizing states” (as argued by Rogers Brubaker) or “nationalizing regimes” (as argued by Graham Smith) due to the explicit efforts by the national elites to give priority to forging national identities of eponymous/core ethnic groups, the use of mythological discourse in Ukraine was not aimed at privileging the core Ukrainian ethnic group, but, rather, represented an attempt to minimize the negative effect of historical and ethnocultural narratives imposed on Ukraine in the Russian imperial and Soviet periods. It will be argued in the present thesis that the ways of the use of mythological discourse and a whole set of nation-building practices in Ukraine do not display the correspondence of

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the importance of myths in the formation of national identity see, George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 19-35.

Ukraine's nation-building model to the concept of "nationalizing state". Indeed, as Kataryna Wolczuk has contended, while trying to formulate such a narrative that would glorify "the centuries-long yearning and struggle of the "Ukrainian people" for independent statehood"<sup>8</sup>, the elite has refrained from placing emphasis upon ethnocultural and linguistic differences between the Ukrainian ethnic group and the Russians.<sup>9</sup> Neither has the elite attempted to underline the dominant position in the polity of the Ukrainian eponymous majority. According to Kataryna Wolczuk, one of the reasons why Ukraine can not be defined as a "nationalizing state" is the fact that:

...[T]he precise configuration of the constituent ethnic communities in the Ukrainskyi narod is left deliberately vague; and hence the position of the Ukrainian ethnic nation (Ukrainska natsiia) is not exalted. Moreover, the imperative for positive action to implement the linguistic and cultural de-Russification of Ukraine has so far been eschewed or played down. The assertion of the leading role of the Ukrainian ethnos by dwelling on its symbolic representation and historical myths appears not so much to be designed to revitalize the ethnocultural bonds of community as to reflect the pragmatic recognition by the elite of the absence of an alternative reservoir of plausible symbols and myths.<sup>10</sup>

The present thesis aims at the exploration of the peculiarities and complexities of the nation-building project undertaken in post-Soviet Ukraine and the concomitant construction of nation-building discourse in post-Soviet Ukraine between 1991 and 2004. Rather than adopting a chronological and strictly narrating approach, this thesis is distinguished by its conceptual emphasis, with a special scholarly attention devoted to the investigation of the nature and mechanisms of the interplay between four pillars of the transitional process undergone by Ukraine in the first decade of its independence. These pillars are state-building, nation-building, transition to free market economy and the introduction and subsequent inculcation of liberal democratic principles and values. The main emphasis of the present work is the interconnectedness of these four dimensions of the recent multiple transformation being undergone by post-Soviet Ukraine.

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<sup>8</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": The "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine", *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December 2000), p. 689.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Thus, this thesis concentrates upon concepts and paradigms, rather than isolated events and their consequences. While fully acknowledging the risk of being labeled as “excessively functional, structuralist and culture-focused” with an implicit critique of providing a somewhat deterministic picture of post-Soviet transition of Ukraine and assuming a linear view of political transformation conditioned by institutional legacies and cultural factors, this thesis, nevertheless, contends that despite a prominent role played by the elites in the Ukrainian transition, the political choices and decisions of the Ukrainian elites were invariably conditioned by the network of societal, economic and political factors at work at the time of achieving independence. These factors, first and foremost, included institutional, economic, political and socio-cultural inheritance from the Soviet past. The whole complex of these residuals provided an inevitable texture, a vital milieu, in which and under restrictions of which political decisions had to be made and political contest for influence over decision-making had to take place. In other words, this thesis precludes any possibility of wholly arbitrary inclinations on the part of leaders in any of the aforementioned four pillars of post-Soviet transition of Ukraine and strongly argues against the underestimation of the interconnectedness of political decision-making and socio-cultural framework.

Partly inspired by the macro-modeling approach of comparative studies, this thesis advocates the presence and importance of a strong negative correlation between the level of endurance exhibited by Soviet institutional and socio-cultural legacies and the prospects of the nation-building project in post-Soviet Ukraine, which is most evident in the East of Ukraine, and a considerable positive correlation between the strength of pre-Soviet values and traditions and the prospects of the nation-building project, which is most marked in the West of Ukraine. It also detects a strong cause-effect relationship between the level of democratic awareness and attachment on the part of the Ukrainian populace and the likelihood of the success of the nation-building project in Ukraine. Discourses of democratisation and discourses of nation-building in Ukraine are interconnected<sup>11</sup> to an extent not observed in Central and Eastern European states largely due to the historical peculiarity of

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the important modernizing functions of nationalistic discourse in the European parts of the former Soviet Union, see Victor Zaslavsky, “Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Societies,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (Spring, 1992), pp. 97-121.

Ukraine consisting in the lack of the experience of independent statehood and nationhood, the paucity of the elements from to which to forge a unifying national idea and the cleavage lines fragmenting popular support base for nation-building. It will be argued that political decisions and choices determining the trajectory of nation-building in Ukraine are inseparable from and strongly influenced by the socio-cultural framework, of which political culture inherited from the Soviet period and pre-Soviet experiences of nationhood and statehood should be regarded to constitute an essential part.

The methodological and conceptual approach this thesis is based is drawn from the classification made by Geoffrey Pridham in connection with the post-Soviet transition and consolidation processes.<sup>12</sup> He distinguishes between four theories preoccupied with the analysis of post-Soviet transition and consolidation: functional theories, transnational theories, genetic theories and interactive theories. For the clarification of the theoretical paradigm this thesis belongs to we will summarise in brief the basic premises of each of these theoretical approaches.

To begin with, functionalist theories have focused upon the necessary economic, social and cultural preconditions for democracy with the conclusion that cross-regional and cross-national variation in these preconditions determined the trajectory of democratic change and accounted for the fact of an uneven shift towards democracy observed in post-Soviet and post-Communist states. According to Geoffrey Pridham, these theories have been to a great extent inspired by modernization theory and tended to treat modernization as “producing value change which favoured democratisation.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, a political-cultural version of the functional theory came to existence. This version has accepted as its starting point the premise that some political cultures are more conducive to democracy than others.<sup>14</sup> Other version of these theories placed an emphasis upon the role played by economic factors. As Geoffrey Pridham points out, presupposing a positive

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<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Pridham, “Comparative Reflections on Democratisation in East-Central Europe: a Model of Post-Communist Transformation?” in Geoffrey Pridham and Attila Agh, (eds.), *Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 1-24.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

correlation between economic developments and democracy, these theories came to gradually acknowledge the necessity of taking into consideration the interplay between political and economic factors and to adopt the concept of “the deeper layer” of socio-economic conditions elaborated by Dankwart A. Rustow.<sup>15</sup> As a result, a strong economic emphasis of the modernization theory have been somewhat moderated by a shift from the treatment of economic development as causality to regarding them as environment (“economic development as providing a milieu favourable to democracy.”)<sup>16</sup>

Transnational theories, being developed from functional theories, tend to focus upon “a complex array”<sup>17</sup> of internal and external factors. Within the framework of these theories structural explanations based on socio-economic conditions are developed on the basis of diffusion tendencies. According to transnational theories, the expansion of global communications enables international factors to influence significantly domestic change.

Genetic theories concentrate upon political choice and share the conviction of “the intrinsic uncertainty of transition.”<sup>18</sup> Structural preconditions are considered to be nothing more than background factors. Genetic theories have developed various approaches, such as pactism, political crafting, path-dependent analysis and contingency. Thus, genetic theories can be classified as excessively elitist, the feature that have been subjected to the most intense criticism consisting in the argument that it is not a plausible and fruitful approach to ignore the role of the relationships between decision-making and socio-cultural context in which this decision-making takes place. Pridham argues that in order to provide a full and comprehensive account of the transition process one should acknowledge a pressing need to place

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Geoffrey Pridham from Dankwart A. Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics*, April 1970, p. 343. Cited in Geoffrey Pridham, “Comparative Reflections on Democratisation in East-Central Europe: a Model of Post-Communist Transformation?” in Geoffrey Pridham and Attila Agh, (eds.), *Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

the analysis of decision-making “within a framework of structural-historical constraints.”<sup>19</sup>

Finally, interactive theories represent an attempt to combine the most recent developments in theory building concerning the problem of regime change. They are the most comprehensive and most successful in the exploration of the underlying dynamics and causal relationships of the transition process when compared with other theories. According to Pridham, the strength of interactive theories lies in the fact that they, besides admitting the importance of the “compelling relationship between economic and political transformation”, “have a dynamic potential that is particularly attractive as it allows us to bring into play historical determinants and explore how legacies from the past impact on the present as well as obtain a grasp on the interplay between top-down dictates and bottom-up pressures.”<sup>20</sup> Interactive theories also stress the inevitability of the impact of the societal forces upon democratization. There is also a need to pay more attention to the nature of the relationship between nationalism and democratization. Pridham has lamented that “so far, there has been little dialogue between democratisation studies and the interdisciplinary field of nationalism studies.”<sup>21</sup> According to Geoffrey Pridham, Kirchheimer’s theory of “confining conditions and revolutionary breakthroughs” represents the first example of interactive approach. Otto Kirchheimer has defined “confining conditions” as “the particular social and intellectual conditions present at the births of [the] regimes”<sup>22</sup> and has been preoccupied with the question of determining the degree to which circumstances and factors at work at the moment of the emergence of a new regime and in its aftermath condition its subsequent actions. Geoffrey Pridham reiterates an important point made by Otto Kirchheimer, who argues that the central aspect of the transition process is “the inter-relation between

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Quoted by Geoffrey Pridham from O. Kirchheimer, “Confining Conditions and Revolutionary Breakthroughs”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (December, 1965), p. 964. Cited in Geoffrey Pridham, “Comparative Reflections on Democratisation in East-Central Europe: a Model of Post-Communist Transformation?” in Geoffrey Pridham and Attila Agh, (eds.), *Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 8.

socio-economic conditioning and the discretionary element left to the decision of the regime.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus, after this brief overview of the major theories of transition we may conclude that this thesis is based upon the premises of the interactive school of transition and democratic consolidation. The main reason why the present author has adopted an interactive approach is its strength of analytical depth and scope, as well as its analytical utility and convenience for exploring underlying dynamics between the political decisions of nation-building in post-Soviet Ukraine and the socio-cultural context in which these decisions are made. Such an approach also provides an explanation why democratic and nationalist discourses are combined by the Ukrainian elites to compose a unique blend appealing to a newly emerging Ukrainian political community.<sup>24</sup>

This thesis consists of six chapters. Following the introductory first chapter, the second chapter explores the concept of “myth” in nationalism studies. The third, fourth and fifth chapters discuss the nation-building process of post-Soviet Ukraine by examining cultural, political and social aspects. The concluding chapter discusses the main findings of the thesis.

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted by Geoffrey Pridham from O. Kirchheimer, “Confining Conditions and Revolutionary Breakthroughs”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (December, 1965), pp. 964-965. Cited in Geoffrey Pridham, “Comparative Reflections on Democratisation in East-Central Europe: a Model of Post-Communist Transformation?” in Geoffrey Pridham and Attila Agh, (eds.), *Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> For an argument that nationalism and democracy in post-Soviet Ukraine should by no means be treated as discourses incompatible with and precluding each other, see Victor Zaslavsky, “Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Societies,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 97-121.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE CONCEPT OF “MYTH” IN NATIONALISM STUDIES**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union has left behind not only the institutional wreckage of a loosely and vaguely defined cumbersome political entity characterized by its failure to create a genuine overarching political bond based on mutual consent and by its inability to prevent the reinforcement of regional disparities between administrative units constituting it, but also an ideological and mental chaos and the absence of guiding paradigms, which would serve as templates for making sense of the post-Soviet transition. The Soviet attempt at the inculcation of a socialist ideal was a story of complete erosion of genuine national ideas and failure to generate a deep sense of attachment among the populaces of its constituent republics and to ensure the necessary level of legitimacy.

Thus, when the Soviet Union disintegrated, the old mental forms found themselves to be inadvertently delegitimized, while the return to genuine and authentic national identities of the post-Soviet nations was still to be realized. While the argument that the Soviet Union has brought some institutionalization of independent statehood and nationhood to pre-modern national identities in Central Asia and that these identities were provided by a unique chance and invaluable opportunities to develop their national cultures by means of the delimitation of the administrative boundaries has enjoyed enormous popularity in the Soviet scholarly community, this argument intentionally ignores the fact that the Soviet ideological machine has destroyed the very fabric of genuine social and cultural identities in the region and was unsuccessful in substituting a viable and legitimate alternative for it. What the Soviet experience did in Central Asia was the downgrading of these pre-modern national identities to an unenviable status of rural and backward identities lacking the necessary political and institutional form. Neither was it able to construct a new, legitimate bond of political attachment, which would serve as the basis of the Soviet people.

Other regions of the Soviet Union were luckier in that they had possessed certain degree of national awareness at the moment of the Soviet subjugation. However, even in these regions the Soviet ideological machinery was fairly efficient in obstructing the development of national cultures and languages, considered to constitute vital markers and boundaries of identity in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. Yet, neither has it substituted for them a new, overarching political and civic identity, which would enjoy a sufficient degree of legitimacy and be considered as truly genuine and authentic. Thus, the moment of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has witnessed the emergence of a complete mental chaos and flux of ideologies, with the various mental paradigms competing to fill this vacuum. The new elites were quick to adopt nationalistic and pro-independence rhetoric in an attempt to ensure the build-up of the necessary level of legitimacy so urgently needed in the new circumstances. The most efficient means of achieving this was the manipulation of the national mythology and, thus, myths came to occupy a prominent place in nation-building programmes of most post-Soviet states. Ukraine proved no exception to this pattern.

## 2.1 The Origins of the Term “Myth”

The modern world has inherited the concept of myth from ancient Greeks, for whom the fundamental postulates of reality and truths of existence could be expressed through an eloquent, metaphoric and rich form of narration of certain events, *mythos*<sup>25</sup>. For ancient Greeks, an affective and performative strength of *mythos*, its capacity to convince the audience consisted solely in the beauty, elegance and charm of the vocabulary of *mythos*, its verbal and grammatical composition. A successful “mythos-teller” had to possess “the gift of eloquence”<sup>26</sup>, for only the mastery of building a beautiful, magical and charming composition of narration would ensure that the audience is convinced and impressed at the same time. The

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<sup>25</sup> Joanna Overing, “The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: ‘The Reality of The Really Made-up’” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

strength of *mythos* lied in its poetic combination of sounds, verbal patterns and magical content.

Besides its astonishing beauty of verbal and sound composition, ancient Greek *mythos* also had a narrative that “attempted to capture in terms conceivable to humans some of the indeterminate qualities of [the] divine unknown.”<sup>27</sup> Even though it referred to the divine, the unknown, it managed to realize this by an earthly, understandable means, albeit “figurative, metaphorical and ambiguous.”<sup>28</sup> Besides representing “the bearer of other meanings, larger meanings, meanings beyond,”<sup>29</sup> the strength of the appeal of *mythos* to ancient Greeks also consisted in its striking capacity to claim universality. Thus, myth “does not tell truths, but does tell *the truth*.”<sup>30</sup> Myth is the only narrative that is transcendental and eternal. Myth is something that is ancient and contemporary at the same time, its dramatic nature is as appealing today as it was at the times of ancient Greeks, its astounding ability to keep itself up-to-date and adjust its form to contemporary realities stems from its designation to appeal to the most inner human drives, which are not so much different in the context of today’s complexities of modernity from those of ancient times. The metaphorical character of its style of narrating events and concepts prevents it from turning into a mere illusion as opposed to “reality” and ensures its flexibility, tenacity, immortality and universality. As Lee C. McDonald has eloquently remarked, “a myth is something that “never was, but always is.”<sup>31</sup>

Between the eighth and fourth centuries BC, a distinction began to be made between *mythos*, an impressive form of oral poetry, and the rational and reasoned discourse of *logos*, based not on a magical appeal of sound, verbal composition and colourful and dramatic set of events described in *mythos*, but on the logical

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<sup>27</sup> Lee C. McDonald, “Myth, Politics and Political Science,” *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March, 1969), p. 141.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

consistency, accuracy and rationality of logical conclusions.<sup>32</sup> Joanna Overing makes reference to Jean-Pierre Vernant, according to whom this distinction and the privilege given to logos were the result of an increasing emphasis on the written text and the political process of democratizing speech.<sup>33</sup> Thus discourse ceased to be “the exclusive privilege of those who possessed the gift of eloquence”. From now on, it could be used by all members of the community on equal terms.<sup>34</sup> According to Joanna Overing, in contrast to logos, which could also be referred as *alethinos logos* (truthful discourse), mythos began to be rejected as something fictive, absurd and irrational.<sup>35</sup>

Paradoxically enough, despite a widespread assumption that the modern world has inherited the term and the concept of “myth” from ancient Greece, it was not until 1760’s that this term has began to be used in the various vernaculars to signify the body of oral stories inherited from our ancient predecessors. Instead, the Latin word for “story” or “tale”, *fabula*, was widely used to indicate a piece of oral story. Andrew Von Hendy points out that even though the researchers failed to find out an evidence of the usage of the term of “myth” before 1760’s, the words “mythologist” and “mythology”, appear early in the vernaculars. By the early seventeenth century, the derivative forms of the word “mythology”, such as “mythic”, mythographer” and “mythologize” begin to be used.<sup>36</sup> According to Andrew Von Hendy, the word “mythology” has been used to indicate not a

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<sup>32</sup> Joanna Overing, “The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: ‘The Reality of The Really Made-up’” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> This point is borrowed by Joanna Overing from Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990), pp. (207-208). Cited in Joanna Overing, “The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: ‘The Reality of The Really Made-up’” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Joanna Overing, “The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: ‘The Reality of The Really Made-up’” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> The term *alethinos logos* is borrowed by Joanna Overing from Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 1000a, 11-20. Cited in Joanna Overing, “The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: ‘The Reality of The Really Made-up’” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 23 (according to the page numbering system of site.ebrary.com). Reached by through site.ebrary.com.

compilation of oral stories, but the scholarly practice or science of allegorical reading, and the term “to mythologize” meant not the practice of inventing a *mythos*, but rather, engaging in the practice of interpretative and allegorical reading.<sup>37</sup>

The word “fable”, which has been displaced by the word “myth” by the 1760’s, has also carried different, and often contradictory, connotations. Besides signifying “a story that has been demonstrated by the science of mythology to be full of the pith of ancient wisdom”, it could also be used to point to “the kind of foolish, idle, and often scabrous tale that [demanded] face-saving by the mythologist if it [was] to avoid giving offense.”<sup>38</sup>

It is essential that a distinction is made between the category of myth (*mythos*), in the words of Joanna Overing “pertaining [directly] to the domain of phantasmogorical”<sup>39</sup> and the category of political or ethnocentric myths, which will be used in the present thesis. While not denying that political and ethnic mythology used nowadays by the ethnic elites of Ukraine and Russia for their own nation-building projects and ends has its roots in the Greek mythology, there are important distinctions between them. The first difference has to do with the form of narration. While in some instances the potency of ethnocentric myths could still stem from an impressive verbal and phonetic composition (being similar to *mythos*), modern political and ethnic mythology shares much with *logos* in terms of the form of narration (however, this is not to say that they are similar in terms of content and the subject of narration). As far as the content of contemporary political mythology is concerned, it is still overwhelmingly dramatic and colourful and appeals mainly to the sentiments and inherent emotional drives of the members of ethnic collectivities. The deeds of heroes are in most cases depicted in the tones of exclusive heroism and bravery. As such, the content of contemporary political mythology is very different from that of *logos*, being based not on the reason, but on the subjective perceptions of the members of ethnic communities.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Joanna Overing, “The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective, Or: ‘The Reality of The Really Made-up’” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 4.

Yet, contemporary political and ethnic mythology and ancient Greek *mythos* have not only differences, but also similarities. It is striking that at an unconscious level, the mechanisms, by which both categories of myth operate, are similar. Both modern mythology and ancient Greek *mythos* derive their strength of persuasion, affective and performative capacity from their ability to appeal to the most inherent, inner human drives. It is their subjectivity that determines their effect, not their rigid consistency, plausibility and rationality. However, while at the core of *mythos* may lay a story not supported by any concrete historical evidence, contemporary mythology needs a piece of historical reference. It does not matter much whether this point of reference is strictly accurate or not. What is important is that the popular memory of the community accepts that a certain historical event has happened in the past. No matter to what extent certain political or ethnic mythic narrative diverges from the actual, objective historical reality, in the words of George Schöpflin and Andrew Wilson, it must “resonate”, namely correspond to the popular memory of the collectivity or to the overall perception by the members of the community, so that it could organize and mobilize public opinion of the community.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.2 Key Functions of Myth

The author of the present thesis is convinced that the role of the ethnicity factor cannot be explained by limiting analysis to the political system operating in the country in question. It is not enough to look at the political institutions, national legislatures or institutional arrangements in order to offer a plausible account of how interethnic relations are managed in certain polity. The author argues that the analysis of the political system will not be sufficient if our purpose is to provide an exhaustive account of the role of ethnicity and national identity. Undoubtedly, certain institutional arrangements or political bodies designed for regulating interethnic relations constitute a governmental response to the current interethnic atmosphere. However, an analysis limited to these political arrangements will suffer from

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<sup>40</sup> George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 25. Also see Andrew Wilson, “The Donbas Between Ukraine and Russia: The Use of History in Political Disputes”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, No.2 (April 1995), p. 266.

partiality and superficiality since it misses the very core, the very fabric of community's internal system of values. Such an approach is bound to miss the underlying dynamics of the process of creating a "coherent world"<sup>41</sup>, a meaningful whole by the ethnic collectivity.

One of the most important advantages of the myth analysis consists in the function of myth as a means of standardization and compression of the information which is not rational and which is not countable. The information which is stored and standardized through myths is often heavily loaded with symbolic meanings. This kind of information is an accumulation of symbolic and emotional messages rooted in the consciousness of an ethnic collectivity and as such cannot be accepted as historically accurate. Yet, it does not have to present a detailed and microscopically accurate account of historical events. What matters here is rather an overall imprint and impression left by certain historical event or a series of events on the consciousness of the collectivity. So, the analysis of myth enables a researcher to grasp the reality which is overwhelmingly symbolic and emotional. It provides an explanation for the aspects of life which cannot be accounted for by historians. Even though the information which is stored in the myth cannot be defined as an accurate reflection of an historical event, myth serves as a vital instrument of ensuring coherence and standardization of mass perception and mass consciousness, thus preventing the chaos and an irregular and unsystematic flux of ideas and thoughts and making "cosmos out of chaos".<sup>42</sup>

Another important function of the myth in the societies undergoing a rapid and profound transformation of political and cultural values is its capacity to mobilize the most inherent, the most emotional human drives, which tends to transcend any rational analysis and explanation, and thus provides the intellectual and political elites of the communities with a convenient tool to control public

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<sup>41</sup> A reference made by George Schöpflin to Csaba Pleh, "A Narrativumok mint a pszichológiai koherenciateremtés eszközei" (Translated by George Schöpflin as "Narratives as instruments for creating psychological coherence"), *Holmi*, vol.8, no.2 (February 1996), pp.265-82. Cited in George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power. The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), p. 117.

<sup>42</sup> The expression is borrowed by George Schöpflin from Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* (London, 1991). Cited in George Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths" in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 20.

opinion and determine the direction of the changes in political and cultural values. The period of the dramatic and profound political and social transformation, such as experienced by the post-communist world in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has been characterized by the deepest ideological and cultural vacuum, flux and ambiguity of values and ideas, a deeply felt sense of social and cultural insecurity and meaninglessness. The collapse of the former set of ideas, social, political and cultural concepts has given rise to the perceptions of a cognitive chaos and uncertainty. According to Vladimir Tismaneanu, an atmosphere of ideological vacuum and uncertainty is a suitable ground for the emergence of various political mythologies, seeking to feel this vacuum. He has pointed out that:

The post-communist landscape is propitious soil for collective passions, fears, illusions, and disappointments. The old ideological certainties are dead. Instead new mythologies have arisen to provide quick and satisfactory answers to excruciating dilemmas. Political myths are responses to the sentiments of discontinuity, fragmentation, and the overall confusion of the post-communist stage<sup>43</sup>.

In such a social atmosphere it was highly predictable that in these countries the political and cultural elites, having access to the means of controlling and mobilizing public opinion, will rediscover the great potency, convenience and the strength of emotional appeal of ethnocentric, political and cultural myths. By using these myths towards the aim of achieving their own political ends, they seemingly provided the societies deprived of their old cognitive tools of categorization, standardization and interpretation with the new ones with the only difference that a new framework of the concepts, which were to be used to overcome the flux and chaos of ideas, did not require a detailed rational account. Its strength lied not in its convenience to be subjected to the rational analysis, but in its intrinsic feature of providing a desired legitimacy without resorting to rational analysis. According to Vladimir Tismaneanu, despite the fact that “political myth is intrinsically elusive, and some or its transrational aspects defy rigorous analysis”, “political myth appears

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<sup>43</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 18 (according to the page numbering system of site.ebrary.com). Reached through site.ebrary.com.

as a coherent and complete belief system” since “it does not invoke any other legitimacy but its own affirmation, no other logic but its own development”<sup>44</sup>.

At this point it should be mentioned that political myth is capable of providing a mere semblance of working out a seemingly suitable solution to social fears and anxieties without having to justify its line of argumentation by a detailed rational analysis. Vladimir Tismaneanu contends that political myth is immune from any objection or questioning. According to him, the very “pseudo-cognitive”<sup>45</sup> nature of any political mythology requires it is accepted unquestionably since “no empirical evidence can shatter [political myths’] pseudo-cognitive immunity.”<sup>46</sup> However, the author of the present thesis does not share the same view as to the unquestionable nature and absolute power of influence enjoyed by political myth. The author of this thesis argues that there are certain limits to the degree of appeal of any political mythology or historical narrative. In order to a political mythology to be accepted by the members of the community, the key historical events on which this mythology is based should be already present in the popular memory of the community and the accuracy of these historical events should not be questioned on a mass level. But what is important here is not an absolute and objective (encyclopedic) accuracy of these historical events, but its accuracy in the memory of the community. George Schöpflin in a similar vein argues that the national myths cannot be invented or imagined out of nothing, thereby implying that there are certain limits to the myth-creating activities of the political and intellectual elites of the communities and the degree of appeal enjoyed by myth. He asserts that “[a] myth that fails to elicit a response [from the members of the community] is either alien to the community, or inappropriate at the time when it is used...[the] myth cannot be constructed purely

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<sup>44</sup> On this point Vladimir Tismaneanu makes reference to Raoul Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986), p. 12. Cited in Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

out of false material; it has to have some relationship with the memory of the collectivity...”<sup>47</sup>

Another important feature of the myth is that it does not necessarily constitute an entirely fictive and deceptive tale. It is often mistakenly assumed that the only purpose of this kind of tale, besides amusing, is to help the reader to forget the boring and routine realities of our everyday life and to smell the air of the ancient. Myth should not be associated with a mere falsehood or deception. According to George Schöpflin, “members of a community may be aware that the myth they accept is not strictly accurate”<sup>48</sup>, but still the function of providing the necessary emotional legitimating ground for the community and helping the community to make sense of the existing order of things and the meaning of existence may well prevail within the community even if it is well aware that the myth that they resort to does not represent an encyclopedic account of historical events. Andrew Von Hendy also points out the fact of the dubious and contradictory usage of the term of “myth”. According to him,

“Myth” is one of the small set of words that we are accustomed to employing in contrary senses. The word signifies in everyday parlance either a traditional story commanding special respect or a widely disseminated falsehood. This contradiction appears even more odd if we recollect the highly successful romantic launching of “myth” in the first, positive sense, but notice that it is the second, negative sense that prevails in current speech and writing.<sup>49</sup>

It is these unique features and aspects of national myths that convinced the author of this thesis to adopt the approach of analyzing the role of mythological discourse in the formation of national identity of Ukraine. The merit of this approach lies in the fact that it enables a researcher to uncover the most inner, the most hidden aspects of rival mythological discourses on Ukraine’s national identity.

### **2.3 Main Approaches to the Interplay Between Ukrainian and Russian Mythologies**

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<sup>47</sup> George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 25-26.

<sup>48</sup> George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power. The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), p. 80.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 299.

It is possible to discern a number of different approaches on how common historical experiences of Ukraine and Russia have influenced the formation of competing mythological discourses in Ukraine. One of these approaches accepts as its main tenet the concept of “Otherness” and asserts the key role of outside influences and external perceptions in the solidification of in-group bonds of certain community and the construction of its ethnic boundaries. According to the scholars, applying this concept to the formation of Ukrainian national identity, it was in contrast to the autocratic and “Asiatic” nature of Russia that the arguments and claims about a democratic, demotic and “European” character of Ukrainian nation have been used as a moral ground and a justification for the need on the part of Ukraine to distance itself from Russia if it is to revive its genuine identity.<sup>50</sup>

According to the basic tenets of this approach, in order for Ukraine to strengthen its national idea it will have to magnify and exaggerate every minute difference from Russia. Since Russian-Ukrainian relations carry the imprint of the long history of strained relations, the processes of cultural reproduction and the mythological discourses should be attached a primary importance if our goal is to clearly demarcate the “Ukrainian” from the “Russian”. If one is to rediscover a genuine Ukrainian identity, it has to take into consideration its cultural, civilizational, historical, moral, ideological standing vis-à-vis Russia. It is virtually impossible to identify ourselves if there is no one or nothing against which we would formulate our distinct “We”.

George Schöpflin also points out that the element of “Otherness” serves as a source of legitimizing one’s claims about uniqueness and moral worthiness. According to him, the practice of choosing an “Other” allows ethnic collectivities to prove their distinctiveness, uniqueness and enduring character. Thus the presence of

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<sup>50</sup> It should be pointed out here that the role of “Otherness” and outside influences in the strengthening of in-group bonds of certain ethnic collectivity has been a popular theme among the scholars of nationalism. For an example of such a use of the concept of “Otherness” in the context of Ukraine, see Andrew Wilson, “Myth of National History in Belarus and Ukraine” in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 182-197.

an external object of comparison plays an important role in the construction of external boundaries.<sup>51</sup>

The reason why competing Ukrainian and Russian mythological discourses have proved to be so enduring is a long history of Russian-Ukrainian encounters and the abundance of their common historical experiences. It is of paramount importance for the nation-building entrepreneurs in Ukraine to reconstruct and reinvent the Ukrainian national history in such a way that would minimize the negative impact of the lack of the nationhood experience and would serve as a potent stimulus to the process of rediscovering once considerable national potential. The path to shaping the external image of Ukraine as a country capable of an independent foreign policy course immutably lies through the primary task of reaching de-facto moral and historical equality and mutual respect in the relations with Russia. No matter to what extent the current Ukrainian leaders tend to emphasize the importance of the Western links of the Ukrainian nation and the Western axis of its development and civilizational identity, there is no chance to escape the centuries-long imprint of relations with Russia.

The genuine identity of Ukraine has to be searched not in its alleged Western links, but, instead, in its long history of the relationships with its northern neighbour. It is true, an underlying identity is bound to be tried to be formulated through its ideological, historical, moral and cultural standing vis-à-vis Russia if Ukraine is to discover its intrinsic features. How could Ukraine accomplish this immensely complex task? Is it possible simply by the attempts at fostering its relations with the West or is it of paramount importance to search its genuine roots in its painful history of the relations with Russia? The answer is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, lies in the magical appeal of national myths reconstructed and reformulated in such a way that would magnify every minute difference of the “Ukrainian” from the “Russian” and would give a centuries-long desired momentum to mobilizing the elements peculiar to Ukraine and emphasizing its distinctiveness vis-à-vis Russia.

The very fact of the existence of many common historical events leads to a great diversity of various interpretations of these events. While it is unclear in what

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<sup>51</sup> George Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 28.

fashion the construction of historical narratives and national myths will proceed in Russia, the initial phases of the same process in Ukraine and the logic of furthering the statehood allow us to argue that in the foreseeable future Ukrainian ethnic entrepreneurs will seek to distance Ukraine from Russia in cultural and ideological respects while preserving the normal diplomatic, political and economic relations with its former “Big Brother”(Russia).

However, this is not to say that the element of “Otherness” is the sole source of identity. Even though the practice of comparison serves as a tool of defining distinctiveness and authenticity and strengthening communities’ internal bonds, ethnic identity is a constant interaction between internal discourse-generating and the construction of external boundaries.<sup>52</sup>

Another approach focuses on the cultural and ideological relations between former metropolitan and dependant entities and analyses the way the rival mythological discourses in the former dependant entity having just attained independence are utilized by the ethnic entrepreneurs. The concepts of cultural reproduction and “Otherness” are also used within the framework of this approach.

According to this approach, a period following the achievement of independence by the formerly dependent entity is characterised by an increased speed of cultural reproduction and the search on the part of this entity of its genuine identity. It is in these times that cultures undergoing a process of cultural re-creation and reproduction are observed to feel a need to prove their eternity, uniqueness and moral worth in counter-reaction to a former metropolitan force. The attempts on the part of Ukraine to distance itself from a former Soviet identity and to prove its right to exist as an independent state and a nation with a centuries-long ethnic and cultural tradition against Russia is a case in point. The position in which Ukraine found itself with the achievement of independence is compounded by the fact that it has to overcome the double negative impact of the Soviet identity imposed by the Soviet rule and the common presupposition of the common fate and cultural affinity of the three East Slavic peoples, namely, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Third approach focuses on the manipulation of foreign policy by the national elite for the purposes of strengthening national in-bonds of countries having just

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

attained their independence. Some authors have stressed that an assertive foreign policy by Ukraine in general and towards Russia in particular has been necessitated by the task of building distinctive nationhood and has been used as a vital instrument towards accomplishing this task. It is a commonly observed phenomenon that newly emerging polities having just attained their independence tended to resort to an assertive foreign policy as an instrument of shaping their national identities. Having been noticed and recognised by the outside world has often been one of the paramount objectives on the way towards building a distinctive nationhood. As Ilya Prizel has put it:

[The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union] deprived Ukraine of several vital building blocks of nation building. Because of its peaceful, almost uneventful transformation Ukraine lacked a unifying national mythology and heroes...Furthermore, Ukrainians could neither look to a common national experience for a “usable past” nor follow Israel’s example and use their own experience of genocide... Ukraine, apart from Galicia, unlike the emerging polities of Slovenia, Slovakia, or Croatia, had never embraced a solely ethnic identity that could tie its political and national agendas together...Accordingly, Ukraine’s political elite conformed to a familiar post-colonial pattern: it sought political legitimacy through the manipulation of foreign policy.<sup>53</sup>

Fourth approach focuses on a prominent role played by Ukraine in the formation of the imperial Russian identity and the impact of the crisis of this imperial identity on the Russian mythological discourse on Ukrainian national identity. According to this approach, Ukraine has been an indispensable constituent part of a Russian imperial identity and the crisis of Russian imperial identity caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union has necessitated a re-formulation of previous ideological and mythological tools being at disposal of Russia.

So, in what ways will the counter-reaction by the Ukraine’s nationalist-minded intelligentsia to the perceptions of Ukraine by Russia will be used in the forging of Ukrainian national identity? In what ways will ethnic entrepreneurs resort to and use certain myths? The problem about the usable myths in Ukraine is such that the usable history in Ukraine allows different interpretations and, therefore, presents a golden opportunity for ethnic entrepreneurs preoccupied with the construction of such a historical narrative that would facilitate their nation-building projects and solidify the bonds of in-group identity.

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<sup>53</sup> Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 372-374.

But are ethnic entrepreneurs free to invent whatever they wish? Certainly, they are not. According to Andrew Wilson, in order for ethnic entrepreneurs to be successful, the historical narrative they try to formulate should “resonate in a plausible past and find an appropriate place in the mainstream of popular memory in order to take root.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, certain version of national history should be supported by the already existing beliefs or assumptions in national consciousness. The more deeply these beliefs are rooted in the popular memory, the more solid base is at the disposal of ethnic entrepreneurs. Wilson also points out that “[t]he trick with historical myths, or identity myths in general, is that they must help constitute the collective identity of a social subject...without that subject being aware it is being so constructed.”<sup>55</sup>

Anthony D. Smith, making an important differentiation between the “rediscovering”, “reconstruction” and “outright invention” or “fabrication” of national mythologies, also maintains that there are certain limits to the degree of “reconstruction” or invention of the communal mythologies. He asserts that these are dictated by “the existing criteria of historiography of the time, and by the texture and inner coherence of the myths and motifs themselves.”<sup>56</sup> He argues that even though one may sometimes come across with pure, unconstrained fabrications, often the mythologies represent the “novel recombinations of traditional, perhaps unanalysed, motifs and myths taken from epics, chronicles, documents of the period, and material artifacts.”<sup>57</sup> Anthony D. Smith asserts that there are certain limits to the process of recombining pre-existing motifs and beliefs:

[A] recombination must be “in character”. It must intuitively “belong to”, or cohere with, a particular traditional past and its peculiar flavour. ....The type of hero-

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<sup>54</sup> Andrew Wilson, “Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine” in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 182-183.

<sup>55</sup> This point is borrowed by Wilson from Roxanne Lynn Doty, “Sovereignty and the Nation: Constructing the Boundaries of National Identity” in Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, (eds.), *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 121-147. Cited in Andrew Wilson, “Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine” in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 183.

<sup>56</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), p. 178.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

figures, the degree of sacredness, the atmosphere of key events, the aroma of the habitat, all differ systematically; together they form a specific “historical configuration”,... which...is quite distinctive in quality and flavour.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, to sum up, the processes of myth construction and myth sustaining can by no means be characterized by the fact of an arbitrary choice and an unlimited freedom of action on the part of the national elites even in the cases marked by the absence of a sufficient experience of independent statehood and nationhood. No attempt at a mythological narrative formulation can escape the fundamental and all-decisive impact of collective memory and an overall communal conviction about the importance of certain historical theme, period or event. Thus, we must accept that even though the underlying mechanisms of the functioning of ethnic and political mythology are often distinguished by the subjective and emotional character of social decoding mostly devoid of the necessary element of unbiased and rational questioning and analysis, every historical narrative should find a sufficient and plausible resonance in popular consciousness and be at least believed to be “historically true” by the members of the ethnic collectivity if it is to enjoy the necessary degree of acceptance and internalization in the community.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 3

### BOUNDARIES AND MARKERS OF POST-SOVIET UKRAINIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Nation-building in post-Soviet Ukraine has necessitated not only concrete institutional arrangements largely of affirmative character purporting in the short run to redress the destructive impact of the Soviet period upon Ukrainian language and culture and aimed in the long run at the elevation of a long-suppressed and subjugated Ukrainian proto-identity to the status of an overarching political identity with an emphasis upon the Ukrainian core element, but also at the strengthening of the key markers and boundaries of the ethnic element of this identity, which were considered as a vital aspect of the consolidation of Ukrainian independence and would lay the basis of the consolidation of Ukrainian nationhood and statehood. These markers and boundaries are attached a vital importance since they ensure the survival and self-reproduction of every ethnic collectivity. According to Schöpflin, boundedness should always be maintained and protected; “it does not live as if by a law of nature.”<sup>59</sup> The maintenance of this boundedness is often accomplished by the recourse to the construction of “myth-symbol complex”. Schöpflin remarks that “the myth-symbol complex may well be the single most important resource available to a community to sustain cultural reproduction.”<sup>60</sup> What is particularly striking about this “myth-symbol complex” is that “it is associative and resonant, rather than descriptive and rule-making” and “it does not have to be internally cohesive and consistent.”<sup>61</sup> However, one necessary precondition for the appeal of this complex is that it should “be recognized as “ours” and thereby be available as resource for

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<sup>59</sup> George Schöpflin, “The Construction of Identity”, *Österreichischer Wissenschaftstag*, 2001, p. 6. [Online: [http://www.nt.tuwien.ac.at/nthft/temp/oefg/text/wiss\\_tag/Beitrag\\_Schopflin.pdf](http://www.nt.tuwien.ac.at/nthft/temp/oefg/text/wiss_tag/Beitrag_Schopflin.pdf)]. Accessed on 16.10.2004.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

constructing a hierarchy of norms which then permits the creation and recreation of saliency and oblivion.”<sup>62</sup> This chapter will focus upon some of boundaries and markers of Ukrainian national identity and will trace how these markers have been constructed in the framework of Ukrainian nation-building project.

### **3.1 Language and National Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine**

The nature of the linkage between national identity and language has always been subject to extensive debates in the academic circles preoccupied with the problems of nation-building and the formation of national identity. In fact, the question of the relationship between national identity and language is not a simple one and there is no straightforward answer to this question. While it has become a commonplace to argue that language is one of the building blocks of national identity, the very degree of the impact of language on the process of nation-building seemed to vary from case to case and has often given rise to very different academic interpretations by scholars dealing with the same case. What is exactly the place of language in shaping national consciousness? Does it serve as a determinant without which certain national identity can not be forged or is its importance not so sweeping and crucial? How has the importance of language as an essential element of in-group identity changed from one historical context and geographical area to another, from one case to another? For instance, in what ways did the Western European experience of nation-building differ from that of Central and Eastern Europe? What factors should be taken into consideration if we are to account for the sacredness attached to language in Central and Eastern Europe?

The author of this thesis is convinced that it is in the light of the answers given to these questions that the importance of Ukrainian as a vital border marker between “Little Russian Identity”, Soviet identity, East Slav identity and newly emerging Ukrainian identity should be discussed.

Historical and social conditions of Central and Eastern Europe have left their indelible mark on the importance attached to language in this region. Ukrainian is by no means an exception to this phenomenon with the only difference of having for

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

centuries been under the shadow of Russian and deprived of the opportunities for development enjoyed by other Eastern languages. If we are to accurately describe the present-day linguistic situation in Ukraine, we should take into consideration the historical and social peculiarities of the region of which Ukraine is an inseparable part.

Nevertheless, this context is not the only one to leave its imprint on the relationship between language and national identity. Other contexts will also be analysed in this work. Among these is an East Slavic context, which will be discussed in more detail later. Third context is the situation resembling post-colonial patterns of development in the former colonies.<sup>63</sup> Even though the question whether the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic represented the metropolitan state imposing the quasi-colonial rule on the other Republics of the Soviet Union is far from being resolved and scholars still do not hold a uniform view on this issue, the author underlines the cultural subjugation of Ukrainian by Russian. The main consequences of the cultural dominance of Russian in Ukraine are Little Russian identity, strong regional identities (Crimea and the Donbass), East Slavic identity and Soviet Identity.

As we have already mentioned, an elaborate analysis of the relationship between Ukrainian and the formation of national identity in Ukraine requires taking into account three contexts, of which Ukraine is an inseparable part. As far as problem areas to be identified are concerned, one of these areas is whether Ukrainian will occupy the pre-eminent place in the nation-building attempts by Ukraine and follow in the footsteps of other East European states, where language is accepted as the most sacred element of nation-building. Second set of problems has to do with the model of nation-building to be adopted by the Ukrainian elite: whether it will follow a civic-territorial model or an ethnic-genealogical one? Third set of problems concerns the way the spread of Ukrainian will affect the phenomenon of multiple identities in Ukraine. To put it more succinctly, in what way will people identify themselves as the use of Ukrainian increase? We will focus our attention on whether

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<sup>63</sup> See Mark R. Beissinger, "State Building in the Shadow of an Empire-State: The Soviet Legacy in Post-Soviet Politics," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, (eds.), *The End of Empire?: The Transformation of the USSR in Comparative Perspective* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 157-185.

the phenomenon of multiple identities will cease to be a determining factor in people's self-identification or will identities other than Ukrainian identity continue to co-exist with this identity?

One of the key tenets of this thesis is that Ukrainian language will serve as a vital factor in the re-identification of those with multiple identities with the newly emerging Ukrainian national idea, the creation of the necessary psychological bond between one's own psyche and the Ukrainian language and the acceptance by the person of Ukrainian state's legitimacy and the rights-duties relationship stemming from this legitimacy. However, this process of the re-identification in the short term will not culminate in the elimination altogether of the phenomenon of multiple identities, but, rather, will add to this phenomenon a new element of identity, namely, Ukrainian identity making existing mixed identities more multi-layered and multifaceted. One possible scenario is that this new layer of Ukrainian identity will not fundamentally transform the self-identification of the Russophone population, largely characterised by the East Slavic identity, the Soviet identity and a denigrating attitude towards the Ukrainian language and culture, but will change their attitude towards Ukrainian, strengthen their allegiance to a new civic Ukrainian nation and persuade them to accept the citizenship rights and duties before this state.<sup>64</sup>

It is expected that the gradual increase in the use of Ukrainian in the media, various educational institutions, public and semi-public contexts and environment will step by step change people's attitude towards Ukrainian by making this language an inseparable part of their everyday life. At least constant hearing of Ukrainian and coming across with it in various contexts will inevitably create a psychological bond between the person and the language. This bond will strengthen a rights-duty relationship between the Ukrainian state and its citizens. An important point here is that the increase in the popularity of Ukrainian will add a necessary momentum for the constructing of an all-comprising national identity. Even though an increase in

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<sup>64</sup> There exists no uniform view concerning the question whether the Russian-speaking population constitutes a strong and enduring form of identity in post-Soviet Ukraine. While such scholars as David Laitin underscore the importance of the Russian language in shaping the identity of the Russian-speaking population in post-Soviet Ukraine, other authors such as Lowell Barrington tend to question the validity of this argument. Compare David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) and Lowell Barrington, "Russian-Speakers in Ukraine and Kazakhstan: 'Nationality', 'Population', or Neither?", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (April-June 2001), pp. 129-158.

the status of Ukrainian will to some degree make the position of the Ukrainophone more privileged than of those not fluent in it, it will not necessarily result in the ethnic model of nation-building since language policies planning and implementing will proceed in such a fashion as not to overly impinge on the cultural rights of the Russophone population and not to provoke anti-Ukrainian sentiments. On the other hand, the possibilities of career advancement and better job opportunities offered by the fluency in the state language will provide necessary incentives for learning Ukrainian. This, in turn, will further consolidate the Ukrainian society around an all-embracing civic national idea with the Ukrainians as the core, titular group.

What we can observe nowadays is a significant overlap between the Soviet and East Slavic identity at an ethnocultural and civilizational identity level and another overlap between these identities and being Russophone at language-identity interaction level. This reality further strengthens our conviction that one's linguistic self-identification largely affects his ethnocultural and civilizational identity. We will use here the term "ethnocultural and civilizational identity" in order to fill a substantial gap that the term "ethnic identity" is insufficient to fill and which remains very actual in the context of today's ethnic and linguistic situation in Ukraine.

It should also be pointed out that the Soviet censuses provided quite an ambiguous and inaccurate picture of the Ukraine's population identities. The Soviet tradition of "passport ethnicity" based on the paternal inheritance or republic of residence and allowing very little room for the person's own subjective choice of ethnicity largely distorted the actual ethnic structure of the Ukrainian population "creating" more ethnic Ukrainians than the actual share of those who really identified themselves with the Ukrainian identity. The most recent surveys taking into account situational identities and offering a broader choice of categories revealed striking differences between the picture portrayed by the Soviet censuses and the current situation.<sup>65</sup> In a similar fashion, linguistic situation was also inaccurately reflected by the Soviet censuses, which were based of the concept of "mother tongue". It was unclear what was meant by this concept: one's maternal language, language of ancestors, language used on a daily basis or a language of subjective self-

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<sup>65</sup>Andrew Wilson, "Elements of a Theory of Ukrainian Ethnonational Identities", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, (January, 2002), p. 32.

identification. The most recent surveys based on the language of preference (the language people normally prefer to use in semi-public contexts because using this language is more convenient for them) far more accurately depict the actual linguistic situation in Ukraine.

The author of the thesis does not assert that the linguistic policies will be aimed at overly impinging at the rights of the Russophone population and Ukrainianising them at all costs and by all means available. On the contrary, despite the key importance of Ukrainian language in forging Ukrainian national consciousness, language policies are expected to be rather moderate in view of the psychological importance of deeply-rooted multiple identities of the Russophone population.

The author also believes that in order for the linguistic policies to achieve their goals, it is inevitable that the politicisation of the Ukrainian language and transforming it into the symbol of the Ukrainian independence and patriotism take place. Taking into account the cultural and psychological closeness between Russians and Ukrainians, their East Slavic origins, geographical proximity and shared past, every minute difference in Russian and Ukrainian will acquire political and cultural dimension. Every difference between these languages at linguistic level will be utilised at the political and cultural level with the aim of creating a civic Ukrainian “We” as opposed to everything representing Russian and Soviet “Other”. However, the author’s aim is not to absolutise the importance of language. No matter how language is important in Ukraine, other factors will also affect linguistic policies and the process of the construction of national identity.<sup>66</sup> For instance, unsolved economic problems might foster the nostalgia towards the Soviet past, strengthening thereby Soviet identity and weakening the current regime’s legitimacy in the eyes of the population. In a similar fashion, economic difficulties are bound to impede the implementation of the linguistic policies due to the shortage of the necessary funds. If the economic situation in Ukraine improves, it will only facilitate the process of building a civic nation-state.

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<sup>66</sup> Such scholars as Taras Kuzio tend to argue that one should not overemphasize the importance of language. See Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 168.

### 3.1.1 Views on the Role of Language in Nation-building

There is no uniform view on the role of language in nation-building in the academic circles. The very fact that one's self-identification with particular language is by itself a subjective and, to this extent, psychological choice, has made it very difficult to define the precise role of the linguistic border marker with the same certainty as, say, issue of citizenship. The importance attached to language in forging national consciousness varied from one scholar to another, from one case to another. While some scholars have stressed the significance of language in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, others maintained that one should not overestimate the role of language. In order to demonstrate to what extent the opinions of these two opposite camps differ from each other, it would be sufficient to give some examples. Trevor Waters refers to the American anthropological linguist, Edward Sapir, who has pointed out that:

The mere fact of a common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of those who speak the language. The psychological significance of this goes far beyond the association of particular languages with nationalities, political entities, or smaller social groups...The extraordinary importance of minute linguistic differences for the symbolization of psychologically real as contrasted with politically or sociologically official groups is intuitively felt by most people. "He talks like us" is equivalent to saying "He is one of us".<sup>67</sup>

The statesman and polymath Wilhelm von Humboldt even argued that every language has its own distinctive structure which significantly determines the framework of its speaker's world outlook.<sup>68</sup> Joshua Fishman cites a colourful remark by Ludwig Jahn that "in its mother tongue every people honors itself; in the treasury of its speech is contained the charter of its cultural history."<sup>69</sup> Joshua Fishman also makes reference to Hayes, who, underscoring the role of language as a link with the glorious past, has pointed out referring to Machperson that "[t]he vernacular was not

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<sup>67</sup> Trevor Waters, *Language and National Identity: A Source of Conflict in Post-Communist Europe*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, p.4, [Online: [http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/CSRC/Language\\_Nat\\_Identity.htm](http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/CSRC/Language_Nat_Identity.htm)]. Accessed on 08.11.2002.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Quoted by Joshua Fishman from R.Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture* (London, 1937), p.295. Cited in Joshua Fishman, "Language and Nationalism" in Stuart Woolf, (ed.), *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the Present: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 158.

merely the highroad to history, it was itself “the voice of years that are gone; they roll before me with all their deeds.”<sup>70</sup> Fishman quotes from Shafer a remark by the French philosopher Limoge, who has argued that “the spiritual wealth of the nation was stored in its language and could only be tapped by those understanding it...”<sup>71</sup> Taras Kuzio cites Edward Shils, who is convinced that “participation in a common language has a solidarity-producing function” because there is “a particular sacrality attached to language.”<sup>72</sup>

However there are also scholars who are somewhat sceptical about the absolute importance attached to language in shaping national identity. Taras Kuzio holds the view that we should not overestimate the importance of language.<sup>73</sup> He gives an example of Paul S. Pirie, who, in a similar vein, has pointed out that despite the fact that “[l]anguage usage is an important factor which informs national self-identification and political attitudes” we should not regard it as “the Alpha and Omega of national identity in Ukraine...”<sup>74</sup>

### **3.1.2 Language Factor in the Context of Central and Eastern Europe**

The historical and social conditions of Central and Eastern Europe have produced the consequence of language becoming the most vital border marker between non-historical ethnic groups of Central and Eastern Europe. Our stress upon language is based on the fact that the historical experiences of Western Europe were

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted by Joshua Fishman from C.J.H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York, 1937), p. 16. Cited in Joshua Fishman, “Language and Nationalism” in Stuart Woolf, (ed.), *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the Present: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 158.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted by Joshua Fishman from B.C. Shafer, *Nationalism: Myth and Reality* (New York, 1955), p.122. Cited in Joshua Fishman, “Language and Nationalism” in Stuart Woolf, (ed.), *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the Present: A Reader* (London and N.Y.: Routledge, 1996), p. 168.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from Edward Shils, “Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and a Civil Society”, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol.1, Issue 1, (March 1995), pp. 102-103. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 168.

<sup>73</sup> Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 168.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from Paul S. Pirie, “National Identity and Politics in Southern and Eastern Ukraine”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, Issue 7 (November, 1996), p.1081. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 168-169.

in a sharp contrast to those of Central and Eastern Europe. The very differences in historical developments and social structure of these two regions of Europe have brought into being two different models of nation-building: civic-territorial of Western Europe and ethnic-genealogical one of Central and Eastern Europe. Whereas in civic-territorial model of nation-building objective determinants such as being a subject of a legal and political entity, political boundaries, the equality in civil, legal, political and cultural rights, the concept of citizenship are essential, in ethnic-genealogical model an emphasis is placed upon the myths of a common origin and descent, common ancestry, myths of the authenticity and the glorious past. The most important feature of East European nationalism which markedly distinguishes it from a Western one is that due to specific socio-historic conditions East European ethnic groups have tended to give primacy to linguistic distinctiveness to the extent that at times language was considered to be the only border marker of a community.

This specific situation is a product of history and dates back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where many ethnic groups were devoid of clear-cut territorial and well-defined political boundaries that would reinforce their sense of distinctiveness. Therefore, the most prominent border marker between “Us” and “Others” seemed to be their language. Especially the situation that many ethnic groups under Austro-Hungarian rule had common Slavonic origins and to this extent similar cultural values had made it necessary to stress their linguistic distinctiveness. George Schöpflin has brilliantly described the reasons behind the importance of language in the context of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>75</sup> He contends that the conditions for the establishment of civic-territorial notion of nationhood based on the citizenship link and the principle of territoriality were simply non-existent in Central and Eastern Europe. Under the conditions of ruling empires’ seeking to homogenise the imperial population “in the name of greater efficiency and imperial loyalty”, the political case and task of regional intellectuals was to oppose such an attempt on the part of ruling empires. This could be achieved by the social mobilization of masses. How could this be realized? The answer of Schöpflin is through defining “the people”. Given the fact that legal, historical and political claims at the disposal of a newly emerging stratum of intellectuals were not strong enough to provide a popular base to

challenge ruling imperial power, the only weapon in hands of these intellectuals were “the people” speaking the same language. Thus, as Schöpflin argues, “questions of language and literacy acquired a political dimension in Central and Eastern Europe.”<sup>76</sup>

### **3.2 Ukrainian Mythology of National Character and Spirit**

Every ethnic community is characterised by its attempts to establish a coherent self-picture, which is part of the process of establishing a coherent internal world. The process of self-portrayal has a number of important functions for ethnic collectivities.

First of all, it magnifies and underlines the most distinguishing features in which the community in question thinks it is different from others. By doing this, community provides a plausible answer to an important question of the meaning of existence and the purpose of being chosen as such. The fact that we are granted some different cultural traits points to the historical mission of the community. This can be categorised as the first, community level of providing coherence and meaning for its existence. Thus, the anarchy of cultural notions and values is prevented and systemic perfectness and integrity is achieved. In other words, internalising some cultural traits and values proves the community’s right to existence.

Implied in this is the presupposition that all the individuals who share some cultural traits supposedly characteristic of this community’s self-portrait can be entitled to be considered as a worthy members of the community, thus being very different from those who do not share the same cultural traits. Thus, the second level of providing a meaning of existence is achieved – individual level of providing meaning for existence.

Secondly, by developing a narrative about some different cultural traits community satisfies its inherent desire for originality, self-worthiness and authenticity. Such narratives with an emphasis over a number of cultural traits prove communities’ distinctiveness and give powerful stimuli for communities’ further

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<sup>75</sup> See George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 116-127.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

development. Besides this, having positive cultural traits provides an internal stability for the community.

Thirdly, by magnifying some supposedly shared cultural traits ethnic collectivities implicitly or explicitly provide boundary markers, cultural barriers, which are essential for ethnic collectivity's safety, purity and integrity.<sup>77</sup>

Now after outlining some basic functions of the narratives about shared cultural traits of ethnic communities, let us look at how certain cultural traits supposedly characteristic of the Ukrainian ethnic group were elevated to a level of the pertinent symbolic narratives in Ukraine. Stephen Shulman, for instance, analyzes the main cultural constituents of ethnic Ukrainian 'world-view' (svitohliad), 'mentality' (mental'nist, mentalitet) or 'national character' (natsional'nyi kharakter).<sup>78</sup> Interesting in these traits is their function as an essential boundary marker demarcating the world-view of the Ukrainian ethnic group from that of the Russian ethnic group. According to Stephen Shulman, at least five distinguishing cultural traits of the Ukrainian nation can be discerned: individualism (in contrast to the perceived collectivism of the Russian mentality), love of freedom and democracy (as opposed to the Russian despotic traditions), love of land and popular (folk) culture (as opposed to the Russian culture with a city-based intelligentsia, divorced from the land), emotionalism/romanticism (being very different from the Russians preference of the reason and materialism) and tolerance (in contrast to the Russian dogmatism, intolerance towards other beliefs and disrespect for the dignity and interests of others).<sup>79</sup>

### **3.3 Functions of the Myth of "Golden Age" in Ukraine**

There is no ethnic intelligentsia or national entrepreneur who has been unable to discover a stimulating and inspiring potential of the appeal to a "glorious past" to

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<sup>77</sup> See George Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths" in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 19-35.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Shulman, "The Cultural Foundations of Ukrainian National Identity", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.22, No.6 (November, 1999), pp. 1017-1019.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

mobilize, drive and direct mass emotions by instilling in the members of the community sentiments of dignity, pride, inner worth, a conviction about a distinctive and authentic character of their community and a strong belief in the community's brilliant future. Each ethnic community needs an inspiring and colourful vision of its past - no matter to what extent the glory of this past is exaggerated- if it is to mobilize and direct its own regenerative and creative energy towards the goal of shaping its future in accordance with its glorious, pre-ordained destiny. However, it should be taken into consideration that there exist certain limitations to the degree of colorization of the selected past. One of the limitations to the activities of "rediscovery", "reconstruction" or a "pure fabrication" of the past is that this past should be historically verifiable (well attested and documented) or, at least, should resonate in the collective memory of the ethnic community, that is, be perceived to be historically true and reliable on a popular level.<sup>80</sup>

There can be no belief in the future of the community among its members without a popular conviction about the existence of the "glorious past". In the words of Anthony D. Smith, it is no coincidence and only natural that "[p]eople often remark on the Janus-nature of the nation, at once visionary and nostalgic, backward-looking, yet oriented to the future."<sup>81</sup> A conviction on the part of the members of the community of its inherent capabilities and the level of the strength of its belief in its own future depend on the internalization by the community of the discourse of a "golden age". Communities' collective memory of the previous heroic deeds and achievements constituting a depository of the community's recollections determines a conviction on the part of the members of the community that they should do their best in order to achieve the same glory and success. According to Anthony D. Smith:

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<sup>80</sup> For this limitation, see George Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myth and A Taxonomy of Myths" in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 25-26; Andrew Wilson, "Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine" in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.182; Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), pp. 175-177. A different classification of the ways of the interpretation of the past as "rediscovery", "reinterpretation" and "regeneration" is presented in Anthony D. Smith, "Gastronomy or Geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations," *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 1, no.1 (1995). Reprinted in Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 163-186.

<sup>81</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal," in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 36.

The road that the community expects to take in each generation is inspired and shaped by its memories of former heroic ages. Their values and symbols form the basis and spur to heroic feats of communal self-sacrifice in the future, a future that can become as glorious and fulfilling as the days of old...In other words, the ideal of self-renewal and the vision of collective destiny are built into the collective memory of a golden age and justify all the sacrifices that citizens may be asked to make.<sup>82</sup>

Thus, the selected “golden age” serves as a desirable standard the members of the community should take into consideration if they are intent on making the best use of their inherent capabilities and talents, the existence of which is vividly exemplified by their ancestors’ heroic deeds and brilliant achievements. In the words of Anthony D. Smith, “the selected golden age sets up the parameters which help to delineate present action and future goals”.<sup>83</sup> Underlying the role of the memories of a golden age in the communities’ belief in their future, Anthony D. Smith points out that:

[T]he memories of a golden age mirror and point towards a glorious destiny, stemming from the true nature revealed in and by that golden past. In nationalist metaphor, its noble past prepares a community for its ordained destiny, and provides it with a hidden direction and goal beneath the obscuring present. In more concrete terms, each generation’s understanding of the communal past and particularly of its golden age(s) helps to shape the future of that community. The selected elements of the heroic era in each generation’s understanding will guide the community towards its goal and be recreated in its visionary future.<sup>84</sup>

The key importance of the golden age lies in its function as a blueprint for emulation, as the highest level of development and moral sophistication, towards which the community should aspire. As Anthony D. Smith maintains:

The ideal of a golden age is not simply a form of escapism or consolation for present tribulations. For later generations, the standards of golden ages come to define the normative character of the evolving community. They define what is and what is not to be admired and emulated...They define an ideal, which is not so much to be

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<sup>82</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “The Resurgence of Nationalism? Myth and Memory in the Renewal of Nations,” *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, Issue No. 4 (December, 1996), pp. 584-585. Reprinted in Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 264.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “The ‘Golden Age’ and National Renewal,” in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 58.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

resurrected (few nationalists want actually to return to the past, even a golden past) as to be recreated in modern terms.<sup>85</sup>

Anthony D. Smith contends that the golden age serves as a final destination, as a peak of the communities' development. It is a guide for the community's actions and a course of development. In the view of Smith:

[T]he memories of a golden age hold the key to unlocking the secrets of a community's destiny, providing a rough-and-ready compass for the journey, as well as a "map" and a "morality" for the road, one which will enable the members to return to their core ethnic values and realize their "inner being".<sup>86</sup>

However, an important point to be made about the function of the golden age as an ideal to be emulated is that it should be recreated in modern terms rather than be resurrected in its actual forms. Anthony D. Smith gives the example of the Arab invocations of the Age of Companions, stressing that these invocations "imply no return to the seventh century, rather the quest for inspiration and guidance from a pure and holy past for the creation of a united Arab nation."<sup>87</sup> Anthony D Smith asserts that:

[T]he vision of the desired future transmutes the meaning of memories of the golden age in each generation, adapting them to present conditions (though within strict limits), and thereby enabling them to galvanize the community for collective action to achieve a better future.<sup>88</sup>

The projects of nation and state-building have necessitated the invocation of golden epochs in the history of the Ukrainian nation and state as well. The main functions of the golden age given above may also be applied to the case of Ukraine, which has proved no exception to the pressing need of an appeal to the glorious images and heroic moments in the Ukrainian history. Yet, besides the basic difficulties encountered by the states having embarked upon the nation-building

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<sup>85</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 263.

<sup>86</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal," in Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin, (eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 52.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

projects, such as the absence of a single, coherent version of the glorious past, Ukrainian nationalist-minded intelligentsia has had to deal with the obstacles, peculiar only to the states falling into the category of “non-historical” states. These obstacles specific to Ukraine may be summarised in the following way: suffering from the lack of continuity in their statehood experiences; the absence of such an intelligentsia that would be unified around an all-embracing national idea and determined to pursue nation-building projects; the fact that the titular (eponymous) ethnic group constituting the core of the nation has not had a well-documented and well-preserved ethnic past. Using the term of “full” history, put forward by Anthony D. Smith, the Ukrainian ethnic group is assumed to fall into the category of ethnic communities lacking a “full” history.<sup>89</sup> Like the Slovak’s intelligentsia having had to disentangle their peculiar reservoir of myths from the dominant Bohemian-Moravian line of the presentation of the past, Ukraine has also felt a pressing need to challenge the dominant Russian imperial scheme of historiography.

Another problem encountered by the Ukrainian historians preoccupied with the task of the construction of a single, coherent and “full” past has been the existence of the evident breaks and discontinuities in Ukrainian history-recording and history-writing. According to Frank E. Sysyn, despite the fact that Kievan Rus’ had been renowned for its achievements in history-writing, the sudden end of the Galician-Volhynian chronicle in 1292 has been assumed to be an indication of the cultural and political decline of Kiev in the period between 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>90</sup>

Frank E. Sysyn points out that unlike the Russian lands, where the tradition of chronicle writing has been successfully maintained down to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in Ukraine the cultural and political decline of the polities of Kievan’ Rus’ has resulted in the decline of chronicle writing with the end of the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle.<sup>91</sup> While chronicle writing may have been maintained for a time in some regional centres, the chronicles written here have not survived.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), p. 178.

<sup>90</sup> Frank E. Sysyn, *History, Culture, and Nation: An Examination of Seventeenth –Century Ukrainian History Writing* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ukrainian Studies Fund, 1988), pp. 286-289.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Frank E. Sysyn, even though the Lithuanian (West Rus') chronicles written in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries are usually viewed as an indication of the continuation of the historiographic tradition of Kievan Rus' and despite the fact that they used the chronicles of Kievan Rus' as a model and source, they are different from the Kievan Rus' chronicles in several ways. Having as their reading audience Catholic rulers, these chronicles seem to have abandoned ecclesiastical Slavonic in favour of administrative Ruthenian. The chronicles written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century also began to date events from the birth of Christ, rather than the Creation.<sup>93</sup>

Frank E. Sysyn argues that even though the Lithuanian chronicles may serve as a source of information on the events that took place in the Ukrainian land (for instance, they describe the last attempts of the princes of the Rurikid and Gediminid to restore a declining polity), these chronicles cannot be considered to be continuations of Ukrainian historical writing, because except the Suprasl' Chronicle they were written in the Belorussian and Lithuanian lands.<sup>94</sup> These chronicles often record northern, including Muscovite, events more fully than southern ones. Vilnius is regarded as a centre of political power. Likewise, the seat of Orthodox ecclesiastical power is considered to be Vilnius and Navahrudak. Thus, no matter to what extent they depend on the Rus' tradition, their primary goal seems to be tracing the origins of the Lithuanian dynasty.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 4

### OFFICIAL POLICIES OF NATION-BUILDING IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE

The first decade of Ukraine's independence has been characterized by the attempts of Ukraine's political and intellectual elite to forge Ukrainian national identity, to build a coherent and united political community and to strengthen national idea among Ukrainian population. This chapter will analyse the character and the main purposes of the state policies aimed at implementing aforementioned tasks of nation-building. As in other post-Soviet states, *the legacy of a weak and depoliticized civil society* inherited from the Soviet period has made it inevitable that in Ukraine a key role in nation-building was played by the ruling elite. In this sense, nation-building in Ukraine has overwhelmingly been a state-driven process. An acutely divided and polarized ethnic and political community in Ukraine, on the other hand, has also added its own peculiarities and complicacies to the goal of the solidification of in-group bonds of the Ukrainian nation, making it virtually impossible to base the idea of the Ukrainian nation exclusively on the Ukrainian eponymous core. An insistence upon privileging Ukrainian genealogical ethnic core at the cost of other ethnic elements populating Ukrainian territory would drastically undermine the effectiveness of the state policies of nation-building and would have serious counter-effects. One possible consequence of the state practices aimed at privileging Ukrainian national core would be a further exacerbation of ethnic divides and further polarization along ethnic lines. So from the very outset of independence it has been clear that nation-building in Ukraine would exclude the possibility of an ethnic/genealogical model of nation-building.

Yet, nation-building in Ukraine has been neither a civic one, which would inevitably imply democratic accountability, a strong, politically active and conscious civil society and the presence of deeply-rooted democratic traditions.<sup>96</sup> Ukraine in

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<sup>96</sup> The only region in Ukraine where the building blocks of a fledgling civil society can be discerned seem to be Western Ukraine. According to Orest Subtelny, the presence of the strong traditions of

the first years of its independence had not possessed either of these features and is still bereft of them. According to Kataryna Wolczuk, Ukraine continues to be “a country affected by poignant and divisive legacies, which saddled its regions with competing historical memories, language, religion and culture.”<sup>97</sup> Ukraine’s regional disparities in terms of the strength of national identity stem from its long history of interactions with both Russia and Poland, and Ukraine’s lack of nationhood and statehood experience. As Kataryna Wolczuk aptly points out, while “[p]aradoxically, Ukraine’s relationship with Poland, often stained by bloody episodes, strengthened the sense of national identity in Western Ukraine”<sup>98</sup>, “[t]he incorporation of eastern and southern Ukraine by Russia in the seventeenth century resulted in a profoundly ambiguous sense of collective identity devoid of a distinct historical consciousness.”<sup>99</sup>

Besides being divided along ethnic lines and lacking a unifying national idea, Ukraine has also been devoid of a coherent and united political community. The lack of the experience of nationhood and statehood, a divisive effect of the phenomenon of multiple identities (the legacy of the Soviet period), a strongly felt sense of regional attachment, nostalgia towards a relative economic prosperity and well-being of the Soviet period resulting from current economic hardships – all these factors have contributed to “the absence of a single psychological focus shared by all segments of the population.”<sup>100</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk cites Clifford Geertz, who points out that “new states tend to be bundles of competing traditions gathered accidentally

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nongovernmental activism clearly distinguishes the West of Ukraine from other regions. Western Ukraine is characterized by the highest concentration of political activists, volunteer social agencies, private academic and educational organizations, youth organizations and cultural clubs in Ukraine. Yet, even in Western Ukraine one can not speak of a form of fully functioning and independent civil society present in the West European countries. Rather, it will be plausible to argue that the likelihood of the appearance of a fully functioning civil society is the highest in Western Ukraine. See Orest Subtelny, “Russocentrism, Regionalism, and the Political Culture of Ukraine” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

<sup>97</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December 2000), p. 671.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> This expression is borrowed by Taras Kuzio from Walker Connor, “Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?”, *World Politics*, Vol. 24., No. 3 (April, 1972), p. 353. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 45.

into concocted political frameworks rather than organically evolving civilizations”<sup>101</sup> and Ukraine has proved no exception to this pattern.

Another factor contributing significantly to the weakness of a psychological bond of loyalty towards a political nation has been the fact that the configuration of political space defined in the Soviet period no longer corresponded to the subjective perceptions of the Ukrainian population. Even though the geographical borders of Ukraine with Russia are not questioned, they do not constitute in-group boundaries of the Ukrainian population.<sup>102</sup> This phenomenon also makes the creation of a united political identity and reconfiguration of political space a pivotal and urgent task for Ukraine’s ruling elite. Kataryna Wolczuk quotes from Roman Laba, who maintains that:

Borders are supposed to be focal points for conflicting historical memories and political wills of nations and states. They make concrete: what is my country and who is the other. They are physical manifestations of national and state identity. The peculiarity of the Ukrainian–Russian relationship is that there is a physical state border, while a large minority in Ukraine and an overwhelming majority on the Russian side see no significant reason for its existence. For many people, there is no difference to express, no reason for the borders.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, in the aftermath of the break-up of the Soviet Union Ukraine’s ruling elite found itself faced with a serious question as to providing for a such design of nation-building process that would ensure the necessary level of congruence between the spatial boundaries of the newly fledgling Ukrainian state and the subjective perceptions of the actual boundaries of post-Soviet Ukraine.

## **4.1 Symbolic State Practices of Nation-Building in Ukraine**

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<sup>101</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 240. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 671.

<sup>102</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 674.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from Roman Laba, “The Russian–Ukrainian Conflict: State, Nation and Identity,” *European Security*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (1995), p. 478. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 674.

Among the first tools resorted to by Ukraine's ruling elite with the goal of strengthening Ukrainian national consciousness has been the introduction of historical and cultural symbols, which were carefully chosen to serve the objective of constructing a narrative of continuity between the present Ukrainian state and its predecessors in the past. Taras Kuzio makes reference to Edward Shils, who has pointed out that "much of the effort to promote a nation [had] focused on the reaffirmation of the continuation of the present state of the nation with significant elements of the past."<sup>104</sup> Taras Kuzio cites from Donald L. Horowitz: 'If societies are in the throes of transition and transformation where the future is uncertain, "the past intrudes with increasing severity. In this field there is no such thing as a fresh start."<sup>105</sup> In a country which has just achieved independence there has been an urgent need to link the present right of a Ukrainian state and people to an independent statehood and nationhood with certain precedents of the past. An invocation of certain precedents from the previous experiences of statehood and nationhood would legitimize this right, lay the necessary symbolic foundations of a new state, help strengthen national consciousness and weaken an emotional attachment of the population to the symbols of the Soviet regime. The correct choice of the symbols of the state having just achieved independence has been one of the most important steps towards statehood and nationhood since, in the words of Mykola Tsivirko, symbols are "the code of the nation."<sup>106</sup>

An internal political struggle over the choice of the symbols, which would represent Ukraine as a would-be independent state, began in the late Gorbachev era. Ukraine's national symbols had been attempted to be eradicated by the Soviet regime. The Soviet policies in the field of state symbols had led to a situation when in eastern and southern Ukraine the popular memory of Ukraine's national symbols

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<sup>104</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from Edward Shils, "Nation, Nationality, Nationalism and Civil Society", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 1, No.1 (March, 1995), p. 100. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 199.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.4, No.1 (October, 1993), p.23. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 199.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from Mykola Tsivirko, "Konstitutsiya, Derzhava, Himn-Slaven", *Vechirnyi Kyiv*, 13 November 1996. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 217.

had been largely lost.<sup>107</sup> According to Taras Kuzio, the first appearance of Ukraine's pre-communist national symbols took place in 1989 in western Ukraine, which was followed by their spread to Kyiv and other regions of Ukraine. This turn of events has alarmed the Communist Party of Ukraine, which was quick to launch a propaganda campaign which argued that these symbols had never been genuine all-Ukraine symbols, but, rather, those of western Ukrainians and of nationalist "war criminals".<sup>108</sup> However, relatively stronger civil society of western Ukraine has reacted to this campaign by an 80.000-strong rally in L'viv in August 1989, the resolution of which demanded "an end to the obscene attack by the mass media and officialdom on that which is sacred to the Ukrainian people-the national flag."<sup>109</sup> Taras Kuzio points out that the propaganda campaign, on the whole, proved to be unsuccessful and between 1989 and 1990 a mounting public pressure, demanding adoption of Ukraine's pre-communist national symbols, forced the state officials to accept the defeat of the Soviet Ukrainian symbols in the public eyes.<sup>110</sup>

Yet, even though there was a considerable support for the adoption of pre-communist Ukrainian national symbols in the Ukrainian society, one could not speak of a consensus as to which symbols of statehood should be adopted. Some nationalist-minded people called for the incorporation of Cossack crimson into the blue and yellow flag. According to Taras Kuzio, this option had two advantages: first, it would unite the blue and yellow traditions of western-central Ukraine with those of the Cossack crimson of eastern Ukraine, ensuring thereby the unity of the Ukrainian nation and state. Second, it would reduce the opposition of moderates in the anti-nationalist ranks, who would accept the crimson and blue colors in the flag due to their association with the blue and red of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist

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<sup>107</sup> Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 218.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from B. Kravchenko, "National Memory in Ukraine: The Role of the Blue and Yellow Flag", *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), p. 7. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 218.

<sup>110</sup> Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 219.

Republic's flag.<sup>111</sup> Cossack revivalist groups called for the adoption of a flag with a golden cross on a crimson background. . Hrushevs'kyi had proposed a yellow plough imposed upon a blue background. During 1940's the Melnyk wing of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) had used a trident (tryzub) imposed on a blue and yellow background.<sup>112</sup>

According to Taras Kuzio, the choice was made in favour of the blue and yellow flag, while the trident was adopted and defined as the "Small Symbol of Ukraine." On 28 January 1992 a parliamentary resolution introducing the blue and yellow flag, the trident and the national anthem was approved by a large majority. Thirteen days earlier a separate decree of the Parliamentary Presidium had annulled the Soviet Ukrainian hymn and introduced the national one. On 19 February 1992 after heated parliamentary debates the trident was adopted. Described as the "Small Symbol of Ukraine", the trident would be used on state stamps, currency, by the post office, in identification cards and on official letterheads. These new state symbols were included in Article 20 of the June 1996 constitution. Thus, for the first time in post-Soviet Ukraine their legitimacy acquired constitutional character.<sup>113</sup>

Taras Kuzio contends that the choice of these new national symbols of Ukraine was not random. They were endowed with special meanings. For instance, the meaning of the blue and yellow flag consisted in the fact that, as quoted by Taras Kuzio from A. Sokol's'kyi, "[i]n the blue-yellow flag of Ukraine is impregnated the age-old striving towards liberty, peace and good fortune."<sup>114</sup>

The invocation of the pre-communist national symbols of Ukraine has also stressed the fact that despite discontinuities and ruptures in the history of Ukrainian statehood and in spite of the popularity of the argument that the Ukrainian nation represents an "a-historical" (or "non-historical") nation<sup>115</sup>, Ukraine, in fact, possesses all

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>114</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from A. Sokol's'kyi, *Natsional'na Symvolika Ukrainy* (Zaporizhzhia: Interbuk, 1993), p.92. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 223.

<sup>115</sup> For the treatment of the problem of continuity in Ukrainian history and for the scholarly debates concerning "a-historicalness" of the Ukrainian history, see Mark Von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a

the attributes of nationhood and statehood. The adoption of Ukraine's national symbols has also served to link today's Ukrainian nation and state with its precedents in the past. The very fact that today's independent Ukraine has made its historical choice in favour of the symbols expressing its genuine and authentic "self" is claimed to clearly demonstrate continuity between contemporary Ukrainian nation and state and its predecessors in the past. For instance, according to Taras Kuzio, the trident, described as the "Princely sign of Volodymyr the Great" in the June 1996 constitution, has served to link today's Ukrainian state to Kyiv Rus'<sup>116</sup>, challenging thereby the old Russian imperial scheme of historiography.<sup>117</sup> Taras Kuzio makes reference to Leonid Reshod'ko, who has argued that the inclusion of the trident within the new constitution "emphasized the connection of these links of the Ukrainian historical process within the context of ethnopolitical, cultural and territorial ties of contemporary Ukraine with Kyiv Rus'."<sup>118</sup> According to Taras Kuzio, the second symbolic function of the trident has been to stress the territorial integrity and inviolability of the current borders of the Ukrainian state by providing a necessary geographical linkage between contemporary Ukraine and its southern regions and the Crimea.<sup>119</sup>

It has also been claimed that the blue and yellow flag (symbolizing the blue "peacefulness" of the sky and Ukraine's wheat fields respectively) was used by some

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History?", *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 658-673; Serhii M.Plokyh, "The History of a "Non-Historical" Nation: Notes on the Nature and Current Problems of Ukrainian Historiography," *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 709-716; Iaroslav Isayevich, "Ukrainian Studies – Exceptional or Merely Exemplary", *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 702-708; Yuri Slezkine, "Can We Have Our Nation State and Eat It Too?", *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 717-719.

<sup>116</sup> Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 223.

<sup>117</sup> For the first example of challenging Russian imperial scheme of historiography in Ukrainian history, see Mychaylo Hrushevsky, "The Traditional Scheme of "Russian" History and the Problem of a Rational Organization of the History of the Eastern Slavs" (The Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S. II, No.2) in Ukrainian Studies Fund, *From Kievan Rus' to Modern Ukraine: Formation of the Ukrainian Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ukrainian Studies Fund, Harvard University, 1984).

<sup>118</sup> Quoted by Taras Kuzio from Leonid Reshod'ko, "Litopysets' i Patriarch Ukraïns'koi Derzhavnosti," *Holos Ukraïny*, 27 September 1996. Cited in Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 223.

<sup>119</sup> Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 223.

Cossacks and during the 1848 Galician and the 1905 Russian revolutions. But, according to Taras Kuzio, the real symbolic potent of the flag stemmed from the fact that it had officially been adopted by the West Ukrainian People's Republic.<sup>120</sup>

The introduction of national stamps and national currency (hryvnia) in 1992 and 1996 respectively has also been of a symbolic importance, evoking different historical figures and key periods in Ukrainian history. Taras Kuzio quotes from President Kuchma, who has remarked that "...[t]he national currency is an integral attribute of the state, just like the flag, the coat of arms and the anthem. [Ukrainian] hryvnia must become such a symbol."<sup>121</sup> Ukrainian national stamps were introduced on 1 March 1992. The introduction of the new national currency has symbolized the revival and restoration of the Ukrainian statehood, linking post-Soviet Ukraine to the UNR (Ukrainian People's Republic) and Kyiv Rus'.<sup>122</sup> On the banknotes were portraits of Hrushevs'kyi, Kyiv Rus' figures and Ivan Mazepa, the eighteenth century Hetman<sup>123</sup>, presented as an "evil" in the Russian and Soviet traditions of historiography. Even the sequence in which karbovanets and hryvnia (the Ukrainian currency units) were used in post-Soviet Ukraine has represented the repetition of the national currency experiences of the UNR.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, from the foregoing list of symbolic state practices aimed at underscoring the fact of essential continuity between the contemporary Ukrainian state and its predecessors the following conclusion can be drawn: the present pattern of the invocation of certain precedents from the previous experiences of statehood and nationhood exhibited by the ruling Ukrainian elite in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has had as its pivotal goal not privileging the Ukrainian ethnic eponymous majority and endowing it with an exclusive entitlement to possess the status of the nominal bearer of Ukrainian state sovereignty, but,

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Like Ukraine during 1992 – 1995, the UNR had also begun by using the karbovanets (currency unit). The hryvnia (currency unit) had been introduced in March 1918 after being printed in Berlin. See Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: State and Nation-building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 225.

rather, an urgent need to redress the negative impact of considerable ruptures and discontinuities in the history of Ukrainian statehood and nationhood.

## 4.2 Concepts of “Nationalizing State” and “Nationalizing Regimes” in Post-Soviet Studies

A full and comprehensive analysis pertaining to the character of the nation-building project implemented in Ukraine in the last decade of its independence and the ways mythological discourses of the Ukrainian titular group have been constructed within the framework of this project requires looking at the ways the concepts of “nationalizing state” put forward by Rogers Brubaker and “nationalizing regime” advanced by Graham Smith are adopted or accommodated by some scholars with regard to nation-building projects in post-Soviet Ukraine. Such an analysis would also require a review of the recent scholarly debates this discussion-provoking concept has inspired in the academic community. This chapter will analyze an overall applicability of the concepts of “nationalizing state” and “nationalizing regime” to nation-building attempts by the elites in post-Soviet states in general and their utility as analytical tools in exploring the dynamics and the character of nation-building in post-Soviet Ukraine in particular.

At the core of the concept of “nationalizing state” put forward by Rogers Brubaker is the triangular relationship between national minorities, the newly nationalizing states to which these national minorities are attached by formal and legal citizenship and external national “homelands”, to which these minorities belong or “can be construed as belonging” by ethnocultural affinity bonds. Central to this concept is the idea that the main factor lying behind this triadic relationship is the new phenomenon of mismatch between cultural and political boundaries, being the product of the recent reconfiguration and an alleged “massive nationalization” of political space in post-Communist Europe.<sup>125</sup> The key aspect of this triangular relational nexus is the argument that each of the constituent elements of this triangular relationship represents a *field* of dynamic, “differentiated and competitive positions or stances” adopted by various political actors, rather than a fixed, static

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<sup>125</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe,” *Daedalus*, Vol.124 (1995), p. 108.

and given entity.<sup>126</sup> The elements of this triangular relationship are “variably configured and continuously contested political fields”, rather than being fixed, immutable or “analytically irreducible” categories.<sup>127</sup> Thus, this triadic relationship represents a “relation between relational fields”.<sup>128</sup>

The concept of “nationalizing state” developed by Rogers Brubaker has provoked intense debates among scholars dealing with the problem of nation-building in post-Communist Europe. While acknowledging an analytical usefulness, practicality and convenience of the definition by Rogers Brubaker of a “nationalizing state” as a “dynamic political stance”<sup>129</sup> or a “field of competing stances”<sup>130</sup> and an invaluable scholarly insight offered by such a definition, the author of this thesis does not share the argument by Brubaker that nation-state represents such a stage of development in the history of given state and nation that is characterized by the state of completeness and achieving all the goals identified, while an allegedly “nationalizing state” is conceived as an “unfinished state”.<sup>131</sup>

The definition of “nation-state” as an achieved condition would inevitably imply that all the political actors seeking the realization of their political stances have reached consensus on all vital issues on the nation-building agenda and that “field of political stances” is no longer characterised by the competition between mutually antagonistic stances. Such a definition of “nation-state” would also inevitably carry the sense of being static, fixed and immutable so vigorously rejected by Brubaker. The condition of achieving a desired state of affairs would imply achieving a theoretically perfect stage of development, which is distinguished by an absolute

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>130</sup> It should be noted here the notion of “field” denoting a political arena or realm characterized by dynamic competition between various political actors or agents and where distinct political stances compete for finding the ways of expression and implementation has been borrowed by Rogers Brubaker from Pierre Bourdieu. The main advantage of this notion consist in the fact that this field is characterized by dynamism, competition and interaction between various political positions and ideas defined by Brubaker as “stances” and that by adopting this analytical tool the limits of the condition of being static, fixed and immutable can be overcome.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

consensus and trust at all the levels of societal life. This, in turn, would mean that the purest and crystallised form of national identity has been created and this identity is bound to lay the basis of the current “nation-state”. Thus, an immutable and static character of “nation-state” and national identity can also be inferred from the line of argumentation put forward by Rogers Brubaker. Yet, no national identity can be identified as an achieved end, from now on bound to remain in the same form. There exist no fixed, no final form of national identity. On the contrary, national identity represents a category, continuously reproduced, perpetuated or redefined depending on the historical stage experienced by the community.

A state, where the policies or projects implemented by “the nominally state-bearing nation” tend to be perceived by representatives of the national minority or external national “homeland” is defined by Rogers Brubaker as a “nationalizing state”. This concept has provoked intense debates in the academic community. An attempt to avoid an excessively marginal and to this extent risky academic notion can be discerned behind an emphasis placed by Brubaker not upon the actual set of policies, practices or “an avowed and expressly articulated positions” aimed at privileging the eponymous majority, but, rather, upon the perceptions by national minorities of these positions as deliberately formulated and organised with the purpose of impinging on their rights. But even such a moderate, mild definition of “nationalizing state”, which acknowledges the possibility of subjective factors influencing the decision-making mechanisms of various political actors involved in the political struggle around nation-building issues, tends to be applied by Brubaker indiscriminately to all post-Soviet nations.

Second important flaw in Brubaker’s concept of “nationalizing state” is the absence of a detailed explanation as to what elements constitute a “nationalizing state”. Is it a former colonial state which has just embarked on a path of state and nation-building and the elites of which have set the goal of redressing the negative impact of the colonial legacy by formulating a set of affirmative action? Is it a state having clearly opted for ethnic-genealogical model of nation-building and which is quite explicit in its intentions to give privilege to its ethnonational core, while other national groups are oppressed and denied poliethnic rights? If this is the case, to what extent does the titular, nation-bearing group dominate political and social life? Or is it a civic state which has made its choice in favour of civic-territorial model of

nation-building and which has acknowledged the fact that it can not escape the necessity of basing its all-embracing and overarching political community on the political and ethnocultural values of the eponymous ethnic group while providing national minorities with extensive poliethnic rights? Unfortunately, the concept of “nationalizing state” developed by Rogers Brubaker does not give answers to any of these questions.

Third important flaw in Brubaker’s line of reasoning is that he treats as inseparable and mutually necessitating the phenomena of sustaining “a stance as a mobilized national minority” and sustaining “a vision of the host state as a nationalizing or nationally oppressive state.”<sup>132</sup> Implied in this assumption is the idea that there can exist no politically or culturally articulated stance of national minority, that is, no possibility of the mobilization of national minorities if the host state is not “nationally oppressive.” However, the mobilization of national minorities does not necessarily require the existence of an explicitly oppressive stance on the part of the titular majority. Neither can the existence of the perceptions of an expressly articulated political stance explicitly privileging the rights of the eponymous majority be considered as a condition inevitably giving rise to mobilization on the part of ethnic minorities.

Besides this, not clearly expressed in the concept of “nationalizing state” is the question of the definition of the official set of nation-building policies and practices. While it is certainly true that the field of nationalizing stances within the framework of “the complex inter- and intra-organizational network” called “the state”<sup>133</sup> will be characterized by a continuous struggle for the channels of expression and implementation between distinct nationalizing stances, there is no explanation of the requirements for a nationalizing stance to be considered as adequate to be implemented or expressed as an official state stance.

Not developed within the framework of the concept of “nationalizing state” is the nature of interrelationships between a dominant stance, which finds its expression in the actual corpus of laws, official procedures and policies implemented by the state, and competing nationalizing stances, claiming their exclusive right to represent

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

the nominally state-bearing national group and seeking to influence official policy in a particular direction. It is not clear how these competing stances mobilize to influence the ways of the articulation of the dominant, state position.

Rogers Brubaker, while significantly enriching and enhancing our understanding of the internal political space as a dynamic field of an ongoing political contest for influence between various political “stances”, represented by actors’ political programmes, platforms and discourses and making all its best to underline the inadequacy of the conception of the political field as a static condition, seems to have made the same mistake by emphasizing a distinction between the concept of “nationalizing state”, which represents a “dynamic political stance”, and the concept of “nation-state”, which is implied to differ from “nationalizing state” in its representing a “finished” and “realized” condition.<sup>134</sup> The very fact that the political struggle between competing political stances culminates in the condition of “nation-state” allows, even begs for, making an inference that the degree of political struggle among various actors is bound to diminish, that these actors are finally to succeed in working out the necessary consensus on vital matters concerning state and nation-building, that the very necessity for a lively exchange of ideas and discourse struggle disappears, and that, as a result of these phenomena, the political field is likely to lose much of its dynamism and the spirit of contest and competition inherent in it.

The dichotomy of “nationalizing state” and “nation-state”, which is based on the results of the assessment of internal political field by the criterion of its dynamism, is itself unnecessary and irrelevant either for its application for consolidated and well-established entities or for the political spaces in the process of reshaping, restructuring and redefinition. One of the main reasons for the absence of a need to engage in constructing such dichotomies is the fact that the dynamism of the ideological, discursive and institutional contest between various political actors seeking the ways of influence, expression and representation is an attribute peculiar to both the states having embarked upon the projects of state and nation building and well-established and firmly-grounded nation-states. In fact, due to the fact that

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<sup>134</sup> See Rogers Brubaker, “National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe,” *Daedalus*, Vol.124 (1995), pp. 107-132.

national identity is itself a constantly and reproduced and redefined phenomenon and that even well-established nation-states constantly feel a pressing need to engage in the process of redefinition of their respective national identities and political spaces, the dynamism of competing political stances never shows signs of abating in these states. The same is true for competition and contest, which also tend to be a constant mark of the political landscape even in nation-states.

As was briefly mentioned above, one of the important flaws in the concept of “nationalizing state” as it was developed by Rogers Brubaker is the distinction between “nationalizing state” and “nation-state” attributed to the latter category representing a “finished condition”. This condition is defined as a final destination, as a final point of certain trajectory of development, which is preordained and inevitable, with a natural conclusion that every “nationalizing state” is destined to follow some inescapable path towards its “realized condition” as a “nation-state”. Yet, no nation-state in the contemporary world may claim that it has already achieved the final stage of its pre-ordained identity. No nation-state is exempt from its obligation to redefine its national identity in response to constantly changing and ever-present internal and external factors. Nation-building process has never been a finite process; the history of nation-states has always been marked by the need for cultural reproduction and redefinition of identity boundaries and markers. In fact, every “nation-state” never ceases to be a “nationalizing state” not in its negative sense of privileging and promoting the cultural and ethnic attributes of titular, core ethnic groups at the expense of the cultural rights of other groups, but in a positive sense of forging an overarching political identity, vital for the consolidation of the internal political space and ensuring political integrity and a unified political culture of an entity.

An explanatory paradigm and analytical tool similar to Rogers Brubaker’s concept of “nationalizing state” applied to the nation-building processes in the post-Soviet states has been advanced by Graham Smith. These states are classified by Smith as “*nationalizing regimes*”.<sup>135</sup> While lacking the depth of analysis and the definition of its constituent elements present in the Brubaker’s paradigm, the concept

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<sup>135</sup> Graham Smith, *The Post-Soviet States: Mapping the Politics of Transition* (London: Arnold; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 76.

developed by Graham Smith does not make excessive and all-sweeping generalizations as to the nature of politics of nation-building in the post-communist Europe. While Smith focuses upon three “notable nationalizing projects”<sup>136</sup> in the post-Soviet space, these are not separate projects as such, but, rather, represent the dimensions of nation-building processes taking place in the post-Soviet space. It is difficult to share with Smith the argument that de-Sovietization constitutes an independent “nationalizing project.” Rather, it would be more plausible and wise to treat de-Sovietization as an important dimension of the overall transitional process while it is certainly true that it is an important prerequisite for constructing an institutionally and ideologically independent polity. Even though the newly emerging national identity is being tried to be formulated in juxtaposition with the former Soviet one, it would be a mistake to elevate the importance of de-Sovietization to that of an independent programme or project and to absolutise it. Smith overplays the degree of urgency of the goal of de-Sovietization and attaches an excessive significance to this tendency. In fact, as every goal presupposes a complete removal or an absolute retreat of certain condition against which this goal is set, de-Sovietization as such does not seem to completely remove ideological and intellectual tenets, resources and mechanisms of the old systems, which constitute an enduring, even tenacious, inheritance, which is unlikely to be eradicated in a relatively short period of time.<sup>137</sup>

Though former institutional network has been replaced by a new one, the codes and modes of political communication, cognitive categories and patterns of behaviour are not so easily dislodged. While discourses have changed, the political culture of the electorate and the elites is not adequate to address the complexities of

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> We must, however, acknowledge the fact that the gradual retreat of the old Soviet and authoritarian values and habits will certainly depend on such factors as the depth of pre-Communist values in the post-Communist Europe, the degree of legitimation and internalization these values enjoy in the region and the experience of statehood and nationhood on the part of East European states. From this perspective one should admit that the Soviet successor states with a strong authoritarian traditions deeply rooted in their past (with the exception of the Baltic states) are likely to encounter an “acute unwillingness to surrender” on the part of authoritarian values. While it is true that strong etatist traditions in the post-Communist Central and East Europe will work to a degree against the onset and consolidation of liberal democratic values, the lack of the experience of independent statehood and nationhood on the part of such states as Ukraine, Belarus and Central Asian states will render the legacy of Soviet rule here more tenacious and more difficult to eradicate than in the post-Communist

the working of market economy mechanisms and principles of liberal democracies. Even though the initial impetus towards accepting liberal values was very high and the euphoria about an instant onset of prosperity reigned over the political scene and though this has led to the wrong conclusions about the prospects of the consolidation of democracy drawn primarily from the public opinion survey, the results of which failed to go beyond a simple measurement of the degree of a normative commitment to democracy, the lack of the institutional experience and base of democracy with an attendant lack of the knowledge about the content and mechanisms of democratic governance among the populaces of post-Soviet states have culminated in a condition, when hopes for quick democratization have evaporated and more pragmatic and minimal expectations of ensuring order and stability have become prevalent.

On the other hand, only de-Sovietization in the sense of the breakdown of everything that is associated with the old type of governance and system of values will not be sufficient if the newly emerging polities and democracies are to succeed in consolidating their independence. The processes of state and nation-building in the post-Soviet and post-Communist states have to be implemented under the often negative impact of international economic and trade mechanisms and against the persistence of the old mental structures. So it is a real challenge and a task of immense difficulty requiring enormous zeal and ability on the part of the elites to build a coherent political community around a unifying and overarching national idea. Thus, academic community should focus not upon de-Sovietization, but to go beyond the breakdown of the old structures and to concentrate on the adaptation and transition processes in the post-Communist space.

### **4.3 Concepts of “Nationalizing State” and “Nationalizing Regimes” in the Ukrainian Context**

The predominant role of the state in state and nation-building peculiar to Eastern European states has been the central feature of post-Soviet state and nation-building practices in Ukraine as well. Ukraine shares with other Eastern European

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East and Central Europe taking in consideration the weakness of the reservoir of pre-Soviet authentic national traditions in these parts of the former Soviet Union.

states the relatively weaker civil society when compared with that of Western Europe, strong etatist traditions<sup>138</sup> with accompanying deeply-ingrained propensities among the population towards attributing an all-decisive role in governance to the state and the existence of excessive expectations from the state and the combined impact of the two mutually complementary phenomena: that of the deeply-rooted notion of the elitism and intellectualism of the domain of politics representing a pre-Soviet inheritance and that of a widespread belief in danger of being involved in the politics creating an unbridgeable cleavage line between the domain of public and the domain of private life<sup>139</sup>, being the Soviet legacy.

Yet, the identification of state and nation-building goals and the implementation of respective policies in Ukraine were different from other Eastern European states in the fact that they have been compounded by the lack of institutional framework and experience necessary for efficient implementation of such policies and by the absence of a coherent political community mobilized around a unifying and inspiring national idea. Even though the Soviet experience has created a strong belief in the entitlement of the Ukrainian nation to possessing the right of making political and ethnonational boundaries congruent by delimiting the

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<sup>138</sup> Though, it should be admitted that Ukraine, due to the lack of the experience of independent statehood and nationhood, has had to deal with the consequences of the historically determined phenomena of “weak state” and “dysfunctional state” denoting not the strength of the state vis-à-vis civil society, but, rather, the structural inefficiency of state in the enforcement of rules and its capacity to implement certain set of policies. These phenomena are elaborated below. The etatist traditions in Ukraine are considered to be strong taking into account the strength of the state vis-à-vis societal forces and an acute underdevelopment of civil society and political passivity and self-attributed political helplessness on the part of the population.

<sup>139</sup> Even though George Schöpflin argues that “dependence on the state tends to strengthen vertical relationships and thus undermines the horizontal links of community and solidarity”, it would be more plausible to admit that the perceived alien nature of vertical relationships and the negative reactions showed at the often forceful ways of imposition characteristic of these relationships has generally led to the situation when these vertical relationships began to be perceived as unsafe, uncomfortable and risky, substituting for it horizontal links of social and private domains characterized by interpersonal trust limited to the private sphere. It would be an exaggeration to argue that under Soviet rule “interpersonal connections and interactions, other than those within the family and with very close friends, were laden with suspicion, distrust and a zero-sum game mentality.” Certain degree of suspicion and cautiousness towards other members of society undoubtedly existed, often on ideological grounds, but this cautiousness did not prevent members of society to prefer informal ways of acquiring goods or other economic benefits. Thus, horizontal relationships of the social domain continued to be preferred to vertical ones. Yet, the presence of these horizontal relationships did not, of course, lead to the generation of the sufficient level of interpersonal trust necessary for laying grounds for a strong civil society. See George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power. The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), p. 155.

administrative territory of the former Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, it has substantially weakened the sense of constituting a united political community and Ukrainian national identity. Administrative machinery and state apparatus with the network of formal and informal mechanisms of power distribution, inherited from the Soviet Union, undoubtedly, existed, but this apparatus was devoid of national consciousness, accustomed to thinking in old mental forms and substantially lacking the cognitive categories suited for the consolidation of independence and the identification of state and nation-building goals. It is against the impact of the patterns of cognition and modes of reasoning shaped by centuries-long Russian imperial and Soviet domination and cultural subjugation that the very idea of constituting an authentic and separate nation had to be instilled both in the elites and the population. The phenomenon of regionalism<sup>140</sup> and the fragmentation of society along linguistic and ethnic lines made it extremely difficult to forge a conscious and coherent political community. To this should be added an obstructive effect of the Soviet-type political culture and a huge, cumbersome and inefficient institutional framework inherited from the Soviet past. It is against these factors that state and nation-building policies had to be implemented in post-Soviet Ukraine.

Under these conditions it was only natural to expect that nation-building policies in Ukraine would be organized according to the scheme developed by Brubaker and Smith since the very scale and scope of the transformation project needed for Ukraine in order to become a fully independent polity and nation was so grandiose as to preclude the sufficiency of a minimal set of affirmative actions and practices. Therefore, the very problem of how to reconcile the nationalist aspirations and claims of the Ukrainian titular majority with the poliethnic entitlements and claims of other ethnic elements and to harmonize interethnic relations in a fledgling Ukrainian state assumed saliency. While discourses of democracy and independence with a special emphasis upon the necessity and inevitability of re-joining the European home and the return of the Ukrainian nation to its pristine and original

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<sup>140</sup> For an analysis of the phenomenon of regionalism in post-Soviet Ukraine, see Lowell W. Barrington and Erik S. Herron, "One Ukraine or Many?: Regionalism in Ukraine and Its Political Consequences," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2004), pp. 53-86.

European roots and path of development<sup>141</sup>, from which it was brutally diverted by Russian imperial and Soviet rule, tended to be used interchangeably by the elite, there have inevitably arisen the questions of how to reconcile the demands of a democratic governance for the respect for the rights of minorities living on the territory of Ukraine, including the Russian one, and the frequently expressed views of the right of the Ukrainian core majority to fully enjoy the rights and a dominant position stemming from its privileged status as a nominally state-bearing ethnonational element.

In fact, taking into consideration the fact that the prospects of the consolidation of Ukrainian independence depended at first sight on the strengthening of the position in the society of the nominally state-bearing nation, namely Ukrainian eponymous majority, the generalizations of the Brubaker's model of "nationalizing state" and Smith's concept of "nationalizing regimes" seemed to be validated by such a need. The very essence of post-imperial and independence politics made this need for granting an exclusive right to enjoy a privileged position to the Ukrainian titular majority synonymous to and inseparable from the need for a drastic break with the Russian imperial and Soviet pasts, since this would exert a compensatory and to this extent healing impact upon Ukrainian national culture and languages, considered to be the most vital markers of Ukrainian national identity. Thus, an abstract mode of analysis allows for drawing a conclusion that the schemes advanced by Brubaker and Smith can and even should be applied to the analysis of nation-building model adopted by the Ukrainian state. Yet, as actual practices and policies implemented by the Ukrainian state demonstrate, the generalizations made by Brubaker within the framework of the concept of "nationalizing state" reveal their considerable weakness and abstractness when applied to particular cases such as Ukraine.

In order to show what kind of policies and practices by the Ukrainian state and what decisions do not easily correspond to the analytical structures of the concepts of "nationalizing state" and "nationalizing regimes", first, we should analyze the trajectory of change undergone by the official narrative of national identity formulated before and during the presidency of Leonid Kuchma.

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<sup>141</sup> See Victor Zaslavsky, "Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Societies," *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (Spring, 1992), pp. 97-121.

The current ruling elite under the presidency of Leonid Kuchma has won the elections on a platform based on the rejection of the conception of nationhood propagated by the moderate right-wing, so-called national democrats.<sup>142</sup> The national democrats' narrative had been based on the argument that "the Ukrainian ethnic nation (*natsiia*) originated in the mists of time from an ethnocultural collectivity (*ethnos*), and was bound by unique qualities molded in a thousand year long history"<sup>143</sup> and that "[t]he linear progression of the primordial community into a nation state was frustrated by Russia's imperial aspirations, as the latter separated Ukraine from its European roots."<sup>144</sup> Being the ardent proponents of the Hrushevsky's scheme of history, the national democrats criticized the Russian imperial tendency to reinterpret and adjust the key historical events, periods and figures to the needs of imperial domination and fully rejected its historiographical scheme (for instance, the questions of the inheritance of Kievan Rus', the interpretation of Pereiaslav Treaty and Hetman Khmelnytsky).<sup>145</sup>

According to national democrats, the Soviet rule was nothing more than the continuation of the imperial ambitions of the Russian imperial state based on the denial of existence of a separate Ukrainian nation "under the banner of "internationalism," which was a thinly veiled cover for "Russian imperialism."<sup>146</sup> While acknowledging the fact that minorities should be protected in conformity with the European standards, they, nevertheless, pointed to the natural right of the Ukrainian eponymous majority to enjoy the privileged status in Ukraine. According to them,

The actualization of the full amplitude of the national rights of the various ethnic groups that inhabit Ukraine is inseparable from their acknowledgment that the Ukrainian nation in the republic has the status of historical owner. Ukraine is the

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<sup>142</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": The "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine", *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 677.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 678.

only territory in the world on which fully valid existence and development of the Ukrainian ethnos is possible.<sup>147</sup>

Running on a platform rejecting the thesis of the natural entitlement of the titular majority to enjoy “the status of historical owner” propagated by national democrats, Kuchma condemned “romantic Galician nationalism” and maintained that the fact that Ukraine was a multinational state should be taken into consideration as an important determinant of nation-building in Ukraine.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, Kuchma underscored the importance of the Eurasian roots of the Ukrainian nation. Pointing out that “[h]istorically Ukraine is a part of the Eurasian political and economic space”<sup>149</sup>, he argued that Ukraine should give due attention to pursuing Ukrainian vital national interests on the post-Soviet geography. He also promised to propose the necessary changes to the 1989 Language Law with the purpose of granting the Russian language the status of official language.<sup>150</sup>

Yet, after winning elections Kuchma drastically changed his rhetoric and it soon became apparent that all his promises were nothing else but a mere tactic of electoral campaign. This change in its programme is explained by Kataryna Wolczuk by “the “logic of the office” of the head of a sovereign state and the urgent need to secure the support of the national democrats in a parliament dominated by left-wing parties eager to weaken or abolish the presidency.”<sup>151</sup> In a sharp contrast with its election promises, Kuchma has abandoned the discourse of the return to the Eurasian space and adopted the stance of supporting Ukrainian independence and opposing political reintegration with Russia. As he argued:

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<sup>147</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from Programme of Rukh, Kiev, 1989. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 678.

<sup>148</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 678.

<sup>149</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from *Uriadovyi Kurier*, 21 July 1994. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 678.

<sup>150</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 678.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 679.

The objective political, economic and geopolitical analysis gives rise to the assertion that only an independent Ukraine is today the optimal form of preservation...of its people ... The point of no return has been passed, and in whatever direction the development of Ukraine will go, there can be no return to the past.<sup>152</sup>

A middle ground between an inclusive concept of civic nation and the model of ethnic nation-building placing an emphasis upon the core, state bearing nation has been found in endorsing the “Ukrainian people”(Ukrainskyi narod) as the bearer of state sovereignty. Thus, according to Kataryna Wolczuk, the Ukrainian constitution adopted in June 1996 seems to have established “an implicit hierarchy” of the key concepts: the Ukrainian nation (Ukrainskyi narod) composed of “citizens of Ukraine of all nationalities”; the Ukrainian ethnic nation (natsiia); indigenous people (korinni natsii), denoting ethnic groups with no homelands outside Ukraine, and thus possessing a special entitlement to be considered to be settled on the territory of Ukraine from the very inception or the moment of birth; national minorities (natsionalni menshyny), defining ethnic groups having homelands outside Ukraine, which are granted collective rights to cultural autonomy.<sup>153</sup> The peculiarity of the concept of “the Ukrainian people” is its civic character with an implicit acknowledgement of the fact that Ukraine is a multinational state and with a focus upon the necessity of including, besides the titular Ukrainian national element, other ethnic elements into the definition of the bearer of Ukrainian sovereignty. An implied civic emphasis of this concept provides a clear proof of the invalidity of the concepts of “nationalizing state” and “nationalizing regimes” developed by Brubaker and Smith respectively in the Ukrainian case. As Kataryna Wolczuk has had a strong case for the absence of correspondence between the concept of “Ukrainian nation” and the model of “nationalizing state”, “the passing references to the Ukrainian natsiia [as opposed to the Ukrainskyi narod, representing an inclusive and civic

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<sup>152</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from *Holos Ukrainy*, 28 September 1995. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 679.

<sup>153</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from *idem*, “Constituting Statehood: The New Ukrainian Constitution,” *Ukrainian Review*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (1998), pp. 17–38. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 679.

conception- author's note] are not so much an indicator of "state ownership" by the titular majority, as the *raison d'être* of the Ukrainian state."<sup>154</sup>

An explicit constitutional arrangement providing for the state's obligation "to ensure the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life throughout the entire territory of Ukraine"<sup>155</sup> does not make the concept of the "Ukrainian people" ethnically exclusive, but, rather, has the purpose of ensuring the development of the official language as the key factor of state sovereignty and independence at an important stage of state and nation-formation. Neither can the reassertion by the 1996 Constitution of the provision of the 1989 language law that Ukrainian is the only state language be interpreted as a testament of the ethnocentric inclinations and ambitions of the new Ukrainian elite. Rather, such a provision represented an understanding of the key importance of the development of Ukrainian as a state language for the consolidation of the independence of the still-fragile Ukrainian state in the context of Eastern Europe, where language has always been attached an overwhelming sacredness and been considered as an "innermost sanctum of ethnicity"<sup>156</sup>, and under the circumstances, when Ukrainian has been effectively downgraded to an enviable status of representing a set of "folkloric residuals"<sup>157</sup> by the Russian imperial and Soviet policies. Furthermore, the Constitution also provides for a free development and use of languages of national minorities.<sup>158</sup>

Among other hotly disputed policies in a state having just attained independence has been the introduction of historical and cultural symbols, which

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<sup>154</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": The "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 686.

<sup>155</sup> Article 10 of the Constitution of 1996. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": The "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 679.

<sup>156</sup> George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power. The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), p. 116. See the same text in George Schöpflin, "Aspects of Language and Ethnicity in Central and Eastern Europe," *Transitions*, Vol. 2, No. 24 (29 November, 1996).

<sup>157</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": The "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 673.

<sup>158</sup> Article 10 of the Constitution of 1996. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, "History, Europe and the "National Idea": The "Official" Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 679.

were carefully chosen to serve the objective of constructing a narrative of continuity between the present Ukrainian state and its predecessors in the past. The very fact that these were associated with the Ukrainian nationalist movement and the titular majority has been used as a pretext for advancing the argument that the symbolic practices of the new Ukrainian elite are aimed at privileging the cultural legacy of the eponymous Ukrainian majority and that this constitutes one of the pillars of the “nationalizing project” of the Ukrainian state. Yet, even allegedly civic states have always been preoccupied with the question of constructing a narrative of historical continuity between its present condition and its ancient predecessors with the sole purpose of legitimizing and giving sense to the existence of the new state. An invocation of certain precedents from the previous experiences of statehood and nationhood would serve as the basis of this legitimation, lay the necessary symbolic foundations of a new state, help strengthen national consciousness and weaken an emotional attachment of the population to the symbols of *the ancien regime*, that is, the Soviet rule. Thus, the correct choice of the symbols of the state having just achieved independence has been one of the most important steps towards statehood and nationhood. These new symbols drawn from the cultural reservoir of the Ukrainian ethnic element should be interpreted not as an acknowledgement of the attachment of the privileged status of bearer of state sovereignty to the Ukrainian titular majority, but as the necessary and, what is important, minimal “constitutional attributes”<sup>159</sup> of the newly formed Ukrainian political community. A slightly different interpretation of the motives behind the selection of symbols from the historical experiences of the Ukrainian ethnic collectivity is given by Kataryna Wolczuk, which, again, shows a considerable incompatibility of the symbolic aspect of nation-building undertaken in Ukraine with the concepts of “nationalizing state” and “nationalizing regime”. She asserts that:

The assertion of the leading role of the Ukrainian ethnos by dwelling on its symbolic representation and historical myths appears not so much to be designed to revitalize the ethnocultural bonds of community as to reflect the pragmatic recognition by the elite of the absence of an alternative reservoir of plausible symbols and myths.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 689.

Even though Kataryna Wolczuk argues that “the constitutional assertion of the symbols and language of the titular majority sits uneasily with the proclaimed goal of the consolidation of the political nation”<sup>161</sup>, we must admit that the adoption of the symbols of the eponymous majority does not testify to the nationalizing tendency on the part of the majority, but, rather, represents an attempt to facilitate the processes of the consolidation of independence and statehood by trying to reduce the negative impact of the ethnic and linguistic fragmentation and disunity in Ukraine by means of adopting unifying discourses and symbols. There is no “uneasiness” in the invocation of the symbols of the previous precedents of statehood and nationhood, even if these symbols belong to the cultural legacy of the majority, since every nation, even civic one, feels an inherent and pressing need and imperative to link the present statehood to some historical antecedents.

As far as the choice of certain motifs, golden epochs and heroic figures is concerned, this choice also reflected a pragmatic approach by the Ukrainian elite consisting in the avoidance of the most contested themes, which would reinforce ethnic cleavages in the country, rather than to moderate them. As Kataryna Wolczuk notes, “[c]ontentious issues in the twentieth century, such as the activities of the Organization of the Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military arm, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which waged a struggle against the Soviet Union in Western Ukraine in the 1940s and early 1950s, have been largely avoided.”<sup>162</sup> On the other hand, special attention has been given to the invocation of the heroic deeds of such key figures of Ukrainian history, as Hetman Bohdan Hmelnytskyi. It is noteworthy how Kuchma depicts Khmelnytskyi:

Khmelnyskyi is a titanic figure, his name is linked with the very existence of Ukraine...Like similar figures in the ancient past, Bohdan is the patron of our fatherland; the embodiment of unity and progress in its history—from the Kyiv [Rus] times to the Cossack period and the national revival and liberation struggle of the twentieth century.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 682.

<sup>163</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from *Uriadovyi Kurier*, 19 September 1996. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 680.

This reinterpretation of the Ukrainian past and the invocation of the exemplary character of the heroic deeds from a glorious past was necessary not only for a radical break with the Russian imperial line of historiography having been continued in the Soviet period by the Soviet machinery of indoctrination, but also for the purpose of inculcating an urgently needed belief in the Ukrainian population in an inherent ability of the Ukrainian people to regenerate and unleash its hidden potential and energy of revival and restoration, suppressed by the centuries-long colonial subjugation. As Anthony D. Smith eloquently asserts:

...[E]very nationalism requires a touchstone of virtue and heroism, to guide and give meaning to the tasks of regeneration. The future of the ethnic community can only derive meaning and achieve its form from the pristine "golden age" when "men" were "heroes". Heroes provide models of virtuous conduct, their deeds of valour inspire faith and courage in their oppressed and decadent descendants. The epoch in which they flourished is the great age of liberation from the foreign yoke, which released the energies of the people for cultural innovation and original political experiment.<sup>164</sup>

Thus, the invocation of such heroic themes from an authentic and pristine Ukrainian past not spoiled and stained by foreign intrusions was necessary for generating a sense of the usefulness and purposefulness of the new state, even a predetermined and preordained nature of its recent revival, for showing that it is no futile attempt to reconstruct the pristine form of statehood again. Yet, even though it has served the purpose of delegitimizing the Soviet past, which was not authentically Ukrainian since it was imposed by an external force and lacked genuine Ukrainian elements, and legitimizing the new ruling elite since it was nevertheless depicted as a continuation of Ukrainian statehood despite an intermediate Soviet break<sup>165</sup>, the elite has shown considerable political wisdom and pragmatism at such a crucial stage of state and nation-building by refraining from engaging in an open and explicit anti-Russian rhetoric, which would inadvertently reinforce the cleavage line between the

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<sup>164</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 65.

<sup>165</sup> Such a need for legitimation exists in all states having adopted a civic stance on nation-building issues. Even though Ukraine does not fall into the category of civic states characterized by such features as the principle of democratic accountability and the perception of responsibility on the part of the government, a strong, politically active and conscious civil society and the presence of a deeply-rooted democratic predisposition, neither can it be classified as corresponding to the concepts of "nationalizing state" and "nationalizing regimes."

Ukrainophones and Russophones and work against the process of political consolidation. As Wolczuk points out, the interpretation of the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921 as an anti-Russian uprising was rejected.<sup>166</sup> Likewise, the elite has refused the recourse to the use of the myth of colonial subjugation and suffering, which would inevitably portray Russia and Ukraine as an imperial centre and colony respectively, and has found useless, even counterproductive, the invocation of past injustices for political purposes.<sup>167</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk gives an example of Vasyl Kremen', the former director of the department of internal policy of the Office of the President of Ukraine, who has remarked that “[t]o emphasize when and who offended Ukrainians in the past is a futile exercise” and that “[a] feeling of offence is a bad guide in politics.”<sup>168</sup>

Jose Casanova argues that the Ukrainian state can be classified as a “nationalizing state” “only in the most minimal sense”<sup>169</sup> since it fundamentally cannot escape the necessity of nation-building in the sense of constructing an overarching Ukrainian political community. He proposes to substitute Juan Linz’s systematic conceptualization of the categories of *polis* and *demos*<sup>170</sup> and the conceptual differentiation between “*nation-states*” and “*state-nations*”<sup>171</sup> for the problem of the application of the concept of “nationalizing state” to the Ukrainian

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<sup>166</sup> Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 682.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 682-683.

<sup>168</sup> Quoted by Kataryna Wolczuk from Vasyl Kremen', “Ukraina -Evropeizatsia chy Retrochtorianstvo,” *Uriadovyi Kurier*, 14 May 1998. Cited in Kataryna Wolczuk, “History, Europe and the “National Idea”: The “Official” Narrative of National Identity in Ukraine”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.28, No.4 (December, 2000), p. 683.

<sup>169</sup> Jose Casanova, “Ethno-linguistic and Religious Pluralism and Democratic Construction in Ukraine,” in Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder, (eds.), *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 87.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted by Jose Casanova from J.J. Linz, “Plurinazionalismo e Democrazia,” *Revista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, Vol. 25, (1995), pp. 21-50. Cited in Jose Casanova, “Ethno-linguistic and Religious Pluralism and Democratic Construction in Ukraine,” in Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder, (eds.), *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 87.

<sup>171</sup> Quoted by Jose Casanova from J.J. Linz, “Staatsbildung, Nationbildung und Demokratie,” *Transit*, Vol. 7, (1994), pp. 43-62. Cited in Jose Casanova, “Ethno-linguistic and Religious Pluralism and Democratic Construction in Ukraine,” in Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder, (eds.), *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 87.

case. According to Casanova, Ukraine “is not a nation-state in the strict sense of the term of absolute congruence of its *polis* (community of citizens) and its *demos* (national community).”<sup>172</sup>

Thus, it can be seen from the discourse of the elite that it adopted such a historicizing stance that would lay the basis for a unified Ukrainian political community, rather than assert the historical right of the Ukrainian titular majority to enjoy the privileged status of bearer of state sovereignty. In this respect, this official rhetoric does not correspond to the historicizing dimension of the concept of “nationalizing regimes” elaborated by Graham Smith. Neither can it be classified as corresponding to the paradigm of “nationalizing state” advanced by Rogers Brubaker. To sum up, the formulation of the official nation-building discourse in post-Soviet Ukraine and the construction of historical narratives by Ukrainian national entrepreneurs should not be interpreted as an unrestricted, unlimited and arbitrary activity, but, rather, has to be analysed as an inseparable part of the political bargaining process and as a quest for legitimacy and public support in a wider context of the quadruple transition process being currently undergone by post-Soviet Ukraine. In other words, it was not a free and arbitrary choice of historical motifs and themes privileging the cultural rights of the Ukrainian eponymous majority, but, rather, the necessity of achieving the minimal level of state and regime legitimacy that informed and determined the content of nation-building discourse.

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<sup>172</sup> Jose Casanova, “Ethno-linguistic and Religious Pluralism and Democratic Construction in Ukraine,” in Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder, (eds.), *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 87.

## CHAPTER 5

### PUBLIC OPINION AND THE PROCESS OF NATION-BUILDING IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE

As post-Soviet states embarked upon state and nation-building projects following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the question of the identification of such a set of nation-building policies and practices that would correctly answer to the mass political attitudes and expectations in these states has inevitably arisen. The identification of these policies and practices and their actual implementation also had to take into consideration the ways in which the regime changes in these societies tended to affect the mass political attitudes and perceptions. This has made the measurement of public opinion a pivotal task for national elites preoccupied with state and nation-building projects. Post-Soviet Ukraine has proved no exception to this phenomenon. In Ukraine too the correct measurement of public opinion has been among the most important factors determining nation-building policies and practices and the methods of their implementation.

Assessing public opinion on any political, ethnocultural or social issue in post-Soviet Ukraine has proved to be a complex task necessitating taking into consideration a wide array of factors, influencing mass attitudes of the Ukrainian population in one way or another. These factors may be summarized as follows: the impact of political culture, of which the Soviet authoritarian legacy is likely to remain one of the most important constituents; the phenomenon and system of post-communism with its self-reproducing dynamics and peculiarities;<sup>173</sup> the phenomenon of regionalism, the effects of which, largely ignored or underestimated until quite

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<sup>173</sup> For an analysis of the phenomenon of post-communism, see George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), Chapter 13, “An Analysis of Post-Communism”, pp. 170-188.

recently, have increasingly begun to attract the attention of scholars dealing with Ukrainian studies.<sup>174</sup>

In this chapter it will be argued that the exact contours of Ukrainian political culture representing a unique combination of the following four elements: namely, the Soviet authoritarian legacy, the newly emerging culture of post-communism with the dynamics peculiar to its own and a self-reproducing nature, distinct political culture of Western Ukraine and the idea of the distinctiveness of Ukrainian national character from Russian one will be unlikely to be discerned in the foreseeable future due to the very fluid and malleable nature of current identities of the Ukrainian population. The fluidity and malleability of identity boundaries in post-Soviet Ukraine and a transitional character of Ukrainian political culture find its clearest expression in the fact that the results of the surveys of Ukrainian public opinion lack consistency and tend to change very rapidly. To this also added is the fact that there exist divergence in the scholars views as to which methods to adopt for surveying public opinion in Ukraine or which variables to chose as the most important.

It will be also argued that the empirical data provided by the most recent public opinion surveys in post-Soviet Ukraine do not support the argument of the applicability and the correspondence of the concept of “nationalizing state” developed by Rogers Brubaker to the model of nation-building adopted by the Ukrainian elites.

Since the achievement of independence by Ukraine there has been no uniform point of view as to what contours political culture in Ukraine is likely to assume in the foreseeable future. In fact, at the current historical juncture it is still far from being clear which shape and content the political culture of the Ukrainian population is acquiring. On the one hand, it has frequently been assumed that the breakdown of the old, communist framework of political values, beliefs and worldview in Ukraine is bound to provide a propitious soil for the emergence of the populist nationalist ideologies either stressing the exclusive right of the Ukrainian titular group to enjoy a dominant position in Ukraine, or, at least, underlying the necessity of undertaking an affirmative action to compensate for the past injustices and discrimination suffered

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<sup>174</sup> See Lowell W. Barrington and Erik S. Herron, “One Ukraine or Many?: Regionalism in Ukraine and Its Political Consequences,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2004), pp. 53-86.

by the Ukrainian language and culture throughout the Soviet period. On the other hand, it has been believed that as the generational cohort whose worldview and political culture was shaped in the Soviet period passes, the influence of the totalitarian set of political values will gradually weaken and give place to pro-democratic political values.

Yet, neither of these extreme assumptions has so far proved to find reflection either in the state policies of nation-building, or in the mass attitudes and beliefs of the Ukrainian population. The populist nationalist movements or ideologies seeking to manipulate the pro-nationalist drives of the Ukrainian eponymous group were unable to channel the nationalist sentiments of this group to an organized political action due to the check and balance effect of the state led nation-building policies, which have proven to be cautious enough not to impinge on the cultural rights of other ethnic groups.

On the other hand, the presupposition that all the post-communist societies are bound to embark upon exactly the same democratization route experienced by the Western states and to follow their historical path of the development characterized by the traditions of participatory democracy, a strong civil society and democratic political culture has proven to be too naïve and superficial. Not only have there arisen the problems of the establishment of democratic institutions and political values stemming from particular historical experiences and cultural specificities of these post-communist countries, but also it has proved to be virtually impossible to eradicate the traces and legacies of the communist period, which in a unique combination with the democratic novelties borrowed from the Western states began to exhibit self-reproducing pattern of functioning with the features and dynamics peculiar to its own.<sup>175</sup> In other words, post-communist societies, being completely unaware of the possible outcomes of their democratization models, produced a unique mixture of the newly acquired political institutions and mechanisms and the legacies of authoritarian types of cognition and patterns of reasoning.

It has become commonplace to argue that all the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe are experiencing a transitional period from an

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<sup>175</sup> George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), Chapter 13, "An Analysis of Post-Communism", pp. 170-188.

authoritarian rule and a central command and planning economy (though we must admit the fact that the degree of the centralization of power varied significantly from one state of Central and Eastern Europe to another) to market economy, democratic and accountable network of institutions and pluralism. What are the characteristics of this transitional period, the expectations concerning the success of this process on the part of both Western Europe and the states marked by this transition, and what aspects of transition are likely to proceed faster and easier than other dimensions of this process? One of the most outstanding features of the Ukrainian multiple transition besides its multidimensional and multifaceted character is the fact of the appearance of some self-perpetuating and self-reproducing mechanisms that can not be covered by the very static category of “post-Soviet legacy”, but, rather, tend to transcend the category of legacy and can only be explained by the newly coined concept of “post-communism”, which denotes a set of institutional mechanisms and patterns of political interaction representing a constantly self-sustaining and living organism. It is often argued that its enduring patterns of reproduction will lead to the crystallization of a number of its dynamics and features with the result that some dynamics will exhibit an enduring and self-reproducing pattern in the foreseeable future. Thus, the political, economic and ideological structures in these countries will reflect a pattern *sui generis*.<sup>176</sup> The analysis of post-communism is crucial for our understanding of the process of shaping political culture of the Ukrainian population and the question how the patterns of reasoning unique to post-communism are reflected in Ukrainian public opinion.

## **5.1 Political Culture in the Context of Nation-Building in Ukraine**

The project of nation-building in Ukraine is closely intertwined with the paramount task of transition from authoritarian rule and central-planned economy to a free, market economy, pluralism, an internalization of the principle of accountability and a democratic institutional network. Even though the Soviet rule had formally institutionalized the dominance of the Ukrainian core ethnic group and

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<sup>176</sup> See George Schöpflin, *Nations Identity Power* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

provided the former Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic with administrative boundaries delimitating it from other constituent units of the former Soviet Union and with the formal elements of “independent” statehood such as the constitution, the necessary institutional network and the right to secede from the Union, the Soviet rule has actually represented nothing else but a continuation of the Russian imperial tradition of denying the existence of a separate Ukrainian national identity and preventing de-facto strengthening and consolidation of Ukrainian statehood and nationhood. Thus, when Ukraine has achieved its independence as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it was nothing more than a “veneer” of an allegedly independent state, which, rather, represented a “weak”<sup>177</sup> and “dysfunctional”<sup>178</sup> state with underdeveloped state institutions exhibiting “elements of immature stateness”<sup>179</sup> and lacking a strong tradition of independent statehood. This state was characterized by the fact that Ukrainian ethnic group constituting its titular, nominally state-bearing element has been deprived of its national idea possessed a weak national consciousness and was divided along linguistic and regional lines. Ukrainian language and culture, the main building blocks of Ukrainian national identity, had also suffered a serious oppression throughout Russian imperial and Soviet periods of rule. The necessary set of affirmative policies and practices, which would minimize the negative impact of these historical experiences of the Ukrainian nation and state,

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<sup>177</sup> Taras Kuzio, “The Nation-Building Project in Ukraine and Identity: Toward a Consensus,” in Taras Kuzio and Paul D’Anieri, (eds.), *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger Publishers, 2002), pp. 9-27. See also the Chapter 4 by Mykola Ryabchuk in the same volume, “Culture and Cultural Politics in Ukraine: A Post-Colonial Perspective”, p. 66. Mykola Ryabchuk makes a reference to Paul D’Anieri, who defines the “weakness” of the Ukrainian state as denoting “not the power of the state relative to other state but the ability of the government to adopt a policy and implement it in the society.” For a detailed discussion concerning the concept of “weak state”, see Paul D’Anieri, “The Impact of Domestic Divisions on Ukrainian Foreign Policy: Ukraine as a ‘Weak State,’” in Taras Kuzio, Robert S. Kravchuk, and Paul D’Anieri, (eds.), *State and Institution Building in Ukraine* (New York: St. Martin’s , 2000), p. 84.

<sup>178</sup> Mykola Ryabchuk, “Culture and Cultural Politics in Ukraine: A Post-Colonial Perspective”, in Taras Kuzio and Paul D’Anieri, (eds.), *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger Publishers, 2002), p.66. For a detailed elaboration of the concept of “dysfunctional state” by James Mace, see T.Kis, I. Makaryk, and Roman Weretelnyk, (eds.), *Towards a New Ukraine I: Ukraine and the New World Order, 1991-1996* (Ottawa: Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa, 1997).

<sup>179</sup> Taras Kuzio, “The Nation-Building Project in Ukraine and Identity: Toward a Consensus,” in Taras Kuzio and Paul D’Anieri, (eds.), *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger Publishers, 2002), p. 10.

would inevitably be aimed at overcoming destructive legacies of authoritarian, Soviet rule and colonial Russian imperial rule.

Thus, two intertwined goals which were considered to be the precondition of healing the negative effects of the same destructive cause (Russian imperial and Soviet rule): that of the consolidation of democratic and civic traditions, which had already been present in some form in the Western part of Ukraine, and that of state and institution-building came to be regarded as mutually complementary and even synonymous in the discourses and debates concerning the most urgent objectives in post-Soviet Ukraine. Thus, democratic institutions, the principle of democratic accountability and a politically active and conscious civil society began to be considered as vital factors that would facilitate the implementation of state and nation-building project in post-Soviet Ukraine and would strengthen Ukrainian national identity by focusing on the “Europeanness” and an inherent democratic nature of an authentic Ukrainian national identity with its deeply-rooted tradition of a strong civil society, which would appear even more democratic if compared with an “Asiatic” and authoritarian nature of Russian national identity. Thus, the discourses concerning nation-building project in Ukraine were constructed being based on the following two interconnected dichotomies: “Strengthening and consolidating Ukrainian statehood and nationhood” versus “Remaining a Colonial Periphery of Russian Empire” (in this context the Soviet era has been considered as a continuation of this empire) and “Being based on authentic democratic traditions and institutions treated as an inherent given in the Ukrainian spirit and culture” versus “Identifying Russia as an integral part of a despotic, authoritarian, Asiatic institutional framework and identity incompatible with democratic values and institutions”.

This phenomenon of confluence and overlapping of the proclaimed goals of democratization and the return to an authentic, pristine national identity, which would serve as “the source of potential salvation”,<sup>180</sup> was not unique to Ukraine and has been a common feature of the post-Communist transition. The political discourses that filled the ideological vacuum that had resulted from the delegitimation of Communist ideology in Central and Eastern Europe were

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<sup>180</sup> George Schöpflin, “Culture and Identity in Post-Communist Europe,” in Stephen White, Judy Batt, Paul G. Lewis, (eds.), *Developments in East European Politics* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993), p. 27.

constructed upon the two interrelated dichotomies: that of between an oppressive and homogenizing Soviet ideology with its brutal machinery of regime indoctrination (including the imposition of a Soviet type of society) and the goal of building a society based on the principles of liberal pluralism and individual liberties; and that of between being forced to follow the path of development imposed by an external political entity, which has meant being de-facto a dependent country, and embarking upon the policies and practices that independence would naturally involve, among which nation-building projects occupied the most prominent place. The spatial and temporal congruence and overlapping of these two dichotomies produced an interesting phenomenon of the synonymization of the discourses of democratization and independence.

Thus, contrary to the argument stressing an inherent incompatibility of the nationalistic rhetoric and a democratic discourse based on the promulgation of civic liberties and values, post-communist nation-building projects in Central and Eastern Europe were declared to form an organic and inseparable whole with the paramount objective of transition to democracy to the extent that they were claimed to be designed to address the most urgent social and economic problems inherited from the Soviet central command and planning system. Despite the popular understandings of democracy by the populations of Central and East European states being limited to a normative commitment to democracy in an expectation of a something of “magical” and “instant” solution to all social and economic problems, the absence of a minimal knowledge about the exact content of liberal values and the scope of individual liberties and despite the lack of cognitive categories suited for liberal democracy, a deliberate intermingling and an interchangeable use of the discourses of democracy and independence have served as a useful legitimating tool in the initial phases of post-Soviet transition. Even though the legitimizing function of these discourses and their strength of appeal to popular sentiments have somewhat decreased as the initial economic policies of transition have not met the expectations of the populations, these discourses are still used interchangeably and are often associated with each other. As Victor Zaslavsky has aptly pointed out:

The Slavic and Baltic republics share with postcommunist Eastern Europe a new nationalist myth which unites and animates both the leaders and the rank-and-file members of these nationalist movements. It is the myth of belonging to European

culture, the myth of return to real or imaginary European roots, the myth of normal development brutally interrupted by the Bolshevik experiment or the Russian aggression or both.<sup>181</sup>

Zaslavsky underlines an inapplicability and invalidity of the conception of nationalism as “a purely anachronistic and counterproductive movement”,<sup>182</sup> which is characterized by ethnic intolerance, exclusion and an inherent incompatibility with civic liberties and the “rejection of social compromise”<sup>183</sup> in the context of the transition process in Central and Eastern Europe. While it is certainly true that ethnicity in Eastern Europe has a more powerful appeal and a more solid base of mobilization than its Western European counterpart, with the sole exception of former Yugoslavia and exclusionary citizenship regulations in Latvia and Estonia the employment of nationalistic rhetoric in Eastern Europe has not tended to heighten the senses or perceptions of ethnic polarization, intolerance or hatred. Pointing to the important modernizing<sup>184</sup> functions of nationalism in Eastern Europe in the current transition, Zaslavsky asserts that:

[I]t would be a very grave mistake if analysts, concentrating on the well-known consequences of traditional nationalism and pre-modern ethnocentric mobilization, overlooked important new characteristics and modernizing functions of the nationalist revival in the most developed parts of the former Soviet Union, such as the Baltic and Slavic republics.<sup>185</sup>

Emphasizing the new functions of Eastern European nationalism and the utility of its invocation as a tool of the return to authentic, European roots, Zaslavsky argues that:

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<sup>181</sup> Victor Zaslavsky, “Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Societies,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 121, No. 2, (Spring 1992), p. 110.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> This is not to say that the Soviet path of development did not represent a model of modernization of was a pre-modern stage of development. Undoubtedly, the Soviet experience represented a specific model of modernization with its own peculiarities. By the term “modernization” Zaslavsky seems to mean embarking on a process of building a liberal, democratic model of society and state and the relations between them.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

The true meaning of this new nationalism may be adequately understood only if its program is seen in totality: nationalism's traditional "divisive" goal of creating a nation-state is inextricably connected with its search for unity and integration and its readiness to abide by the principles of democracy.<sup>186</sup>

This lengthy elaboration of the interconnectedness of the projects of democratic consolidation and nation-building in post-Soviet Ukraine was necessary to show the main areas of the location of the constituent elements of Ukrainian post-Soviet political culture. In other words, our analysis concerning the impact of political culture on the process of shaping of Ukrainian public opinion will focus upon the processes and mechanisms of the formation of the mass attitudes of the Ukrainian population towards proclaimed goals of democratization and nation-building.

## **5.2 Concept of Political Culture in the Context of Central and Eastern Europe**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent transformation of post-Soviet societies have provided a promising field of application for the political culture approach and a fertile ground for testing and further developing this approach. Not only the very large number of different societies having just acquired independence and undergoing a radical transformation, but also the very far-reaching, fundamental and unique nature and scope of this transformation itself has provided unique research and analysis opportunities from the perspective of comparative politics in general and for the scholars utilizing political culture approach in the context of Central and Eastern Europe in particular. As Archie Brown quotes from Lucian Pye, a recent increase in the interest in political culture studies "came about in large measure as a consequence of two related historical developments: the collapse of Communism with an attendant rise in ethnic politics, and a significant world-wide trend towards democracy."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>187</sup> Quoted by Archie Brown from Lucian W. Pye, "The Elusive Concept of Culture and the Vivid Reality of Personality," in S.A. Renshon, J. Duckitt, J. N. Duckitt, (eds.), *Political Psychology: Cultural and Crosscultural Foundations* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), p.27. Cited in Archie Brown, "Political Culture and Democratization: The Russian Case in Comparative Perspective," in Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel, (eds), *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p. 17.

To this should be added the fact that the application of the concept of political culture in this region would enable to make an assessment of the nature of the interrelationship and interaction between the legacy of the communist rule and pre-Soviet political traditions in the region. It is the impact of these pre-Soviet political traditions that accounts for the fact that there have existed significant differences between countries within the former communist bloc despite structural resemblances and common features such as similar institutional frameworks and mechanisms, common official ideology and homogenizing attempts at regime indoctrination, state ownership of the means of production. It is these political traditions again that should be considered as a vital factor determining the nature of transition being undergone in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the current degree of democratization<sup>188</sup> in these countries. According to Vladimir Tismaneanu and Michael Turner, in understanding the process of value formation and value change (as well as value continuation) in the context of democratic transitions of Central and Eastern Europe the concept of political culture has turned out to be a very useful “conceptual instrument” and analytical tool.<sup>189</sup> They argue that the employment of this tool allows scholars to account for such elements of the pre-Soviet past as “the resurrection of the extreme right in the post-Soviet states”, the resuscitation of the pre-communist symbols and ideas and “the continuation of the radical rightist components present within the Bolshevik political culture.”<sup>190</sup> As Tismaneanu and Turner reiterate the benefits of the application of the concept of political culture to post-Soviet studies by quoting Robert C. Tucker,

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<sup>188</sup> Undoubtedly, by democratization we do not mean that these countries are bound to follow in the exactly same path of development as Western Europe and that the elites in these countries are preoccupied by the replication of the Western model of democratization. It took almost a decade for Western European states to understand that the imposition of the Western liberal traditions in a pure form as they have developed and exist in Western Europe will not solve the fundamental systemic problems related with the structural differences between capitalist and socialist modes of production, corresponding political regimes and cognitive frameworks and will not create an ideal Eastern European duplicate of Western Europe overnight.

<sup>189</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu and Michael Turner, “Understanding Post-Sovietism: Between Residual Leninism and Uncertain Pluralism,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York : M.E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 3-24.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

A strength of the concept of political culture as an analytic tool (in comparison with such macroconcepts as modernization and development) is the micro-macro character. A political culture in the macro sense is the complex totality of patterns and subpatterns of political culture operative in a given society. Its components, the micro-elements, are individual patterns or clusters of them. They can have different fates at times of radical change. Being ingrained by custom in the conducts and thoughts of large numbers of people, the patterns are tenacious, but some are more tenacious than others, especially is self-interest in their perpetuation comes into play among influential groups. Accordingly, some can survive those historical divides called “revolutions” and appear in guise afterwards.<sup>191</sup>

Cultural theories in general and the political culture approach particularly have been found the most useful not only in the exploration of societal responses to certain transformative factors and the trajectory of value change in society, but also have proved to be the most clarifying in the instances when certain value change towards democracy suffered a serious setback and the most inherent, the most deeply ingrained values tended to resurface again to a degree allowing them to considerably influence the course of value change in a society. Political beliefs, ideological preferences, thought patterns and modes of cognition do not usually change overnight; these categories represent enduring structures no matter to what extent the external environment force the individuals to question the validity of these structures and their applicability to the new ideological paradigms. Even when individuals demonstrate some shift in ideological and political allegiances, ideological paradigms inherited from the old regimes tend to reappear again and again in some form or another. Thus, cultural approach is sufficiently equipped to explain why authoritarianism and collectivism in Russia, for instance, will not recede into past and to account for the fact why the recent democratization in Russia will not engender genuine democratic institutional institutions, mechanisms and values. It also explains why democracy in Russia will remain a superficial and surface form of the governance in its marked democratic discursive trappings, while the most pristine, authentic elements such as authoritarianism and collectivism will remain hid beneath this surface just to resurface in the periods of the mass questioning of a newly acquired ideology and will continue to serve as the most efficient, enduring

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<sup>191</sup> Quoted by Vladimir Tismaneanu and Michael Turner from Robert C. Tucker, “Sovietology and Russian History,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (July-September, 1992), p. 190. Cited in Vladimir Tismaneanu and Michael Turner, “Understanding Post-Sovietism: Between Residual Leninism and Uncertain Pluralism,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 7.

and authentic marker of Russian identity. For instance, Jeffrey W. Hahn cites Walter Lacqueur who has pointed to a virtually eternal character of certain authentic elements of identity and eloquently located the chances of democracy to take root in Russia: “Basic instincts do not easily change; the Russians never respected and loved democracy as they respected and loved autocracy.”<sup>192</sup> Frederic J. Fleron quotes from Leah Greenfield, who in a similar vein has argued that:

The ideas of democracy and capitalism are not merely vague and undefined in the minds of those Russians who support them; they are deeply foreign to them. They go against the values that form the core of the Russian national consciousness, particularly the belief that the intelligentsia forms a natural social elite, as well as its collectivism and authoritarianism, its other-worldly orientation, its proud irrationality and lack of discipline.<sup>193</sup>

Thus, the view stressing the importance of deeply-ingrained values as an essential constituent element of the political culture seems to continue to enjoy considerable support in the academic community.

### **5.3 Definitional and Methodological Problems Related With the Concept of Political Culture**

Despite the opportunities for a comparative research and analysis that the dissolution of the Soviet Union has provided, the application of the concept of political culture in comparative politics has been compounded both by terminological (definitional) problems stemming from the absence of consensus on the exact content and meaning of such a broad concept and a methodological dilemma concerning the question whether quantitative survey methods or qualitative ones should be used. While this dilemma seems to have had less significant implications for the further development of the concept of political culture, the definition of the exact contours of the concept has generated intense debates in the academic community. In order to

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<sup>192</sup> Quoted by Jeffrey W. Hahn from Walter Lacqueur, *The Long Road to Freedom* (New York: Scribner's, 1989), p. 8. Cited in Jeffrey W. Hahn, “Continuity and Change in Russian Political Culture,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (October, 1991), p. 398.

<sup>193</sup> Quoted by Frederic J. Fleron, Jr. from Leah Greenfield, “Kitchen Debate”, *The New Republic*, 21 September, 1992, p. 22. Cited in Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., “Post-Soviet Political Culture in Russia: An Assessment of Recent Empirical Investigations,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (March, 1996), p. 233.

clarify one of the sources of these debates, the process of the adaptation of the more general concept of culture should be mentioned. The very absence of clear-cut boundaries of the concept of political culture has inherently been fraught with a temptation to leave intact the original scope and content of the category of culture, that is, in the same form as it was originally borrowed from anthropology, sociology and psychology or to acknowledge the necessity of adapting a very broad scope of culture to the needs of political science. As William Mishler and Detlef Pollack have pointed out, while the concept of culture as borrowed from anthropology focused on culture's "aggregate and holistic nature, its rootedness in history, its connectedness to society and ethnicity, its stability and resistance to change, its coherent structure as a network of meanings, its deductive character, and its exogenous nature as a determinant of both political structure and behaviour",<sup>194</sup> the new meaning which the concept of culture has acquired in the course of time drastically departed from the cluster of meanings the original form of the concept had carried at the time of borrowing. Having undergone the necessary adaptation and transformation process, the concept has increasingly focused on the individual or "micro-level" character of culture, the divisibility and even the independence of its parts, its diversity both within and across societies and groups, its dynamism and susceptibility to change, its ambivalence and heterogeneity, its inductive character, and its fundamental political endogenous nature."<sup>195</sup> While the concept of culture as borrowed from anthropology has been termed as "thick" culture, the latter definition pertains to "thin" culture.

As the scholars of comparative politics were trying to find a model that would combine these two opposite approaches to the concept of culture in general,<sup>196</sup> debates concerning the definition of the concept of political culture have continued until recently. Scholars still diverge on the question of definition and on the

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<sup>194</sup> William Mishler and Detlef Pollack, "On Culture, Thick and Thin: Toward a Neo-Cultural Synthesis," in Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel, (eds), *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p. 238.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> The neo-cultural synthesis of "thick" and "thin" conceptions of culture represents an attempt to combine these two opposite approaches to culture. For a detailed analysis of the neo-cultural synthesis, see William Mishler and Detlef Pollack, "On Culture, Thick and Thin: Toward a Neo-Cultural Synthesis," in Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel, (eds), *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

constituent elements of the concept of political culture. Indeed, as Frederic J. Fleron, Jr has pointed out, “explication of the concept “political culture” has been a controversial, if not contentious, matter for several decades.”<sup>197</sup> While some are inclined to emphasize attitudes as a constituent element of the concept of political culture (this school of thought being exemplified by Gabriel A. Almond, Sidney Verba and Pye), others point to the importance of the analysis of both attitude and behaviour (this second approach is represented by Robert C. Tucker, Richard R. Fagen and Ken Jowitt)<sup>198</sup> and the third school suggest that the concept is based on deeply-embedded values, deeply-rooted beliefs and sense of identity.<sup>199</sup>

Archie Brown makes an important distinction between “more malleable” attitudes, which are relatively easy to generate, channel in certain direction, mobilize or change, and more persistent, even tenacious, beliefs and core values. He argues that “[w]hile behaviour can sometimes provide evidence of a particular political-cultural pattern, it should not be embedded in the very definition of political culture.”<sup>200</sup> Archie Brown defines political culture as “the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups.”<sup>201</sup> Frederic J. Fleron points out that a comprehensive definition of political culture well capturing the influence of political culture on the trajectory of the development of political system and treating it first and foremost as “a framework” has been given by White, according to whom,

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<sup>197</sup> Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., “Post-Soviet Political Culture in Russia: An Assessment of Recent Empirical Investigations,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (March, 1996), p. 228.

<sup>198</sup> This classification in the form of division into two schools of thought is made by Frederic J. Fleron, Jr. See Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., “Post-Soviet Political Culture in Russia: An Assessment of Recent Empirical Investigations,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (March, 1996).

<sup>199</sup> The latter camp is represented by Archie Brown. See Archie Brown, “Political Culture and Democratization: The Russian Case in Comparative Perspective,” in Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel, (eds), *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> Quoted by Archie Brown from Archie Brown and Jack Gray, *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 1. Cited in Archie Brown, “Political Culture and Democratization: The Russian Case in Comparative Perspective,” in Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel, (eds), *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

[Political culture] is a variable which mediates between the political system and its environment, providing a framework within which patterns of political belief and behaviour, historically considered, can be located, and as a factor which will influence and constrain –though not determine-future patterns of development in a political system.<sup>202</sup>

Frederic J. Fleron also quotes from Stephen White, who defines political culture as “the attitudinal and behavioural matrix within which the political system is located.”<sup>203</sup>

The definition of political culture applied within the framework of this thesis is also based on the afore-mentioned distinction between attitudes, which despite originating from deep-seated values and beliefs tend to change depending on socio-political circumstances at the time and can easily be manipulated, and more persistent values and beliefs, which have tended to display remarkable durability and endurance even in the periods of profound structural and cultural transformations, such as the grand design of constructing a Soviet type of society in Central and Eastern Europe and the current post-Soviet transition. It is these core values and beliefs that account for the current differentiation and diversity observed among Central and Eastern European societies. It is these fundamental and pristine pre-Soviet values<sup>204</sup> that despite attempts at regime indoctrination have persisted to this day due to their enjoying popular legitimacy even the periods of intensified Soviet

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<sup>202</sup> Quoted by Frederic J. Fleron, Jr. from Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (New York: St Martin's, 1979), p. 20. Cited in Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., “Post-Soviet Political Culture in Russia: An Assessment of Recent Empirical Investigations,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (March, 1996), p. 230.

<sup>203</sup> Quoted by Frederic J. Fleron, Jr. from Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (New York: St Martin's, 1979), p. 95. Cited in Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., “Post-Soviet Political Culture in Russia: An Assessment of Recent Empirical Investigations,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (March, 1996), p. 230.

<sup>204</sup> Despite underlying strong etatist traditions, a more active and interventionist state and a weaker civil society compared with Western Europe, these pre-Soviet values in Central and Eastern Europe can be classified as anti-Soviet and anti-totalitarian in nature. See George Schöpflin, “The Political Traditions of Eastern Europe”, *Daedalus*, vol. 119, no.1, (1990); George Schöpflin, “Culture and Identity in Post-Communist Europe,” in Stephen White, Judy Batt, Paul G. Lewis, (eds.), *Developments in East European Politics* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993), pp. 16-34; George Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-1992* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1993).

ideological pressure and have served as a cultural and ideological basis for the post-Soviet transformation in the region.

#### **5.4 Pro-Democratic Values as a Constituent Element of Ukrainian Political Culture**

The measurement of the degree of support for democratic institutions and values in Ukraine in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods alike has not been an easy process. Among serious impediments to an extensive public opinion research in the Soviet period were the factors of a strict administrative and ideological control over academic activities conducted within the boundaries of the former Soviet Union and lack of access to the archives and important sources of data. Even in the cases when all bureaucratic obstacles were overcome, the perception of an ideological control and pressure on the part of respondents taking part in public opinion surveys tended to have a negative impact on the impartiality and the correctness of the views expressed. Added to this should be the factors of the lack of a minimal knowledge about the concepts and cognitive categories related with democracy on the part of respondents and an acutely felt impact of generation-long regime indoctrination, which with the exception of the Baltic republics where Soviet values were largely treated and perceived by the population as inherently alien and inauthentic and to this extent lacked necessary legitimation, was successful in instilling in the population the sense of political passivity by the means of erecting impassable boundaries between the domains of politics with its pronounced attributes of elitism and intellectualism and civil society, which was suppressed and was devoid of any means of representation and influence. Besides this, acute perceptions of helplessness and weakness vis-à-vis an almighty and all-seeing state with its huge apparatus of enforcement and control with an attendant deeply-rooted habit of expecting social security and welfare exclusively from the state, which was the major supplier of job opportunities, dominated large segments of society.

Thus, reinforced by these constraints and pressures of the Soviet type of governance and despite the lack of familiarity with everything associated with plural democracy and the presence of strong authoritarian values deeply-embedded in the popular consciousness as a result of a centuries-long Russian imperial and Soviet

rule, the model of a prosperous West with its material achievements and individual liberties as strong tempting factors came to represent an alluring alternative to the Soviet mode of production, which long before the dissolution of the Soviet Union had already begun to exhibit marked symptoms of structural inefficiency and decay, and the Soviet type of state-society relations.

Thus, the striking phenomenon of a purely normative commitment<sup>205</sup> to democracy without democratic institutional and political culture and marked by the lack of the necessary democratic institutional experience with an attendant absence of the Western pattern of the relationship between state and civil society was born simply as a form of protest to the pressures emanating from the state machinery and as an idealistic expectation of joining the Western material achievements. Yet, this initial euphoria of joining the democratic world proved to be a rather ephemeral, temporary and shallow tendency lacking a democratic *value and institutional base* necessary for the long-term sustaining of such major upheavals and transformations as transition to the capitalist mode of production and a democratic type of governance. Without such a supportive base represented by institutional experience and political culture it has proved very difficult to sustain an initial degree of support, even of a purely normative character, for democratic institutions and respective value system. Besides this, fairly deeply-entrenched and much more tenacious than had been initially anticipated have proved authoritarian inclinations and values taking root in the Russian imperial past and reinforced in the Soviet period.

There was even no knowledge on the part of the population as to the constituent elements of the concept of democracy and the working principles and mechanisms of market economy. Such a knowledge was vital since it would be the main determinant putting an end to a purely normative commitment to democracy and the magical properties attributed to it with an attendant excessive degree of expectations of efficiency from it, and substituting for all this more practical and realistic expectations and psychological readiness to endure inevitable decreases in the standard of living as a result of restructuring at the initial phases of transition to market economy. As George Schöpflin has lamented, the reality was that “[i]n the

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<sup>205</sup> On normative commitment to democracy see Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, “The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October, 1995), pp. 485-514.

eyes of many, democracy was understood as meaning a “high standard of living”, thereby divorcing the political system and its values from the perceived high consumption of the West.”<sup>206</sup> He also mentions the lack of economic literacy on the part of the populations of Central and Eastern European countries:

It is noteworthy in this connection to recognize the widespread difficulty of many people in understanding the nature of the economic interactions in a market situation...The idea of the market was perceived as a synonym for prosperity, and not as a complex system of prices and wages, supply and demand, which would result in differentiation and differential access to goods and services. The ethos of state dependence, the idea that the state would and, indeed, should bail out the individual was very strongly assimilated. In effect, the level of economic literacy was very low.<sup>207</sup>

It was, thus, inevitable in such a highly emotionally-charged atmosphere marked by utopian visions about economic benefits democracy would bring that public opinion surveys conducted in this period be highly unlikely to present a verifiable and trustable data on the public perceptions about the transition process being undergone and the degree of public support for democratic values and institutions. In fact, the very nature of the initial stage of transition characterized by the possibility of significant fluctuation, inconsistency and a rapid change in public attitudes and voting preferences, when unrealistic and irrational expectations were bound to predominate over more established, rational and cautious views, has led to a situation when there were observed considerable inconsistency and contradictions between the data drawn from the various cross-sectional studies<sup>208</sup> of public opinion. As a result, cross-sectional public opinion surveys conducted in the initial phase of the transition period are far from presenting a homogeneous and consistent picture of the public attitudes and preferences characteristic of this period. While some studies

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<sup>206</sup> George Schöpflin, “Culture and Identity in Post-Communist Europe,” in Stephen White, Judy Batt, Paul G. Lewis, (eds.), *Developments in East European Politics* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1993), p. 25.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>208</sup> Cross-sectional studies are based on the surveys conducted at a single point of time, while longitudinal studies draw their data from a series of multiple observations over certain period of time with the participation of the same list of respondents, thus allowing making an analysis of the change in attitudes and preferences taking place within this period of time. See, James L.Gibson, “The Resilience of Mass Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes in the Nascent Russian and Ukrainian Democracies,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, (Armonk, New York : M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 102.

have found considerable support for the prospects of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, others have presented the data not allowing drawing such optimistic conclusions about the possibility for democratic institutions and values to consolidate in the region. In some cases, optimism for the prospects of democracy in the post-Soviet states is shocking, bewildering and unexpected, yet not supported by the multitude of observations on the persistence and authenticity of authoritarian traditions deeply ingrained in Russian imperial consciousness and then easily revitalized and adopted for the needs of the Soviet system. For instance, Jeffrey W. Hahn has went so far as to argue that “[o]n the whole, the picture of Russian political culture that emerges from [his] study is one not strikingly different from what is found in Western industrial democracies.”<sup>209</sup>

Representing a more moderate camp of the proponents of the thesis of a considerable support base for democracy in some post-Soviet states, William M. Reisinger et al. have assessed the popular base of support for democracy in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania and drawn the following conclusion:

Democratic values are present in all three societies-in the predominantly Slavic societies of Russian and Ukraine as well as in the more Westernized Lithuania-at levels the pessimists would not have expected. Our data thus help account for the role that mass political action played in the fall of the Soviet regime. Even so, democratic values are concentrated in certain societal groups and are not so high that the consolidation of democracy is assured.<sup>210</sup>

Under the circumstances when the population lacked the necessary level of experience of living under democratic institutional network and was devoid of the cognitive categories suited for internalizing the meaning, principles and real functioning of democracy, the often irrational expectations (often being short-term rather than reflecting a comprehensive long-term set of expectations) from the transition period have proved to be unable to sustain the initial level of support for democracy as the results of economic reforms failed to meet these expectations. As Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield have aptly pointed out, “the transition

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<sup>209</sup> Jeffrey W. Hahn, “Continuity and Change in Russian Political Culture,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (October, 1991), p. 420.

<sup>210</sup> William M. Reisinger, Arthur H. Miller, Vicki L. Hesli, Kristen Hill Maher, “Political Values in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania: Sources and Implications for Democracy,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (April, 1994), p. 185.

experience itself has reoriented public opinion away from utopian expectations about the market and democracy, which were characteristic of the period when the old system was collapsing, toward a more informed and certainly more cautious outlook.”<sup>211</sup> According to James L. Gibson who complains about the lack of comparable and consistent data on the transition process in the region, “the paucity of comparable data on the crucial period from 1989 to 1992 undermines [scholars’] efforts to understand the transformation process...[The] ability [of the academic community] to understand change is compromised by the absence of coherent longitudinal efforts.”<sup>212</sup>

As far as the issue of a normative commitment of the population to democracy is concerned, public opinion surveys have shown the absence of the relationship between popular commitment to democratic institutions and values and the actual performance and working of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. According to Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, “[r]espondents may support the principles of democracy as an ideal form of government while regarding the actual practice of democracy in their country in a negative light.”<sup>213</sup> The results of surveys of the level of normative commitment in Central and Eastern Europe have been, according to Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, useful in the assessment of the validity and applicability of the culturalist theories emphasizing the role of pre-existing political culture in determining the level of popular support for democracy. According to these theories, a normative support for democracy is determined by the country’s political culture, rather than the actual working of

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<sup>211</sup> Quoted by James L. Gibson from Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, “The Russian Election of 1993: Public Opinion and the Transition Experience,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, No. 10 (1994), p. 58. Cited in James L. Gibson, “The Resilience of Mass Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes in the Nascent Russian and Ukrainian Democracies,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 58. See also James L. Gibson, “Political and Economic Markets: Changes in the Connections Between Attitudes Toward Political Democracy and a Market Economy Within the Mass Culture of Russia and Ukraine,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (November, 1996), p. 956.

<sup>212</sup> James L. Gibson, “Political and Economic Markets: Changes in the Connections Between Attitudes Toward Political Democracy and a Market Economy Within the Mass Culture of Russia and Ukraine,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (November, 1996), p. 957.

<sup>213</sup> Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, “The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October, 1995), p. 488.

democracy in this country.<sup>214</sup> While these theories help to account for the fact that normative commitment for democracy in Central and Eastern Europe does not overlap with a treatment of the actual performance of democracy in the region, they cannot explain cross-national variation in support for democracy and even somewhat contradict the findings of Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield. The results of the measurement of the electorate's support for the principles of democracy in eight countries of the region are given in the Table 1.

Table1. Normative Commitment to Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>215</sup>

Democratic Commitment			
Countries	Level of Support	Level of Opposition	N
Bulgaria	56 %	21 %	1, 924
Estonia	51 %	16 %	2,029
Hungary	54 %	13 %	1,310
Lithuania	57 %	18 %	2,000
Poland	49 %	12 %	1,729
Romania	81 %	10 %	1,620
Russia	49 %	21 %	2,026
Ukraine	40 %	20 %	2,537
Total	-	-	15,175

Source: Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, "The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October, 1995), p. 489.

As can be seen from the Table 1, the lowest level of support for democracy found is in Ukraine, with 40 % of respondents expressing their support and the highest one is in Romania corresponding to 81 %. As the findings demonstrate, the culturalist theories emphasizing the role of political culture in the shaping of support for democracy would certainly predict the highest levels of support to be displayed

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>215</sup> Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, "The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October, 1995), p. 489.

by such countries as Hungary, Poland and Estonia, where the pre-Soviet democratic experience in both the institutional form and in the domain of ideology should have been treated as the most conducive to popular commitment to democracy, and not in Romania or Bulgaria.<sup>216</sup>

As we have already pointed out, cross-sectional studies were unable to provide an accurate picture of public opinion in the post-Communist states due to an ephemeral and unstable character of largely emotional responses and attitudes of the populace in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In transitional periods of such a scope and profoundness it is only natural that purely emotionally-based expectations predominate over more sound and established attitudes based on a long-term experience of having interactions in the social and state domains. Often it has been ignored that “an outbreak and suddenness” of the populace’s support for democratic institutions and for new political forces advocating transition to democracy represented an example of “negative” or “counter” legitimacy, which was based on the absence of viable options for authoritarianism other than the concrete manifestation of the advantages of market economy and plural democracy by the prosperity of West European states, and which was shaped by the negative reactions towards authoritarianism and everything associated with Communism. Even though the data drawn from cross-sectional public opinion surveys measuring this “negative-type” support may provide a correct picture of the condition of popular expectations at the time of measuring, this data are often characterized by inaccuracy in the identification of a possible trend of change in these attitudes. We should bear in mind that only the measurement of “positive-type” attitudes and expectations, more stable and established than “negative-type” ones, and only longitudinal studies may present reliable and consistent data allowing a researcher to identify the possible trajectory of change in attitudes. Therefore, it should not come as a big surprise that an array of isolated and single cross-sectional studies, carried out at an initial phase of transitional period and largely based on the measurement of “negative-type” attitudes, could not but provide

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<sup>216</sup> The same view is articulated by Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield. See Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, “The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October, 1995), p. 490.

us with a significantly diverging and inconsistent data on the level of normative commitment to democratic institutions and values.<sup>217</sup>

However, this is not to say that all cross-sectional surveys of public opinion have tended to present exaggerated data on the level of support for democratic institutions and values. Surveys employing a more diversified and expanded items of research were more successful in assessing the level of support than those based on general questions, in the case of which the probability of the impact of a short-term - and to this extent ephemeral and not well-internalized - attachment to certain general value was higher than in surveys with more detailed items. Those surveyed with more detailed questionnaires usually tend to question and think over detailed items better than those requested to assess more general values. Yet, even surveys with detailed questionnaires were not immune against an exaggerated data on level of support for democracy, since in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union a mere conviction that the Soviet system was a wrong one (based on the belief that it would not collapse were it be an efficient type of governance) could lead to a normative rejection by many respondents of the very fact of their former attachment to such a “wrong” system of values despite the presence of deeply-held and internalized patterns of thought and unconscious attachment to the Soviet way of treatment of things. Such a normative rejection of the previous attachments caused by a psychological shock of such a sudden collapse of Communism and leading many towards a normative embracing of the values pertaining to the type of governance that was still afoot and has proved successful could not be expected to be an enduring phenomenon and could not be treated as symptomatic of a genuine shift in values. An attribution of the adjective “wrong” to the former values in the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union has proved to be a temporary reaction, an expression of a psychological shock at this event, when unconscious deeply-ingrained Soviet patterns of thought and habits resurfaced again in the form of the support for the restructured Communist parties as soon as unrealistic expectations from democracy and normatively adopted value attachments

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<sup>217</sup> On the problem of the lack of coherent longitudinal studies of public opinion in the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, see James L. Gibson, “Political and Economic Markets: Changes in the Connections Between Attitudes Toward Political Democracy and a Market Economy Within the Mass Culture of Russia and Ukraine,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (November, 1996), pp. 954-984.

have proved to be nothing but a warming solace bath so much needed after the shock of the collapse of the Soviet rule. Many people in the post-Soviet states are inclined to think that everything that democratic is good without even having a minimal knowledge about democracy, while believing that everything that is associated with the authoritarian repressive rule is bad. As we have already mentioned, such a cognitive classification of opposite categories reflects nothing but a normative propensity and “negative-type” of accepting and legitimizing; and should certainly be treated with care when assessing a genuine shift in the political culture of a country towards the internalization of democratic values.<sup>218</sup>

In fact, such a normative and superficial embracement of Western values of liberal democracy and market economy could not be treated as highly reflective of a genuine political culture of the population ingrained over centuries. Political culture is not something that is bound to undergo a radical and sweeping transformation even in periods of such regime changes as the collapse of the Soviet rule. While attitudes may drastically change in such periods, more deeply-embedded values are invariably more enduring than the opponents of the cultural approach tend to assume.

Such a normative character of the post-Soviet pattern of the embracement of democratic values was bound to influence the results of surveys making them inconsistent and not mutually-supporting. Thus, in contrast to Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, James L. Gibson detected a relatively stronger support for democratic institutions and values in Ukraine in 1990 and 1992. His survey of Ukrainian public opinion was based on a more variegated set of political values than other measurements at the time. Democratic values were not treated as a single macro category, but were divided into many subdimensions. These included support for an independent media; support for the institution of competitive elections; support for a multiparty system; the value attached to individual liberty; support for dissent and opposition; rights consciousness and political tolerance.<sup>219</sup> Another

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<sup>218</sup> Such ephemeral and malleable changes in attitudes in contrast to the more enduring value changes makes us to rethink the content of the term of political culture and refocus our attention to deeply-embedded values as an important constituent element of political culture. See Archie Brown, “Political Culture and Democratization: The Russian Case in Comparative Perspective,” in Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel, (eds), *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp. 17-27.

<sup>219</sup> James L. Gibson, “The Resilience of Mass Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes in the Nascent Russian and Ukrainian Democracies,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and*

distinguishing feature of the survey was that it also included a panel, an example of longitudinal study, which allows for a consistent and accurate analysis of change in attitudes between 1990 and 1992.<sup>220</sup> This survey consists of two parts, 1990 and 1992 surveys. Of these, first one interviewed approximately seven hundred of 4,309 people interviewed in the spring of 1992 and focused on the European part of the former Soviet Union. Without going into the details and complexities of the research design of the survey in view of the integrity of the present thesis and for considerations of space, we will only mention that the comparison between the data of 1990 and 1992 is slightly complicated by the fact that while 1992 survey included large subsamples that were representative of Ukraine (and Russia), the 1990 sample was not designed to be representative of individual republics, with the consequence that the Ukrainian sample is not sufficient (it consists of 171 Ukrainians against 481 Russians available).<sup>221</sup> The data from this survey on attitudes toward democratic institutions and processes for Ukraine is given below in Table 2.

Table 2. Attitudes Towards Democratic Institutions and Processes in Ukraine (1990-1992)<sup>222</sup>

	Supporting Democracy (%)	Uncertain (%)	Opposing Democracy (%)	N
<b>Support for Independent and Pluralistic Media</b>				
<i>The government ought to see to it that all political movements in this country have the opportunity to publish their manifestos and polemics in newspapers, pamphlets, and books. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	70.9	19.7	9.4	996
1992 panel respondents	72.1	17.6	10.3	165
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a <sup>223</sup>	

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*Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 62-63.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-77.

<sup>223</sup> Note that some items were not identical in the 1990 and 1992 due to the fact there has been felt a need for the expansion of the list of items for the 1992 survey. Therefore, for some items the data on 1990 panel respondents and 1990 full sample are not available. See James L. Gibson, "The Resilience of Mass Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes in the Nascent Russian and Ukrainian Democracies," in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 63-64.

Table 2 continued

<i>Newspapers, radio, television should be responsible for themselves in order to reflect all points of view, even those that certain people could consider to be subversive and dangerous. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	69.7	22.0	8.3	998
1992 panel respondents	71.1	20.5	8.4	166
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>The mass media should be protected by law more than they are now from the authorities. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	79.7	15.9	4.3	997
1992 panel respondents	79.2	14.3	6.5	168
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>Private radios, television, and newspapers should exist alongside state-owned media. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	68.1	16.7	15.3	1001
1992 panel respondents	65.1	17.2	17.8	169
1990 panel respondents	62.6	16.4	21.1	171
1990 full sample	57.7	21.4	20.9	402
<b>Support for Competitive Elections</b>				
<i>There are better ways to select our leaders than elections from several candidates. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	37.1	46.7	16.2	993
1992 panel respondents	41.2	48.2	10.6	170
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>People should try to do everything possible so that any proposal about the abolition of competitive elections is never accepted. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	45.3	40.7	13.9	981
1992 panel respondents	40.1	41.3	18.6	167
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>If the leaders who were elected cannot improve the situation in the country, then it is better to abandon competitive elections. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	44.6	32.1	23.4	992
1992 panel respondents	40.2	33.7	26.0	169
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>Those supporting competitive elections are doing harm to the country. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1992 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 panel respondents	65.5	29.2	5.3	171
1990 full sample	64.9	28.6	6.5	402
<b>Support for a Multiparty System</b>				
<i>Our system of government would work better if we abolished political parties. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	55.3	33.2	11.5	995

Table 2 continued

1992 panel respondents	50.3	41.4	8.3	169
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>Strong political parties will improve the way democracy works in our country. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	51.8	36.9	11.4	996
1992 panel respondents	49.7	40.8	9.5	169
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>Political parties complicate questions more than they help clear them up. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	16.9	30.8	52.2	995
1992 panel respondents	17.1	37.6	45.3	170
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>A one party-system in the USSR promotes the development of democracy. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1992 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 panel respondents	59.6	26.9	13.5	171
1990 full sample	59.5	25.6	14.9	402
<i>Competition between the Communist Party and other parties will improve the way the authorities work in the Soviet Union. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1992 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 panel respondents	70.8	18.1	11.1	171
1990 full sample	67.7	20.6	11.7	402
<b>Valuation of Liberty</b>				
<i>It is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they can become disruptive. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	18.8	24.1	57.1	993
1992 panel respondents	18.8	22.4	58.8	170
1990 panel respondents	24.0	27.5	48.5	171
1990 full sample	24.1	24.9	51.0	402
<i>Free speech ought to be allowed for all political groups even if some of the things they say are highly insulting and threatening to some segments of society. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	49.2	26.6	24.3	998
1992 panel respondents	50.3	27.8	21.9	169
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>Society shouldn't have to put up with the political views that are fundamentally different from the views of the majority. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	40.9	29.1	30.0	991
1992 panel respondents	36.5	30.5	32.9	167
1990 panel respondents	45.0	24.0	31.0	171
1990 full sample	47.3	23.4	29.4	402
<i>Free speech is not just worth it if it means that we have to put up with the danger to society of extremist political views. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	34.0	35.2	30.8	990
1992 panel respondents	28.6	32.1	39.3	168
1990 panel respondents	31.0	28.7	40.4	171

Table 2 continued

1990 full sample	34.6	32.1	33.3	402
<i>Because demonstrations frequently become disorderly and disruptive, radical and extremist political groups shouldn't be allowed to demonstrate. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	34.7	23.5	41.8	998
1992 panel respondents	31.4	22.5	46.2	169
1990 panel respondents	33.3	22.2	44.4	171
1990 full sample	33.1	22.6	44.3	402
<b>Support for Dissent and Opposition</b>				
<i>It is wonderful that people today have greater freedom to protest against things they do not like. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	81.5	13.2	5.3	997
1992 panel respondents	84.5	9.5	6.0	168
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>It is best to treat dissenters with an open mind, since new ideas are necessary for progressive change. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	77.2	20.8	1.9	998
1992 panel respondents	76.9	21.9	1.2	169
1990 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
<i>People should be able to participate in any organization even if this activity opposes some current laws. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	52.9	28.0	19.1	1001
1992 panel respondents	49.7	29.0	21.3	169
1990 panel respondents	58.5	23.4	18.1	171
1990 full sample	55.7	23.6	20.6	402
<i>We are more likely to have a healthy economy if the government allows more freedom for individuals to do as they wish. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1992 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 panel respondents	50.9	26.9	22.2	171
1990 full sample	50.0	26.4	23.6	402
<i>The people should know more about their government. (Agree)</i>				
1992 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1992 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 panel respondents	96.5	2.3	1.2	171
1990 full sample	95.0	3.0	2.0	402
<i>If an unjust law were passed, I could do nothing whatever about it. (Disagree)</i>				
1992 full sample	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1992 panel respondents	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1990 panel respondents	6.4	7.0	86.5	171
1990 full sample	6.7	9.0	84.3	402

Source: James L. Gibson, "The Resilience of Mass Support for Democratic Institutions and Processes in the Nascent Russian and Ukrainian Democracies," in Vladimir Tismaneanu, (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), pp. 64-77.

To sum up, the data provided above vividly demonstrate the problem of the presence of a purely normative commitment to democracy among the Ukrainian citizens, which can be inferred from the discrepancy between the high level of positive responses to the questions of general character and the high level of uncertainty on the part of the respondents in the cases of more detailed questions requiring certain knowledge about the functioning of democratic order. Thus, while the support for dissent and opposition is very high, with the criterion of dissent and opposition constituting one of the minimalist requirements of democracy, such democratic principles as valuation of liberty, support for competitive elections and support for a multiparty system reveal the lack of the popular awareness of the importance of these principles for the establishment of democratic order in Ukraine. In general, the data given above is not very encouraging and is fairly symptomatic of the endurance of Soviet political values in Ukrainian political culture. The data provided above enable us to draw a conclusion that the eradication of the traces of the authoritarian experience from the Ukrainian popular culture and the consolidation of democratic values will not be an easy process, but, nevertheless, the existence of a very general understanding of the fact on the part of Ukrainian population that democracy is still the most humanistic option to be preferred to authoritarian rule still may provide a ground for some optimism.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

The present thesis aimed at the exploration of the peculiarity and the complexities of the nation-building project undertaken in post-Soviet Ukraine between 1991 and 2004. This project is unique, its scope is formidable; the dynamics of the project and the mechanisms lying behind this undertaking should be investigated as a complex set of relationships and mutual dependencies in combination with other aspects of post-Communist transition process being undergone in Ukraine. The difficulties of the project are immense in view of the identified goal of the revitalizing and revival of an identity that has for centuries lacked sovereign and independent means and ways of development and perpetuation, has long been reduced to a status of folkloric residuals to be an exotic subject of investigation for passionate ethnographers, and the construction of a political entity that lacks the experience of independent statehood and nationhood.

The scope of the project even more astonishing if we take into consideration that all the four dimensions of the transition process, namely those of state-building, nation-building, transition to democracy with its emphasis upon individual freedoms, human rights and political accountability and transition to market economy, should be implemented simultaneously and be treated as an inseparable whole. The project is further complicated by the fact that the institutional and cultural legacy of the Soviet past was not eradicated overnight in the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and even managed to turn into a living and self-perpetuating organism, strikingly tenacious, trying to hide behind democratic trappings and showing considerable immunity against injections of democratic content.

Another unique feature peculiar to post-Soviet Ukraine consists in the paramount importance of the inculcation of democratic values and the establishment of a democratic institutional network with a focus upon the principles of functioning

to the benefit of the population, democratic accountability and responsibility for the nation-building project in Ukraine to be successfully implemented and Ukrainian independence be consolidated. Post-Soviet Ukraine does not represent a polity, in which the discourses of nationalism and democracy are constructed in juxtaposition to each other. While democratic transition will only facilitate nation-building in Ukraine by forging a political community unified around a common national idea, nationalism here as far as it is not ethnically exclusive is not perceived as a conceptual paradigm inherently incompatible with democracy.

The uniqueness of the nation-building project in post-Soviet Ukraine, which in its turn means a striking lack of predicaments and historical precedents to be used as a guide, lies in the fact that it can not be easily located either in the category of post-Soviet transition undertaken in Central and Eastern Europe or other post-Soviet states. The most bewildering aspect of the process of nation-building has been, besides its having been started from an extremely disadvantageous point in the sense of the low degree of emotional attachment and national consciousness, is that it has had to overcome an obstructing impact of the institutional and ideological deadlock, which has began as an equilibrium between the factors seemingly bound to facilitate its implementation and its impediments and subsequently culminated in a frustrating political impasse and standstill, preventing working out any sound policy of democratization or market reform. The country have almost for a decade been completely unaware in what direction to go. This equilibrium, with the consequences that no consensus has been reached as to what kind of policy to pursue and that the communist legacies has proved to be too strong to be overcome in such a short period of time, explains why of all the post-Communist states only Ukraine has proved to be the most frustrating disappointment, the most astounding failure of all optimistic expectations, “quick” liberal solutions and Western predictions.

Besides this, Ukrainian initial unsuccessful experiment with transition meaning the absence of any attempt at the level of official set of policies in the direction of restructuring and reforming has proved to be the strongest refutation of the modernization theories emphasizing the importance of modernization, even the Soviet one, in the establishment of democratic institutions and the inculcation of democratic values. It also represents a spectacular manifestation of the conceptual

and analytical weakness and a very low predictive power of the transition theories elaborated in response to the developments in Southern Europe and Latin America.

The aforementioned equilibrium of political interest characteristic of post-Soviet Ukraine and having resulted in a political and ideological deadlock posits itself in irreconcilable and unbridgeable cleavage lines and contradictions between pro-democratic and pro-European Western Ukraine and its “more Eurasian” and pan-Slavic Eastern counterpart, between the high European aspirations and the tenacity of the old Soviet mental forms, between a relatively high normative commitment to democracy and the absence of deeply-rooted democratic political values and traditions, between the popular conviction and awareness of the necessity and inevitability of the onset of democracy in Ukraine and the absence of minimal cognitive categories necessary for dealing with transformations of such profoundness, between a widely shared assumption that democracy is a “lesser evil” when compared with the Soviet rule and the absence of knowledge about what it actually is and how it will be achieved. The social tension and its unreleased negative energy resulting from such a stalemate could not but have a negative impact upon state and nation-building project in post-Soviet Ukraine, making impossible both the identification of common goals by various political actors and interest groups and working out policies towards their realization.

Starting from the assumption that the recourse to political mythology (which can sometimes assume ethnocentric forms) has a far greater relevance for the political domain than it has been assumed until recently and underscoring the invalidity and inapplicability of the assumption of the rationality of political decision-making in the context of transformations as profound as post-Soviet one, this thesis analyses the ways some of the key historical myths are attributed political significance in post-Soviet Ukraine. It is argued that the period of the dramatic and profound political and social transformation, such as experienced by the post-communist world in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union has been characterized by the deepest ideological and cultural vacuum, flux and ambiguity of values and ideas, a deeply felt sense of social and cultural insecurity and meaninglessness. The collapse of the former set of ideas, social, political and cultural concepts could not but give rise to the perceptions of a cognitive chaos and uncertainty.

It is in this atmosphere of a mass search for a viable alternative capable of substituting for the old Soviet one and giving meaning and sense of legitimacy to the recent reforms and changes that the elite was quick to discover the magical appeal of ethnic and political myths. Yet, what was crucial for the ways of manipulation by these myths is that their strength alone would be insufficient to ensure the necessary level of legitimacy in an atmosphere characterized by such a multiplicity of alternatives and options. Something else that could link these myths to the present pressing needs, that would give a contemporary colouring to these myths, was needed. In post-Soviet Ukraine it was the “marriage” of the mythological narrative and a democratic discourse that was discovered as a useful political tool. Both were authentic and pristine to Ukrainian worldview and spirit, both celebrated a high ideal of freedom and independence, both underlined the principles of tolerance, open-mindedness and openness to novelties and change, characteristic of Ukrainian mentality.

Thus, the central thread around which this analysis is constructed is the necessity of the contemporary reinterpretation of ethnic and political mythology, readjusting it for the present needs, and the necessity of supporting this mythology by a contemporary discourse. It is very important that this contemporary discourse and ethnic mythology drawn from the reservoir of remote experiences of the collectivity be easily transformable into each other and be easily associated with each other. While the quest for such overlapping and confluence of discourses is not always the case, in the context of Ukraine it has been a dominant characteristic of politics. The way in which nation-building discourse in Ukraine is constructed is a distinctive one since it is neither democracy-centred in contrast to Central Europe, nor does it employ a purely exclusivist nationalistic discourse, as it is the case in the Baltic or Caucasian post-Soviet states. The historic specificity of the formation of Ukrainian spirit and mentality consist in the fact that it was shaped at the juncture point, at the crossroads between the drastically different worldviews of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with its attributes of the tolerance for ethnic diversity and heterogeneity, respect for the principle of autonomy of its constituent units and the strength of civil society and the Russian Empire with its pronounced inclination towards homogenization, intolerance towards diversity, despotism and authoritarianism. The history of Ukrainian idea is a constant clash between these two

opposite value paradigms. This historical specificity of Ukrainian mental paradigm explains and at the same time informs the content of the contemporary discourse of nation-building, making the narratives of democracy and nation-building inseparable from each other. Yet, it is not an easy task to construct these discourses. Their formation often had to take place against the persistence, even tenacity, of the old mental forms, against the presence of the old informal political rules and hidden patterns of political game inherited from the Soviet period.

An important question in the context of nation-building in post-Soviet Ukraine is the problem of legitimacy. A fruitful distinction from a theoretical point of view has been made by Pavel Barsa, who distinguishes between the legitimacy of the state and that of the regime, which constitute two separate levels of popular legitimacy.<sup>224</sup> The first level concerns “the demarcation of an appropriate political unit”, the “political standing” of ethnocultural elements and the internal distribution of political power between them.<sup>225</sup> The legitimacy of political regime in the context of post-Soviet democratic transition has to do with the identification and implementation of a set of policies that would constitute a best response to the popular expectations of material well-being and political freedoms. In order for nation-building efforts to achieve their identified goals, it is important to understand that it will be a mistake to sacrifice one level of legitimacy for the sake of the other. These two levels should go hand in hand with each other. An attempt to provide for the constitutional arrangements fostering the development of individual rights and liberties while, at the same time, adopting an exclusivist ethnocentric stance on nation-building issues with a special emphasis upon the exclusive right of the Ukrainian eponymous majority to possess the right to be classified as the sole bearer of state sovereignty would seriously undermine the legitimacy enjoyed by the ruling elite, will exacerbate social tensions and make ethnolinguistic and regional divides in post-Soviet Ukraine even more pronounced.

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<sup>224</sup> Pavel Barsa, “Ethnocultural Justice in East European States and the Case of the Czech Roma,” in Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski, (eds.), *Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported: Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 243.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

Pointing to the peculiarity of the ways of ensuring legitimacy employed by the new elites in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of multinational states such as the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, Pavel Barsa has argued as follows:

The success of nationalists stemmed from their ability to translate the issues of democratization into the language of national self-determination and thus to reduce the question of the legitimacy of a political regime to that of the legitimacy of the political unit or its structure. Liberals tried to do the same but in the opposite direction. By considering the sense of communal and national identity as ideas used only by demagogues and anti-democratic power seekers, and irrelevant to democratic political life, the liberals reduced the problems of the politics of identity to those of the political regime and the values it embodies...Liberals lost on many of the intellectual and political battlefields of the post-Communist world precisely because they did not acknowledge that there is an ethnocultural dimension of political modernity that is not reducible to the question of universal political values.<sup>226</sup>

While this argument made by Pavel Barsa sounds plausible when applied to the initial period of independence of the post-Communist and post-Soviet states, during which the discourse of independence permeated the political domain, the subsequent periods of post-Soviet transition have been characterised by the weakening of the appeal of independence and nationalistic discourses. In these later periods of transition it was no longer sufficient to substitute the legitimacy of the political unit for that of political regime, since the mass expectations had already undergone significant change. As soon as the initial euphoria of independence evaporated, popular expectations began to take for granted already accustomed independence and a significant shift towards the demand for the rise in living standards, material well-being and political rights and liberties took place. It is in this period that some countries of the former Soviet bloc have seen considerable resurgence of the old Communist parties, which can be explained by certain decline in the strength of popular appeal of independence discourses aimed at the guaranteeing the legitimacy of the political unit.

Thus, increasingly the demands for the necessary transformation of political regimes began to be raised. It would be an exaggeration and not a correct analysis to argue that “liberals lost on many of the intellectual and political battlefields.”<sup>227</sup> Certainly, in some post-Communist countries nationalistic discourse continued to

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

enjoy considerable public support for a time being and in such countries as Ukraine the overlapping of the legitimacy of the political unit and that of political regime took place, but in the long run it was inevitable that the discourses of independence ensuring high level of public support and consequently legitimacy of the political unit leave their dominant position to the discourses placing an emphasis upon democratic change.

It has been one of the main propositions of the thesis that in Ukraine it was in the Kuchma period that the discourses aiming at sustaining the legitimacy of political unit began gradually to be replaced by the discourses aiming at the legitimacy of political regime. Such a shift has been accompanied by a pragmatic choice in favour of a discursive emphasis not upon the Ukrainian nation (*natsia*), meaning explicit granting an exclusive right to be considered the bearer of the state sovereignty to the Ukrainian titular majority and ignoring the cultural rights of other ethnic elements, but a more neutrally defined concept of Ukrainian people (*narod*), which was rather vaguely and loosely constructed with an explicit aim of avoiding the rise of resentment at the dominant status of the eponymous majority. While the political regime under Kuchma has been far from enjoying popular legitimacy in view of failing to meet popular expectations of economic improvement and democratization, it succeeded in managing ethnocultural diversity and minimized the likelihood of ethnic conflict in Ukraine. Nation-building model adopted in Ukraine under Kuchma has been a success to the extent that it has enabled to prevent the exacerbation of ethnolinguistic divisions and has prevented an outbreak of ethnic strife and violence.

The conceptual paradigms of “nationalizing state” and “nationalizing regimes” advanced by Rogers Brubaker and Graham Smith respectively seem to have missed their point and applicability to the Ukrainian case exactly at the point of explaining the nature of the quest for state legitimacy by the ruling elite in post-Soviet Ukraine. An important aspect of nation-building that escaped the attention of Brubaker and Smith is that in the cases of the lack of historical experience of independent statehood and nationhood, when the weakness of an ethnic element of the eponymous majority is often the case, an exclusively ethnic/genealogical model of nation-building besides bearing the risk of aggravating interethnic relations in a polity has a very low probability of forging a unifying national idea. Such an exclusivist model of nation-building aiming at establishing the dominance of the titular ethnic

group may prove successful when a strong ethnonational consciousness among the members of the eponymous majority had already been formed and consolidated long before an event of subjugation to a foreign rule, which in its turn has only served to further strengthen the sentiments and links of solidarity and sharing common fate among the members of that majority. In such cases an externally imposed alien identity served as an anti-type, as a stimulating factor, provoking the community to mobilize all its potential to preserve its authenticity and distinctiveness. This was the case in the post-Soviet Baltic states, where Soviet rule has been widely perceived as a hidden way of imposing the dominance of Russian identity and was considered to be in authentic and alien. Here the Soviet experience, in a sharp contrast to the Ukrainian case, has only served to strengthen national identity by providing an object of opposition, exemplified by the Soviet and Russian identities.

The presence of a strong ethnic identity of the titular majority tends to serve as an important legitimating factor, minimizing the possibility of an uprising on the ethnic grounds by other ethnic elements since ethnic groups other than the titular majority begin to take for granted the fact that “this country” does not nominally belong to them, which results in an implicit acceptance of and an acquiescence at the dominant position of the titular majority. Of course, the existence of a strong ethnic identity of the titular majority is not the only factor, determining the degree of protest or acquiescence on the part of national minorities. Strong economic incentives of being attached by the link of citizenship to an economically developed country may prove another decisive factor influencing the decisions of national minorities. Baltic states exemplify the most vivid case of such acquiescence on the part of national minorities at the privileged position of the titular majority. Here the Russian minority seems to have been forced by economic incentives to internalise and to take for granted the exclusivist character of nation-building projects.

A drastically different situation is the case in Ukraine. Here the Soviet and Russian identity did not served as an anti-type with a notable exception of Western Ukraine and centuries of Russian imperial and Soviet rule could not but leave their deep imprint on Ukrainian national consciousness and national idea. The consequence of the Ukrainian imperial subjugation was a complete destruction of Ukrainian national consciousness, Ukrainian culture and language. Thus, when Ukraine has achieved its independence with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a fragile and

vague Ukrainian identity certainly could not serve as a legitimizing factor, which would make national minorities to accept a privileged position of the eponymous Ukrainian majority and provide them with sufficient incentives to socialize into Ukrainian society and culture. Under such circumstances an inclusive and loose definition of the concept of Ukrainian people has indeed proved the most viable option. An exclusivist policy of nation-building would inevitably endanger social and political stability of Ukraine taking into consideration the weak and dysfunctional state institutions and mechanisms of enforcement and the weakness of Ukrainian national identity.

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