Borderlands, Conflict, and Identity in Contemporary Ukraine

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BORDERLANDS, CONFLICT, AND IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE

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Abstract

Ukraine has long been a site of European instability, an historically stateless nation at the periphery of empires. While the current conflict is no doubt linked to the "realpolitik" of NATO expansion, as well as the domestic politics of Russia's near abroad, Ukraine's larger history is also in play. In particular, the issue of 'national identity' and the difficulty of securing firm foundations for the nationalist project continue to pose significant difficulties for the region. This national legacy mixes with a divided economy to make differences between east and west more salient than they may otherwise be. This paper locates current issues, including the creation and expansion of the so-called Eurasian Economic Union (EEC), within this centuries-old problem.

INTRODUCTION

On September 16, 2014, the Ukrainian government passed a law giving self-rule to the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and granting amnesty to Russian separatist fighters in the regions, a concession viewed as a victory for the pro-Russian forces in the east. The same government then signed and ratified an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), achieving a long-time goal of successive Ukrainian presidents and committing Ukraine to a future tied to Europe and specifically the European Union and its way of conducting business.[1] An observer could be forgiven for viewing these near-simultaneous developments with confusion. After all, how can Ukraine pull in apparently opposite directions, both eastward toward Russia and westward toward the European Union, at the same time? This article addresses a number of explanations for this behavior. In short, Ukraine, even more so than some of its East European neighbors, is a

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borderland caught between great powers, a territory dominated by large kingdoms and empires from the end of Kievan Rus' (900s AD) until the end of the Soviet era (1991). The push and pull of great powers remains a major factor in incentivizing and delimiting Ukraine's behavior as an independent state in the post-Soviet era; while land empires may be a thing of the past, Ukraine remains bordered by competing powers, Russia to the east and the European Union to the west. The effects of this borderland condition on Ukrainian political behavior can be viewed through a variety of lenses: power politics or realpolitik, national identity and its connection with memory and the interpretation of history, and economics, each of which will be featured in this article.

From the outset, it is important to remember that the "eastward" turn toward Russia taken by President Yanukovych in 2013 was a significant departure from the rhetoric and actions of prior Ukrainian presidents. In the post-Soviet era, Ukraine was hailed by the EU for its "European choice" and its decision to engage with the European Union. Indeed, the first former Soviet state with which the EU openly engaged was Ukraine, which also served as a conduit for EU diplomacy for its more eastward-orientated neighbors such as Belarus.[2] Ukrainian presidents also committed themselves rhetorically to cooperation with the EU. While early presidents such as the non-reformer Kravchuk and the economic reformer Kuchma committed to a multi-vectoral foreign policy that included positive relations with Russia, this was not considered incompatible with deepening trade ties with the EU, nor with pursuing some sort of economic integration with it. Kuchma's rhetoric was backed up with some domestic institution building and a 'road map' meant to facilitate Ukraine's integration into the EU.[3] The key documents managing the relationship between Ukraine and the EU – the 1994 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and the more extensive 2004 European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and its Action Plan for Ukraine – were negotiated and signed under Kuchma's leadership. In the 2004 elections and subsequent Orange Revolution, Kuchma appears as a supporter of Yanukovych in opposition to the openly pro-western Yushchenko, but this should not be interpreted as an anti-EU position on Kuchma's part.

After the Orange Revolution, President Yushchenko took a hard turn westward and largely abandoned the Russian aspect of the multi-vectoral policy approach of his predecessor, though the extent to which this could be successfully done was limited by Ukraine's continued reliance on Russia

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2.   Fredo Arias-King, *The Genesis of the European Union's Relations with Ukraine and Belarus: Interview with Luis Moreno*, 14 J. POST-SOVIET DEMOCRATIZATION 4 (2006).

3.   Kataryna Wolczuk, *Implementation Without Coordination: The Impact of EU Conditionality on Ukraine Under the European Neighborhood Policy*, 16 EURO-ASIA STUDIES 187 (2009).

for energy, and markets for Ukrainian exports. Yushchenko stated that his goal was to enter into talks for Ukrainian accession to the EU within three years, which he expected as a reward for the turn toward 'European parliamentarism' demonstrated by the Orange Revolution and the strongly pro-EU regime elected in its wake.[4] Even with the election of Yanukovych in 2010, the EU vector of the multi-vectoral foreign policy held, with Yanukovych's first diplomatic visit being to Brussels to meet with the EU and reassure the institution of Ukraine's continued intention to achieve deeper integration with its western neighbors. Yanukovych's administration participated in the Vilnius Summit, where the negotiation of the Association Agreement took place. Yanukovych walked away from these talks, but the resulting agreement was recently signed by the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada* and now-President Petro Poroshenko.[5]

Given such apparently deep commitments to Europe, Yanukovych's decision of November 2013 to discontinue negotiations on the Association Agreement, and accept an aid package from Russia, came as a shock to the EU and Ukrainians alike.[6] The *Euromaidan* protests, which began as rallies in support of the Association Agreement, turned to protests against the President's apparent decision to turn away from Europe. After years of pursuit of the goal of deeper integration with the EU and rhetoric from successive presidents indicating that the multi-vectoral policy including the EU was the key to Ukraine's future, a unilateral turn toward Russia was shocking. This, combined with increased concerns about Yanukovych's centralization of power, the selective use of the judiciary against political opponents, and ever-deepening official corruption, provided much of the fuel for the protests throughout Ukraine that led to Yanukovych's flight to Russia in February 2014.

The multi-vectoral foreign policy favored by both Ukrainian leaders and the Ukrainian public (revealed in polls discussed later in this article) is different from that adopted by some of Ukraine's neighbors, particularly the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia who have fully turned toward Europe and away from cooperation with Russia. The reasons for this difference in approach lie in the three lines of explanation addressed here: power politics and more specifically geopolitics, the contested nature of Ukrainian national identity, and the economic realities of Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine.

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    4.   Jeffrey Pridham, *Ukraine, the European Union and the Democracy Question*, 11 ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS 18 (2011).
    5.   Emmnuelle Armandon, *Popular Assessments of Ukraine's Relations with Russia and the European Union under Yanukovych*, 21 DEMOKRATIZATSIYA 289 (2013).
    6.   Nadia Diuk, *Euromaidan: Ukraine's Self-Organizing Revolution*, WORLD AFFAIRS (Mar. 2014), http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/euromaidan-ukraine's-self-organizing-revolution.

I. POWER AND POLITICS AND THE UKRAINE: THE BORDERLAND BETWEEN GREAT POWERS

Scholars in the domain of realist international relations would attribute many of the complications seen in Ukraine today to a case of unfavorable geopolitics, while a historian may be more likely to refer to Ukraine as a borderland or "shatterzone." In either case, scholars pursuing this line of explanation would likely agree on Marcu's description of geopolitics in post-Communist Europe:

> We have been witnessing in Europe two phenomena that dominate the geopolitical scene: on the one hand there is integration, with the advance of the borders of the European Union (EU) towards the east through its two enlargements, and on the other hand there is disintegration, as expressed by social crisis, and latent tensions and conflicts in the countries found beyond the said border.[7]

According to this line of thought, the political divisions seen between the west and east portions of Ukraine (particularly evident during the 2004 presidential elections) and the recent violence in the east, led by pro-Russian separatists, are the result of centuries of tensions engendered by Ukraine's borderland status. The borderlands of the great land empires, the Hapsburg, Prussian, Russian, and Ottoman, were by definition multicultural. According to Bartov and Weitz, violence in the borderlands was often the result of great power rivalries, as great powers used ideology, race, and new technologies as a means to expand their territorial boundaries within the borderlands.[8] While it would be an overstatement to say that the cultural groups lived in a permanent state of peaceful coexistence, after all violence could break out amongst the groups without great power urging, the role of great powers in inciting such violence should be kept in mind, particularly in light of the current conflict in Ukraine and the role that pro-Russian sentiment is playing in the separatist movement in Luhansk and Donetsk, and indeed in the support for the annexation of Crimea by Russian troops in March 2014.

Geopolitics here serves as a more specific means of understanding a realist interpretation of the conditions in Ukraine. Mearsheimer's "offensive realism" focuses on the role of great powers in setting the stage of international relations fits neatly into this line of argumentation.[9] For

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7.   Silvia Marcu, *The Geopolitics of the Eastern Border of the European Union: The Case of Romania – Moldova – Ukraine*, 14 GEOPOLITICS 409 (2009).
8.   *See* OMER BARTOV ET AL., SHATTERZONE OF EMPIRES: COEXISTENCE AND VIOLENCE IN THE GERMAN, HAPSBURG, RUSSIAN AND OTTOMAN BORDERLANDS (2013).
9.   *See* JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER, THE TRAGEDY OF GREAT POWER POLITICS (2011).

instance, Mearsheimer recently argued that much of the blame for the current level of instability can be traced to the West's naïve belief that "Europe can be kept whole and free on the basis of such liberal principles as the rule of law, economic interests, and democracy."[10] The consequences of such simplistic thinking is compounded by failing to see that previous efforts "to turn Ukraine into a Western stronghold on Russia's border" was "a direct threat to Moscow" and Russian interests.[11] Putin's recent speech celebrating the annexation of Crimea directly referenced this threat. In the first place, argued the President, Crimea had been arbitrarily and unconstitutionally "gifted" to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954 by then President Nikita Khrushchev and thus could not be considered to be part of Ukraine proper; its return to Russia was simply a correction of a mistake that had not been dealt with at the time of the USSR's collapse.[12] Further, had Russia not recovered Crimea, and if Ukraine had been admitted into NATO – a move that would have, according to the Kremlin, violated key promises made by the West at the time of the Soviet collapse,[13] "NATO's navy would be right there in this city of Russia's military glory, and this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia."[14]

From the realpolitik perspective, far from wanting to re-establish the Russian empire or the USSR, the issue is simply a matter of recognizing the legitimate interests of a country that, even given its currently weakened condition, remains at least a regional power. Again, Putin was clear on this point, arguing that "Russia is an independent, active participant in international affairs; like other countries, it has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected."[15] Such concerns are only exacerbated by recent announcements that NATO is intending to establish forward 'receiving' bases in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe in order to be prepared should Russia continue its aggressions in other post-Soviet states, particularly in the Baltics, a move conditioned upon Article 5 provisions that understand an attack on one member of NATO as an attack

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10. John J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault*, 93 FOREIGN AFF. 77, 78 (2014).

11. *Id.* at 78–79.

12. At the time, of course, the dissolution of the USSR and the loss of the Black Sea port of Sevastopol to the Russian, as opposed to the USSR, navy, was not contemplated.

13. Mary Elise Sarotte, *A Broken Promise: What the West Really Told Moscow About NATO Expansion*, 93 FOREIGN AFF. 90 (2014).

14. News Desk, *Full Text of Putin's Speech on Crimea*, PRAGUE POST (Mar. 19, 2014), http://praguepost.com/eu-news/37854-full-text-of-putin-s-speech-on-crimea#ixzz3BhfUlStj; Putin moderated his tone just a bit when he added, "I simply cannot imagine that we would travel to Sevastopol to visit NATO sailors. Of course, most of them are wonderful guys, but it would be better to have them come and visit us, be our guests, rather than the other way round."

15. *Id.*

on all members of the alliance.[16]

Geopolitics can also be used as a lens through which to view the Ukraine/EU relationship. Marcu discusses the effects of the EU expansion of its borders into East Europe, indicating the borders between members of the EU (including post-Communist accession states admitted in 2004 and 2007) today serve as "bridges" rather than "barriers." This is not the situation faced by those who have not been admitted, such as Ukraine. Rather, to those non-members, borders are "a barrier, a violent process of exclusion, expressed by the reinforcement of border security."[17] Despite Ukraine's persistent striving toward integration with the EU throughout the post-Soviet era, Ukraine has never been quite "enough" to qualify for inclusion in the EU club. Ukraine's politics were never quite democratic enough, its economy and political actors not incorruptible enough, and its economic development not liberal enough. According to many scholars, EU officials viewed the democratic transition, the fight against corruption, and economic liberalization as "Ukraine's problems." Only when Ukraine made major domestic improvements would real membership become an option. Until then, Ukraine would be treated as an outsider, along with other post-Soviet states such as Belarus and Moldova, both of which have shown far less commitment to engaging the EU. To some extent Ukraine's slow progress on addressing these precursor conditions was a result of the lack of EU efforts to assist, as the carrots and sticks provided by the EU were insufficient to incentivize real political and economic change in Ukraine.[18]

There is, therefore, no doubt that arguments about strategic interests, NATO enlargement, territorial annexations, and other such issues are critical in understanding and assessing the potential actions of international actors. However, for all of its utility, the practitioners of realpolitik and geopolitics often underestimate the extent to which even the most pragmatic of actions are sustained and informed by normative, cultural, and social-psychological concerns which often go unacknowledged in judging and interpreting the actions of a state actor. In this case, behind the tensions currently roiling the borderlands of Russia and Ukraine lies an issue of truly historic proportion, namely, the role and consequences of both individual and national identity.

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16.   Ian Traynor, *Ukraine crisis: NATO plans east European bases to counter Russia*, THE GUARDIAN (Aug. 27, 2014), http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/26/nato-east-european-bases-counter-russian-threat.

17.   Marcu, *supra* note 7, at 420.

18.   *See* Paul Kubicek, *The European Union and Democratization in Ukraine*, 38 COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST STUD. 269 (2005); Kataryna Wolczuk, *Implementation Without Coordination: The Impact of EU Conditionality on Ukraine Under the European Neighborhood Policy*, 16 EURO-ASIA STUDIES 187 (2009); Armandon, *supra* note 5, at 289.

II. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE RUSSIAN HOMELAND

In his speech memorializing Crimea's decision to return home to Russia, Mr. Putin declared that:

> Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea . . . . It was only when Crimea ended up as part of a different country that Russia realized that it was not simply robbed, it was plundered.[19]

The "robbery" is, of course, part of a larger story, one that culminated in 1991 when, according to Putin, "[M]illions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, overnight becoming ethnic minorities in former Union republics, while the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders."[20]

By this telling, the patrimony of all 'true Russians' begins with the rise of Kieven Rus' and Novgorod and the ascendency of Muscovy. It continues with the titanic struggle to remove the smothering grip of the Mongols and the emergence of the Tsars, including Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great, the centuries-long rule of the Romanovs and the much shorter-lived USSR. Given such a history, it is no wonder that the answer to the question of who is Russian and the meaning and impact of acquiring and accepting that identity is shrouded in ambiguity, claims, and counterclaims.

For Putin, a significant element of one's identity centers around language. Despite the contested nature of such a claim,[21] Putin is insistent, returning again and again to the idea that language, more than any other primordial asset, defines who one is. According to Putin, for instance, the 350,000 Crimean Ukrainians who consider themselves to be ethnic Russians do so primarily because Russian is their "native" language. A violation of language rights, in any form, is therefore a violation of a person's right to express his or her essential humanity, in this case, the

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19.   News Desk, *supra* note 14.
20.   *Id.*
21.   *See* Renee Buhr et al., *Language as a Determinant of National Identity: The Unusual Case of Belarus, Language in Different Contexts*. 4 LITHUANIAN U. EDU. SCIENCES, FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY 60 (2011).

freedom to act and *be* a "real Russian."

For Putin, the usurpation of this right to "be Russian" is evident in the new Ukraine. Thus, while hoping:

> [T]hat Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Ukraine, especially its southeast and Crimea, would live in a friendly, democratic and civilized state that would protect their rights in line with the norms of international law . . . this is not how the situation developed. Time and time again attempts were made to deprive Russians of their historical memory, even of their language and to subject them to forced assimilation.[22]

In Putin's telling, the Ukrainian "nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites" who executed the "coup" following the *Maidan* protests, began their reign "by introducing a draft law to revise the language policy, which was a direct infringement on the rights of ethnic minorities."[23] As a result, while avowedly respecting the sovereignty of Ukraine as an "undivided country," Putin is compelled to act upon a greater reality, namely that Russians and Ukrainians are:

> [O]ne people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus' is our common source and we cannot live without each other . . . . Millions of Russians and Russian-speaking people live in Ukraine and will continue to do so. Russia will always defend their interests using political, diplomatic and legal means.[24]

Russia's actions in support of those "real Russians" in both Crimea and the east of Ukraine are often judged to be popular amongst the domestic Russians. While there are very good reasons to question the claims of overwhelming levels of public support for the regime's actions, there is no doubt that an influential clique of strong Russian nationalists are pushing Putin to return Ukraine to its historic Russian home.[25] Such pressures are complimented by an alternative nationalist narrative which, while different in theme, continues the historic struggle to determine just exactly who is

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22.   News Desk, *supra* note 14.
23.   *Id.*
24.   *Id.*
25.   Yekaterina Shulman, *Russia's Mock Democracy Feeds Off Apathy*, MOSCOW TIMES (Aug. 25, 2014) http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/russia-s-mock-democracy-feeds-off-apathy/505819.html (Russia is a prime example of a so-called 'mock' or 'hybrid' democracy. According to Shulman, a key aspect of such a regime is the ability to produce public opinion polls of dubious legitimacy, due mainly to the apathy that conditions the social relations between the masses of the people and the regime).

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Generally referred to as *Eurasianism* or *Neo-Eurasianism*, this effort is strongly linked to "the search by Russian political elites to find a new framework of identity for the broader Russian."[26] While the annexation of Crimea and the aggressive destabilizing moves in Eastern Ukraine satisfies the realpolitik goals of border protection and regional hegemony, *Eurasianism* is informed by a larger search for identity that seeks to bind together Turkic-speaking peoples—or Turanians—of the Central Asian steppe. According to Lukin:

> The ideological roots of the notion of a greater Eurasia first arose among Russian philosophers and historians who emigrated from communist Russia to western Europe in the 1920s. But they gazed in a different direction: whereas earlier Slavophiles emphasized Slavic unity and contrasted European individualism with the collectivism of Russian peasant communities, the Eurasianists linked the Russian people to the Turkic-speaking peoples—or 'Turanians'—of the Central Asian steppe.[27]

According to the early Eurasianists, the Turanian civilization, which supposedly originated in ancient Persia, followed its own political and economic model, which at least according to Lukin, was essentially authoritarian.[28] The Eurasianists also placed great emphasis on traditional Turanian social structures, most importantly the region's churches, which in Russia's case largely means Eastern Orthodoxy. Seen in this light, Putin's elevation of Orthodoxy and his tendency to use the trappings of the church to bolster the legitimacy of his actions, *i.e.*, the blessing of this summer's Ukraine-bound humanitarian aid convoy by an Orthodox priest, is easily located within a complex of more immediate and pragmatic actions, including the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Community. The idea that Ukraine would reject the EEC in favor of deeper ties with the West is therefore both an ideological affront to the Eurasianists that apparently form an important part of the Kremlin's decision making apparatus, as well as a blow to the pragmatists, Putin included, who place great stock in the community's ability to serve as an economic counterweight to the European Union.

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26.   Paul Pryce, *Putin's Third Term: The Triumph of Eurasianism?*, 11 ROMANIAN J. EUR. AFF. 18, 29 (2013); *see also* Edith Clowes, RUSSIA ON THE EDGE: IMAGINED GEOGRAPHIES AND POST-SOVIET IDENTITY (2011).

27.   Alexander Lukin, *What the Kremlin is Thinking*, 93 FOREIGN AFF. 85, 91-2 (2014).

28.   *Id.*

III. IDENTITY AND UKRAINE

A little over one hundred years ago, the war to end all wars erupted, occasioned by a series of epic blunders, strategic miscalculations, dated tactics, and imperial hubris.[29] Among other numberless consequences, the war unleashed the full power of nationalism and the struggles to define personal identity within the context of a larger, collective self. One story that tells us a good deal about this struggle and its continuing reverberations in the 21st century is that of the Sich Rifle Association and their sacrifices at Mount Makivka (April 29 - May 3, 1915). Andrew Higgins describes the battle this way:

> A muddled and modest affair on a pine-covered mountain in what
> is today western Ukraine 'only' a few hundred soldiers died. For
> Ukrainian nationalists, however, the battle nearly a century ago was
> a singular event not only in World War I, but also in a longer
> conflict with Russia that rumbles on today at the eastern end of
> their country. For [according to these same Ukrainian nationalists]
> it was at Makivka . . . [that] they held their ground against the
> Russian Empire . . . Makivka . . . showed we could fight.[30]

But who, exactly, is the "we" to whom they are referring? The soldiers who fought at Makivka were doing so under the banner of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, a spent force on the cusp of dismemberment by the soon-to-be-victorious Allied Powers. Organized in a western territory known as Galicia in August 1914 at the initiative of the Supreme Ukrainian Council, the first volunteers were members of Ukrainian paramilitary organizations, such as the Sich societies, Sokil, and Plast Ukrainian Youth Association.[31] Subsequent to its actions at Makivka, the legion sustained significant casualties in a number of battles. Following successive reorganizations, the Rifleman, known in a Ukrainian transliteration as the *Ukrainski sichovi striltsi* (USS) arrived in Lviv on November 3, 1918 and participated in an unsuccessful effort to prevent the city from being

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29.   MAX HASTINGS, CATASTROPHE 1914: EUROPE GOES TO WAR (2013).

30.   Andrew Higgins, *A Battle in Ukraine Echoes Through the Decades*, NYTIMES.COM (Jun. 26, 2014), http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/27/world/europe/world-war-i-battle-in-ukraine-echoes-through-the-decades.html

31.   Sich Societies were formal associations that began as a mass physical-education and fire-fighting organization. Societies were active in Galicia from 1900 to 1930 and then spread to Bukovyna, Transcarpathia, and Ukrainian communities abroad. Beyond its immediate practical purpose, it strove to promote national consciousness and to raise the educational and cultural level of the peasantry and working class. Organized by leading members of the Ukrainian Radical party, its ideology was secular and somewhat anticlerical. See the *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine* for additional details on the society, including significant materials on the activities and writers associated with these organizations and the Ukrainian nationalist cause.

captured by the Poles. By January 1919 the battalion was expanded into the First Brigade of the Ukrainian Galician Army (UHA) and later that year into the Red Ukrainian Galician Army, all the while trying to advance the cause of Ukrainian nationalism in the face of an advancing Polish army. Unsuccessful, they capitulated to the Poles on May 2, 1920.[32]

The 800 or so members of the USS hold an enormously outsized position in the Ukrainian national consciousness. Indeed, while an additional 250,000 Ukrainians served the Austrians as conscripts, some 3.5 million others, a vast majority of them also conscripts, fought for the Russians. To a great extent, these numbers and the various sides with which Ukrainians fought reflected the imperial makeup of pre-World War Europe. In the west, an area which included Galicia, the Austrian Empire was content with a fairly loose, if not exactly benign, system of oversight that allowed the nationalist sentiments ascendant in the latter half of the 19th century to gain a strong foothold in the region. The east, on the other hand, was under the control of a very centralized and illiberal Russian empire intent on ensuring that no independent sense of "Ukrainianism" ever took root.

Providing a context for the USS were the larger forces of the war. Russia had seized Lviv in September 1914 and began hunting down those accused of being traitors and spies, often Ukrainians who had embraced what one tsarist official described as "extremely dangerous Little Russian separatism."[33] The region's new Russian governor shut down Ukrainian-language schools that had been nurtured by the Austrians, arrested the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and started an aggressive campaign to destroy the idea that Ukrainian interests could ever legitimately diverge from those of Russia. Austrian forces later recaptured Lviv, which they called Lemberg, in 1915. With help from Germany, they moved deep into what had been Russian-ruled Ukrainian territories, including Kiev.[34]

All of this produced a series of competing states: one in Kiev formed from what had been Russian-controlled territory in central and eastern Ukraine, another based in Lviv on western Ukrainian lands that had been ruled until World War I by the Hapsburgs, and a third created by the Bolsheviks, who seized power in Russia in 1917, centered in the nominally Ukrainian state in the eastern city of Kharkiv, the principal purpose of which was to thwart the Ukrainian efforts to take advantage of the chaos created by the war and run their own affairs. These were short-lived experiments and whatever hopes for an independent state existed in the

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32.   *Ukrainian Sich Riflemen*, INTERNET ENCYCLOPEDIA OF UKRAINE (Aug. 29, 2014), http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?AddButton=pages\U\K\UkrainianSichRiflem en.htm.
33.   Higgins, *supra* note 30.
34.   *Id.*

minds of Ukrainian nationalists were dashed by the Allies when they agreed in 1919 that Poland should take over former Hapsburg territory around Lviv. Russia kept the east and ultimately formed the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Nonetheless, in the eyes of many Ukrainian nationalists, this brief period of autonomy, even if it did not result in the ability to exercise the powers associated with an independent state, was crucial for the development of the *idea* of a sovereign Ukraine.

Seizing upon the political and social space afforded by the instability of the period, at least some Ukrainian nationalists worked assiduously to create a national sensibility. For instance, "[W]hen Mykola Khvyl'ovy formed his organization VAPLITE and initiated the Great Literary Discussion of 1925-27, his aim was to accelerate the Ukrainianization process . . . [and] to promote a new Ukrainian identity."[35] According to Shkandrij, Khvyl'ovy showed evidence of a "nation-building imperative", using "historical allusions and narratives that could serve as allegories of the nation's fate."[36] Others writers, such as Lev Kopelev, Benediklt Livshits, and Yurii Smolych, while sometimes referencing the Eurasian renaissance, nonetheless focused their work "not on some abstract, borderless, geographical [postmodern] space, but on Ukraine."[37] The narratives employed by these writers employed a common trope: a frustrated individual, blocked by the crushing realities of revolution and war, serves as a surrogate "for a nation that is not allowed to express itself, whose dream of cultural development has been dashed."[38] In sum:

> Both artists and writers sought to identify key elements out of which culture had been formed . . . [searching] for elements of the cultural code that represented the national experience and identity as it had evolved over the centuries. They examined archetypal forms, characters, canonical images and works, and then recoded these into a new format and new identity . . . The search for the 'grammatical structure' for national identity became analogous to experimentation with pure color and form in painting, or with the search for basic patterns of sound and meaning in poetry.[39]

The post-war actions of the Allies and the newly created USSR ultimately did little to bring these dreams to fruition. Instead, the interwar years saw a Poland threatened by the USSR from the east, a rising Germany

35.   MYROSLAV SHKANDRIJ, NATIONAL MODERNISM IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY: THE UKRAINIAN RENAISSANCE AND JEWISH REVIVAL, 1917-1930, 438 (2013).
36.   *Id.,* at 439.
37.   *Id.*
38.   *Id.*
39.   *Id.,* at 440.

from the west and a large domestic population in Galicia and Volhynia who understood themselves as Ukrainians unfairly tethered to the Polish state.

Compounding the difficulties in the Ukrainian SSR was a Soviet nationalities policy that ranged from highly supportive to absolutely destructive of the nationalist aspirations of the many ethnic communities found in the USSR.[40] According to Francine Hirsch, Soviet state-sponsored nationalism was initially "premised on the belief that 'primordial' ethnic groups were the building blocks of nationalities *and* on the assumption that the state could intervene in the natural process of development and 'construct' modern nations."[41] Early Soviet indoctrination required 'double assimilation', namely, the simultaneous assimilation of individuals into both a national identity, which in some cases coincided with ethnic sensibilities, and a Soviet identity.[42] This made for a Soviet nationalities policy that had a split personality from its very origins and later seems to have led to the varying trajectories that post-Soviet identities have taken. Thus, in the early years of Bolshevik rule Moscow actively promoted the trappings of nationhood throughout the Soviet Union through the policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativization). This included efforts to educate students in their "own" languages (say, Ukrainian for those of Ukrainian ancestry), establishment of a literary version of the local languages where needed, and cultural exhibits exalting the arts, crafts, and acceptable heroes of the nation in question. Intellectual activity was aimed at developing the national identity to its fullest, and Moscow instituted policies calling for the promotion of a national Communist elite.[43] With the rise of Stalin's power and the subsequent Great Retreat of the 1930s, much of this was scaled back, oftentimes in brutal fashion.

Soviet nationalities policies produced a seriously mixed set of signals. Thus, individuals with the right national identity had opportunities in the government as a result of their nationality, national languages were still taught, and national culture that was consistent with Soviet ideology was promoted. But at the same time that nationalism was being promoted, the notion of a shared Soviet – universal and proletarian – identity was also being fashioned. That identity was based, if not in theory then in practice, on Russian language and culture. Thus, the right national identity and the

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40. AVIEL ROSHWALD, ETHNIC NATIONALISM AND THE FALL OF EMPIRES: CENTRAL EUROPE, RUSSIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, 1914-1923 179 (2001);The following paragraphs are drawn from Buhr, Shadurski, and Hoffman (2011) where the Soviet nationalities policy is more fully explored and discussed in the context of Belarusian nationalism.

41. FRANCINE HIRSCH, EMPIRE OF NATIONS: ETHNOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE AND THE MAKING OF THE SOVIET UNION 8 (2005)

42. *Id.;* DMITRY GORENBURG, SOVIET NATIONALITIES POLICY AND ASSIMILATION (2006).

43. RONALD SUNY, THE REVENGE OF THE PAST: NATIONALISM, REVOLUTION, AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION (1993); Yuri Slezkine, *The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism*, 53 SLAVIC REV. 414, 414-452 (1994).

ability to speak the national tongue were key elements to gaining elite status in the non-Russian republics, but so was an understanding of Russian language and culture. As the years wore on, the Soviet identity of the republics increased as their elites, and the "average citizen" became more immersed in the dominant Russian culture.[44] Russification was a particular challenge to survival of the Ukrainian and Belarusian languages, due to the similarities between the three languages.

The problem of what to do about the "nationalities problem" erupted again following the success of the USSR against Germany in the eastern front. With Stalin intent on securing his western border, a policy of *ethnic communism* emerged under which it was assumed that "nationality could create a Soviet interest in matching individuals to national territory" with local elites ruling an ethnically pure nation but in the name of the larger Soviet state.[45] Stalin, who had overseen earlier efforts to solve the nationalities problem, took a cue from the early days of the Soviet Union and directed that ways be found to isolate the "national interest" into a social and cultural silo that would operate in parallel with a "political identity" as a Soviet citizen. The goal was to create a single, unified identity rather than two *competing* identities that ultimately had to diverge.

In the case of Ukraine and its status as the Ukrainian SSR, the institutionalization of ethnic communism was facilitated by the purges and counter-purges that transpired in Galicia and Volhynia following World War II. Snyder exhaustively traces the history of this little-noted conflict between Ukrainian and Polish partisans, including the role of Bandera and the Ukrainian nationalists organized under the banner of the *Ukrains'ka Povstans'ka Armiia*, or Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and their participation in both the Holocaust and the atrocities committed against the Poles.[46] Snyder also gives equal time to the equivalent actions of Polish forces against Ukrainian ethnics, including Operation Vistula, a 1947 effort to rid Poland, once and for all, of its Ukrainian problem.[47] The result of this bloody history were two *national states* rather than the *multi-national states* that preceded them, that is, a shrunken, much more ethnically-defined Poland bordered by a more ethnically pure Ukraine that included Galicia, Volhynia, and the prized Lviv now nearly devoid of Jews and Poles, with borders that eventually defined a sovereign Ukraine following the collapse of the USSR.

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44.   Gorenburg, *supra* note 43.
45.   TIMOTHY SNYDER, THE RECONSTRUCTION OF NATIONS 185 (2003).
46.   *Id.*, at 162.
47.   *Id.*, at 198.

IV. THE ROLE OF ECONOMICS IN THE MULTI-VECTORAL POLICY

While the configurations of present day Poland, Ukraine, and other states in the region must be contextualized both within the larger history of the region's geographical destiny as a contested borderland and the nationalist struggles of the early and mid-20th centuries, the contemporary economic realities that define the region must not be overlooked. In the field of international relations, economics is sometimes relegated to the position of so-called low politics, a matter for consideration when power politics are not the rule of the day. However, in the case of Ukraine, and Yanukovych's decision to turn eastward, economics must be considered by way of explanation.

The economic decision making of former Soviet states, particularly as it pertains to the decision to turn either westward toward the EU or eastward toward Russia, is based on the interaction of electoral contests, national identity, and trade ties. Ukraine is not unique in this respect. However, the economic and political realities of the past 20 years may explain the differences between the westward turn of states such as the Baltics and Yanukovych's turn toward Russia, given similar initial economic conditions. The economies of the former Soviet States were dependent upon Russia at the time of the Soviet breakup. Therefore, the decision by states like the Baltics to "turn west" cannot be attributed to pre-existing economic ties with the west and the lack of those ties with the east. According to Rawi Abdelal, "they were all dependent upon Russia, especially for oil and gas. They had few economic links with the West – in 1990, 90 percent of Lithuania's total commerce was with other post-Soviet states, as was 87 percent of Belarus's and 82 percent of Ukraine's."[48]

Instead, Abdelal attributes the choice to "return to Europe" and embrace economic liberalism as a result of domestic politics and national identity.[49] Nationalists in the East European Communist states were uniformly in favor of turning westward and adopting economic liberal policies, mostly because they viewed Russia and their states' dependency upon Russia as their largest security threat, but also because they considered the rightful place of their state to be Europe. In the newly independent Baltic States, the nationalists were elected into leadership positions, or co-opted the former Communist party into a nationalist perspective, and the painful economic transition began – cutting pre-existing trade ties, establishing new ones, and engaging in shock therapy to effect the transformation to a liberal market economy.

Ukraine remained largely unreformed, economically or politically,

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48.   RAWI ABDELAL, NATIONAL PURPOSE IN THE WORLD ECONOMY: POST-SOVIET STATES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE 9 (2001).
49.   *Id.*

during the Kravchuk administration. In 1994, Kuchma's administration chose what Abdelal refers to as a middle course, i.e. the multi-vectoral policy.[50] Ukraine received some assistance from the EU, particularly through the TACIS Program, intended to foster democratic reforms and western-style macroeconomic development in post-Soviet states. However, the fact that later efforts at cooperation such as the PCA and ENP were written without a "membership perspective" – a term used by the EU to indicate that membership will be offered at some point in the future – meant that the interactions between the EU and Ukraine were more limited than those with accession states.[51] The painful adjustment that accession states made – cutting off dependency on Russia and redirecting economic ties to EU states – was not sufficiently incentivized in the Ukrainian case, and as a result Russia remained an important economic partner for Ukraine.

Russia and Ukraine continue to share important trade ties. According to Grigor'ev, Agibalov, and Salikhov, Russia remained Ukraine's biggest trade partner in 2009.[52] While most of the products Ukraine imported were energy related, Russia served as an important market for Ukrainian exports of equipment, metals, chemicals, and food. The importance of Ukrainian exports cannot be overstated – exports have been a key driver of economic growth, particularly in the eastern portion of the country, since the economic revival in the early 2000s. These trade ties are partly a continuation of Soviet-era ties, and partly the result of Russian government efforts to re-engage with its neighbors through more trade and regional trade agreement proposals such as the Eurasian Union between Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus – an agreement to which Russia would like to add Ukraine as a member.[53]

The level of economic interaction with Ukraine's large neighbors, Russia and the EU, varies by region within Ukraine. The importance of Russia as an importer of Ukrainian-made goods – particularly heavy machinery, equipment, chemicals, and metals – is most apparent in the heavily industrialized eastern part of Ukraine. Economic growth in Ukraine since 2000 has been largely based on the manufacturing, chemical, and metallurgy sectors, and the eastern part of the country seems not only aware of this, but also somewhat resentful of the supposed redistribution of profits from the industrial east to the agricultural west (an exaggerated but not

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50.   RAWI ABDELAL, NATIONAL PURPOSE IN THE WORLD ECONOMY: POST-SOVIET STATES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE 9 (2001).

51.   Pridham, *supra* note 4, at 18-33.

52.   L. Grigor'ev, S. Agibalov M. Salikhov, *Ukraine: A Split Transformation*, 52 PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC TRANSITION 5, 5-27 (2009).

53.   Alexander Libman & Evgeny Vinokurov. *Regional Integration and Economic Convergence in the Post-Soviet Space: Experience of the Decade of Growth*, 50 JOURNAL OF COMMON MARKET STUDIES 112, 112-128 (2012); Armandon, *supra* note 5, at 289-309.

entirely inaccurate understanding of Kiev's policies). The potential for growth in Ukrainian export markets depends upon capital investment, and though this could come from the EU or Russia, some in the east appear to assume that Russia will be the most likely candidate to provide that funding.[54] Finally, other major importers of Ukrainian manufactures are Belarus and Kazakhstan. In terms of trade ties and economic incentives, an eastward turn and integration into a Eurasian Economic Community that includes its most important trade partners (Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus) is entirely rational, and the east may blame western political leaders for Ukraine's continuing choice to turn away from the Eurasian Community in favor of the EU.[55]

Likewise, the western portion of the country has economic reasons to favor integration with the west and specifically the EU. Western Ukraine is primarily agricultural, has shown slow or no growth in the independence period, and sees a great deal of potential in integration with the EU because of the latter's regional development policies (a.k.a. "structural funds") and Common Agricultural Policy, both of which can provide assistance to less developed and agricultural regions within EU member states. The western region of Ukraine has also been subject to population movements out of the agricultural regions and into the capital of Kiev, due to high unemployment and lack of job opportunities. Integration with the European Union would provide those leaving the agricultural sector access to larger labor markets in the EU member states.[56]

Seen in terms of rational economic decision-making, recent agreements between Ukraine and its powerful neighbors make a great deal of sense, despite the apparent contradictions of seeking deeper integration with both Russia and the EU simultaneously. While Yanukovych sought during his first year in the Presidency to reassure the EU that Ukraine was continuing to embrace its "European choice," he simultaneously opened an active dialogue with the Russian government; the result of this dialogue was the Kharkiv Agreement (2010) which offered use of the Sevastopol naval base to Russia in exchange for a 30 percent cut in the price of Russian oil imports for 10 years. Russia increased pressure on Ukraine to join the Eurasian Economic Community – a move that was viewed negatively by many Ukrainians.[57] While most of this behavior could appear in keeping with the multi-vectoral policy typical of Ukrainian leaders, the decision to discontinue talks at the Vilnius Summit in 2013, therefore rejecting the Association Agreement that would have bound Ukraine more closely to the

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54. L. Grigor'ev, S. Agibalov M. Salikhov, *supra*, note 53.
55. *Id*.
56. *Id*.
57. Armandon, *supra* note 5, at 289-309.

EU, seemed to signal a turn eastward rather than a multi-vectoral approach.

The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement signed after Yanukoyvch's departure and under the Poroshenko regime contains a number of elements that would be favorable to the western portion of the country and potentially unfavorable to the east. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) is expected to lead to modernization and integration with EU markets (specifically in the trade of goods and services). However, it also represents a potential "curtain" that would demarcate Ukraine as part of the EU trade area and cut off (or at least, divert) trade with Ukraine's trade partners to the east (Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus), and defers opening of EU markets to industrial goods until a later date.[58] The Agreement also explicitly states the EU's willingness to consider a visa regime for Ukrainian workers, given progress on "well-managed and security mobility" efforts. As is the case with the Eurasian Community, Ukrainian public opinion polls indicate that the EU is also seen as putting undue pressure on Ukraine to 'pick a side,' while Ukrainian public opinion favors the multi-vectoral approach.[59]

V. WHERE ARE WE TODAY?

Critically, the actions and sentiments that were at the core of Ukrainian nationalism in the latter half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century are largely a product of the actions and sentiments held by western Ukrainians. The key question for Ukrainian policymakers, however, is the extent to which the last century of nation-building has resulted in a convergence of opinion between east and west[60] and whether, at least with regard to the "big questions" of economic development and democracy, there exists something resembling a national consensus.

Ukrainian polling data collected in the *Neighbourhood Barometer* from 2012-2014 demonstrates a generally disillusioned Ukrainian population, even when compared to the broader "neighborhood east" states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova. In each of the questions addressed below, Ukrainian respondents were more negative than the neighborhood east average, indicating a very high level of dissatisfaction even when compared to states that could be considered more troubled than

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58.   Information on the Association Agreement can be found via the European Union's European   External   Action   Service   website   at: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu_ukraine/association_agreement/index_en.htm

59.   Armandon, *supra* note 5, at 289.

60.   We recognize that other geographic divisions also exist, for instance, between the south, often taken to include Crimea and central Ukraine a region from where the iconic national image of the Cossack springs. However, given the central importance of the east/west divide we will limit our discussion to these regions.

Ukraine.[61] When asked about life satisfaction, Ukrainians responded negatively, with 57 percent indicating they were "not satisfied" in 2012; 58 and 63 percent indicated they were not satisfied in 2013 (autumn) and 2014 (spring), respectively.[62] When asked whether Ukraine was headed in the right or wrong direction, respondents likewise demonstrated a high level of pessimism: in 2012, 48 percent indicated Ukraine was headed in the wrong direction (only 11 percent felt it was headed in the right direction).[63] In the 2013 spring survey, this attitude worsened, with 56 percent saying the country was headed in the wrong direction.[64] However, the response to this question changed in the 2014 surveys – conducted during the *Euromaidan* protests – with those responding "wrong direction" down to 35 percent, and 31 percent indicating the country was headed in the "right direction."[65]

Dissatisfaction had both political and economic dimensions, with Ukrainian public opinion regarding how democracy works in Ukraine and regarding the economic situation in Ukraine being quite negative from 2012-2014. With regards to democracy, in 2012 a full 75 percent indicated they were not satisfied with how democracy works in Ukraine, and subsequent surveys indicated that this continued to be a point of dissatisfaction among Ukrainian respondents, with 68-69 percent not satisfied.[66] Respondents' assessments of the economic conditions in Ukraine went from bad to worse in this time period. In 2012, 78 percent indicated the current economic situation was bad (only 16 percent responded that it was good); in subsequent surveys the "bad" response increased steadily, from 87 percent in spring 2013 to 92 percent in spring 2014[67] An ad-hoc *Neighbourhood Barometer* regarding employment

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61. *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2012, http://euneighbourhood.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2013/03/FactsheetENPI_wave2-UA-EN.pdf   (last visited Oct. 1, 2014); *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2013, http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FS-ENPI-Wave-3-UA-EN.pdf   (last visited October 1, 2014); *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2013, http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FS-ENPI-Wave-4-UA-EN.pdf   (last visited Oct. 1, 2014); *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2014, http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FS-ENPI-Wave-5-UA-EN.pdf   (last visited Oct. 1, 2014).

62. *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2012; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2013; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2014.

63. *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2012.

64. *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2013.

65. *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2014.

66. *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2012; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2013; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2013; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2014.

67. *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2012; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2013; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2013; *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Spring 2014.

conditions conducted in 2013 sheds some light on the reasons for this negative evaluation of the Ukrainian economy – 53 percent had a negative outlook about the future of employment, 72 percent feared losing their job (fears that a partner or children would lose their jobs were also high for the east neighborhood), and 60 percent considered employment assistance services in their country not useful.[68]

   While dissatisfaction runs deep throughout Ukraine, there are also pronounced differences between east and west, a fact revealed in a March 2014 survey conducted by the Gallup organization in cooperation with the International Republican Institute (2014).[69] Using many of the same questions posed by the *Neighbourhood Barometer*, the poll starkly demonstrated the divisions that plague the country. Consider, for instance, the actions of the Russian Federation and its commitment of resources, including troops, off-duty or otherwise. While majorities in both regions objected to such actions, some 98 percent of western residents expressed objections compared to 61 percent in the east.[70] Even starker divisions emerge when considering even a referendum on Crimea's future. Some 94 percent in the west consider the possibility as a clear attempt to break up Ukraine into pieces, and therefore a threat to its independence.[71] In the east, however, opinion is relatively evenly divided, with 45 percent of the respondents seeing a referendum as the legitimate right of the residents of Crimea to express *their* opinion about *their* future, a sentiment expressed by a mere 2 percent in the west; only a slightly smaller 40 percent saw such a vote as a threat to the country's integrity.[72] Similarly sharp divisions

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   68.   *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer East: Ad-Hoc Survey, Employment* (2013), http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/RapportENPI_ad-hoc2_EAST.pdf   (last visited Oct. 1, 2014) (While significant, these cleavages are ameliorated by at least one increasingly significant factor, namely, age. As is the case in adjacent countries, there is now coming of age a generation that never experienced the rough tutelage of a Soviet Republic. In both Belarus and Lithuania, for instance, there is a clearly emerging sense of 'being' Lithuanian or Belarusian and an accompanying sense of national loyalty. This is true despite the fact that Russian is commonly spoken both in formal setting, i.e., work or at university, and at home); Theiss – Morse, *supra* note 25, at 143.
   69.   International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Ukraine, March 14-26,*   *2014,* http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2014%20April%205%20IRI%20Public%20Opinion%20Surv ey%20of%20Ukraine,%20March%2014-26,%202014.pdf (last visited Oct. 2, 2014); The survey used the following geographic designations: Oblasts in the west: Chernivetska, Ivano-Frankivska, Khmelnytska, Lvivska, Rivnenska, Ternopilska, Transcarpathian, Volynska; Oblasts in the center: Cherkaska, Chernihivska, Kirovogradska, Kyivska, Poltavska, Sumska, Vinnytska, Zhytomyrska, and the city of Kyiv; Oblasts in the south: autonomous region of Crimea, Khersonska, Mykolaivska, Odeska, Sevastopol, Zaporizka; Oblasts in the East: Dnipropetrovska, Donetska, Kharkivska, Luhanska.
   70.   International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Ukraine, March 14-26,* (2014).
   71.   *Id.*
   72.   *Id.*

characterize general perceptions of Russia's actions in the Crimea. Some three-quarters of respondents in both western and central Ukraine regard such actions as an "invasion and occupation of independent Ukraine," a view shared by 37 percent and 30 percent of the respondents in southern and eastern Ukraine, respectively.[73]

The proper cultural orientation of the country also sparks regional controversy. For instance, when asked about a choice of joining one international economic union, an overwhelming 90 percent of western respondents favored the European Union, a choice favored by only one-fifth of eastern respondents.[74] Instead, a healthy majority (59 percent) of eastern respondents favored joining the customs union with Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.[75] Equally strong divisions were demonstrated with regard to the signing of the EU Association Agreement, with 72 percent of western respondents urging an immediate signing, a move favored by only 13 percent in the east.[76] The desire for a move west is only somewhat tempered by the more controversial proposition of NATO membership. Thus, while 67 percent in the west would vote for NATO membership, an almost equal percentage (64 percent) of eastern residents would vote against being part of NATO.[77]

While all of these questions point to the sort of geographic divisions often noted in the popular and scholarly media, there is one issue around which much less disagreement exists. As noted above, Russian President Putin makes much of the threat to Russian speakers in many of the post-Soviet countries, a threat so severe as to justify the sorts of aggressive tactics currently on display in Ukraine. However, the supposed beneficiaries of his rescue efforts do not seem to share his views. Thus, on the key question of whether Russian speakers feel "under pressure or threat because of their language," fully 85 percent of respondents *throughout* the country do not perceive such a threat.[78] Even more surprising, given Putin's dark view of the matter, fully three-quarters of eastern residents agreed that no such pressures exist. Reality, it seems, has yet to penetrate the Russian president's world-view.[79]

CONCLUSION

Clearly, the Ukrainian political and economic systems have a long way

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73.   *Id.*
74.   *Id.*
75.   Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Ukraine *supra* n. 71.
76.   *Id.*
77.   *Id.*
78.   International Republican Institute, *Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Ukraine, March 14-26*, (2014),
79.   *Id.*

to go before they will regain the faith of the population. One way in which this may be accomplished is in cooperation with one of Ukraine's powerful neighbors, who not only have deep pockets, but may also be able to provide guidance and incentives on such tasks as modernization, democratization, and market transition. The difficulty in this approach lies in Ukrainian public sentiment regarding the choice of either the European Union or a Eurasian Community. As noted above, while surveys clearly demonstrate a broad level of public support for the multi-vectoral policy overall, there are distinct regional divides with regards to preference for integration with the EU versus a Eurasian Community.[80] Further, while integration with the EU would bring with it assistance on a variety of tasks, including democratization, rule of law, reducing corruption, and modernizing the economy, Ukrainian trust of the Union has always been middling at best, hovering around 50 percent, though levels of trust in the EU always exceed those for the UN or NATO.[81] The other likely choice for Ukraine is the Eurasian Community. While national-level data does not provide a great deal of support for a hard turn east toward Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, the desire to accommodate regional sentiments and the reality of regional economic differences provide justification for at least an accommodation with the Eurasian Community.[82]

The hard choices facing Ukraine should come as no surprise in a country that has historically served as a borderland between empires and world-views. Whether to turn east or west remains a decision mediated by

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80.   Armandon, *supra* note 5, at 289.

81.   Trust does not necessarily equate with a positive image for the EU, as only 41 to 49 percent of respondents in the Eurobarometer survey indicate they view the EU positively. This may be related to high expectations of the EU's potential to assist Ukraine; in 2012 respondents demonstrated high hopes for the EU's ability to assist in economic development (76 percent), trade (69 percent), human rights (64 percent), and democracy (60 percent). When these high hopes are compared to the respondents' perception of what the EU has actually done for Ukraine, a gap becomes apparent. From 2012-2013, respondents were underwhelmed by the EU's level of engagement with Ukraine, with 37 to 44 percent indicating the EU had an appropriate level of involvement in Ukraine. This number increased in 2014, again in conjunction with the *Euromaidan* protests and in the context of negotiations of the Association Agreement, to 57 percent. The responses to the question regarding the EU's contribution to economic development in Ukraine followed a very similar pattern in each of the surveys, with reality of EU assistance falling far short of its perceived potential, though with a slight uptick in 2014. It is not surprising that Ukrainians would feel as if the potential of the relationship with the EU has not been met, given the discussion above regarding the EU's reluctance to provide a membership perspective or timeline for Ukraine's entry into the EU.

82.   In the national-level *Neighbourhood Barometer* conducted in 2012, respondents were asked which actors would be most effective in assisting in Ukraine's economic development. The largest share of respondents placed this responsibility on the Ukrainian government itself (44 percent), followed by the EU (40 percent), and a "Single Economic Area with other CIS" (14 percent); *European Union Neighbourhood Barometer: Ukraine*, Autumn 2012, http://euneighbourhood.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2013/03/FactsheetENPI_wave2-UA-EN.pdf (last visited Oct. 1, 2014).

struggles over identity as well as the practical politics of a region that continues to be unsettled by both centuries-long historical trends and actions taken by those whose sense of self, both personal and national, is deeply informed by competing visions of the past. Whether the nation-building efforts of the last hundred years or so will serve as a sufficient bulwark against the disintegration of contemporary Ukraine, is no doubt the most pressing challenge faced by both the country's leaders and those who choose to call themselves Ukrainian.