

MUDDLING ALONG: THE FIRST DECADE OF INDEPENDENT UKRAINE

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The aim of this article is twofold. First, to outline a general framework for the study of post-Soviet Ukraine that draws on my study of developments in different areas over the last decade. Ukraine became an independent state in January 1992 with historical baggage from empire and totalitarianism. Of the 27 post-communist countries those with the lightest burdens of legacy from empire and totalitarianism have produced a more successful transition.¹

This baggage has shaped a path dependency in a country divided into roughly three equal camps: active national democrats (often mistakenly referred to as “nationalists”) who form the basis of civil society, a passive center that draws upon those with an amorphous identity and former national communists turned oligarchs, and Ukraine’s largest political party, as well as an unreformed Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU). This path dependency and the resultant threefold division of political forces has produced a relatively stable environment in Ukraine, where none of these three political forces are able to dominate the country and impose their will. Breakthroughs in reform, along the lines of Central-Eastern Europe, were therefore impossible (and, by implication, so was a complete return to the past, as in neighboring Belarus). Domestic and foreign policies maintain Ukraine along a “muddling way” within a virtual polity where declared and actual policies are very different.² Ukraine’s “muddle way” has meant that Ukraine has never outlined a concrete goal or domestic or international vision of what it is building

or where it is heading. Indeed, President Leonid Kuchma hoped that a Ukrainian scholarly conference in Summer 2001 would provide him with these answers, seven years after first being elected.

The national aspects of Ukraine’s path dependency have played the decisive role in determining two further outcomes.³ Ukraine’s inherited legacy within the national domain produced a country lying midway between denationalized Belarus and the highly nationally conscious three Baltic states. This has influenced such questions as support for current borders, the weakness of separatism, a close correlation between national identity and civil society and an amorphous “pragmatic center,” which acts as a buffer between national democrats and communists. Ukraine’s path dependency has helped to facilitate a delegative democracy where Russophones and Sovietophiles, who although living in the most populous regions of eastern and southern Ukraine, largely do not participate in civil society and whose main participation in the political process occurs only during elections. As a consequence of this political configuration, Ukraine’s elites can ignore national democrats during elections and Russophones and Sovietophiles between elections.

In this article I will survey this path dependency in two domestic areas to test the framework. These two areas are political and economic reform as well as state- and nation-building. Foreign and defense policies are referred to in the article within the context of domestic policies but to do them justice would require a separate article.⁴

1. See Alexander J. Motyl, “Ten Years After the Soviet Collapse: Persistence of the Past and Prospects for the Future,” in Adrian Karatnycky, A. Motyl and Amanda Schnetzer, eds., *Nations in Transit 2001. Civil Society, Democracy and Markets in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States* (New Brunswick, NJ and New York: Transaction Publishers and Freedom House, 2001), 36-44.

2. See Dominique Arel, “Ukraine: The Muddle Way,” *Current History*, vol. 97, no. 620 (October 1998), 342-46, D. Arel, “Kuchmagate and the Demise of Ukraine’s ‘Geopolitical Bluff’” and Andrew Wilson, “Ukraine’s New Virtual Politics,” *East European Constitutional Review*, vol. 10, nos. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2001), 54-66.

3. See Philip G. Roeder, “Peoples and States after 1989: The Political Costs of Incomplete National Revolutions,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 58, no. 4 (Winter 1999), 854-81 and Taras Kuzio, “Transition in Post-Communist States: Triple or Quadruple?” *Politics*, vol. 21, no. 3 (September 2001), 168-77.

4. See Jennifer Moroney, Taras Kuzio and Mikhail Molchanov, *Ukrainian Foreign and Security Policy* (Westport: CT: Praeger, forthcoming 2002). Other bibliographic sources on Ukrainian security policy can be found at:

www.taraskuzio.net/ukrainian/bibliography.html.

Twin Legacies and Path Dependency

The legacies of empire and totalitarianism fundamentally affect the national question in Ukraine. Due to this legacy the national idea in Ukraine was strong enough to propel the country to independence but insufficiently powerful to become hegemonic in post-Soviet Ukraine. The national idea in Ukraine is influenced by these twin legacies in three areas.

First, the link between nationalism and modernization, which has always, as Ernest Gellner reminded us, been strong since the late eighteenth century and remains so in modernizing states in South East Asia today, was broken in eastern Ukraine. Until the 1920s nationalism and modernization were allowed to develop simultaneously in Soviet Ukraine because of the policies of indigenization and national communism. After Soviet leader Josef Stalin consolidated his power these twin policies were dropped in favor of a fusion of Soviet communism and Russian great power chauvinism that masqueraded as "internationalism."

These policies lasted for five decades (from the mid 1930s to the mid 1980s), creating an urban and industrialized population with a territorial attachment to Soviet Ukraine and, in some cases to the USSR, but with few cultural or linguistic links to Ukrainian culture and language. Among this element of the population only two of the three political groups that dominate Ukrainian politics have been successful in winning their support—centrists (dominated by former national communists turned oligarchs) and the left.⁵

These legacies have influenced the inability of KPU (Communist Party of Ukraine) to evolve into a national communist or social-democratic, *derzhavnyk*, political party as elsewhere in Central-Eastern Europe. After the national communists (Leonid Kravchuk) and economic elites (Leonid Kuchma) of the KPU defected to the national democrats, the rump KPU remained disorganized and illegal. It was finally permitted to establish a new KPU in October 1993 that consisted of the hard-line minority "imperial communists" from the pre-August 1991 KPU.

The KPU has always commanded a large number of seats in the Ukrainian Parliament, its only source of influence in Ukrainian politics, ranging from 80 in the 1994-1998 Rada to 120 in 1998-2002. The only occasion when they were absent from the Rada, due to their illegal status, was in 1992-1993. During this period the Rada under President Kravchuk and Prime Minister Kuchma could have ostensibly introduced radical reforms, but the fact that they did not is due to the reasons outlined in this framework. At that time the former national communists were even more unclear about any program of action or where they were taking the country (Kuchma asked the Rada this very question in despair), they had no political parties to represent their interests, the eastern Ukrainian wing of this establishment had still to decide whether it was financially worthwhile to be *derzhavnyky* and if they introduced reform policies which failed they would have had no KPU-dominated Rada on which to deflect blame.

Since 1994, when economic and political reforms began, Kuchma has constantly attacked the Rada for blocking his reform plans. This has been a commonly used excuse throughout the CIS and has been used by the executive as an argument to weaken parliamentary power at the expense of the presidency. Undoubtedly, the KPU has been a more vociferous critic of reform than the Communist parties of Central and Eastern Europe who, having become social democrats, have usually embraced reform (Serbia and Croatia, of course, until 2000 represented exceptions). Nevertheless, by continually blaming others for Ukraine's problems the executive follows the Soviet tradition of refusing to accept responsibility for problems that should be clearly laid at the feet of the head of state.

Freedom House's *Nations in Transit* 2001 report clearly does not point to parliamentarianism as an obstacle to reform in Central Eastern Europe, where it is more prevalent.⁶ In the CIS, where presidentialism is prevalent, reform has not progressed faster but has regressed. The April 2000 referendum organized by the executive to reduce the powers of the Rada by introducing a smaller number of deputies, two houses and removing immunity from deputies would have eroded Ukraine's democratization even further. It was not implemented because "Kuchmagate" destroyed the

5. I discuss this legacy in my "Ukraine: Coming to Terms with the Soviet Legacy," *The Journal of Communist Studies & Transition Politics*, vol.14, no.4 (December 1998), 1-27.

6. Available at www.freedomhouse.org.

unity of the non-left majority in the Rada later that year.⁷

Democratization, the role of political parties and influence of civil society have regressed since the late 1990s in the CIS, including Ukraine,⁸ corruption and patronage have increased, and the independent media have come under attack. To blame the KPU for blocking reforms is, therefore, not to see the forest for the trees. By the end of the post-Soviet decade the former national communists-oligarchs had become the main threat to democratization in Ukraine, not the KPU. Those on the moderate left, such as Oleksandr Moroz and his Socialist Party (SPU), have supported the anti-oligarch-Kuchma opposition by accusing Kuchma of threatening both democratization *and* statehood.

This growing cleavage between the centrist oligarch camp and national democrats and their pro-statehood left allies came abruptly onto the Ukrainian political scene in 2000-2001, when "Kuchmagate" exposed the true nature of the Kuchma regime. Ironically, the KPU refused to join the anti-Kuchma opposition and at times even supported the oligarch camp in the Rada, leading to accusations that they have been bought by the executive. This has broadened the rift between the anti-statehood KPU and the pro-statehood SPU.⁹

The second legacy is that national democrats, unlike their Baltic counterparts, have been unable to take power in Ukraine. Ironically, the Soviet regime strengthened an already powerfully entrenched national idea in western Ukraine, nurtured by the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian empire prior to 1918 (at a time when the Tsarist empire was doing its best to eradicate the Ukrainian national idea, including the single ban on any language in the empire, namely, Ukrainian). After the Jews were murdered and Poles ethnically cleansed the small number of urban centers in western Ukraine after 1945 were filled with Ukrainians. Nationalism and modernization of the region went hand in hand as

russification measures were relatively relaxed in comparison to those in western Belarus, also annexed from Poland.¹⁰

Ukrainians were not only the largest ethnic group proportionately among Soviet dissidents, but also a proportionately large number of them came from western Ukraine itself. Two-thirds of the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet era were to be found in Ukraine and three-quarters of these were in Galicia, reflecting a close link between nationalism and religion, higher than that found in Russia. With this historical legacy it is little wonder that western Ukraine led the nationalist movement against Soviet rule between 1988 and 1991 and today still dominates the anti-oligarch and anti-Kuchma camp which it accuses of having "hijacked" their successful push for sovereignty and monopolized and corrupted the *derzhava*.

This weakness of the national idea was celebrated by many Western scholars, policy makers and the media in the mid 1990s, because they feared that the "nationalizing policies" of what they negatively termed "nationalists" would lead to civil war between Russians and Ukrainians or Russophones and Ukrainophones.¹¹ This view did not define nationalism in the broad sense of the term as able to lead to positive or negative outcomes, depending on the manner in which it was applied and defined. Ethnic conflict did indeed break out with the assistance of Russian covert operations in two post-Soviet states (Georgia and Azerbaijan), where national democrats came to power. In the three Baltic states, where national democrats also came to power, no ethnic conflict has taken place.

7. See A. Karatnycky, "Meltdown in Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, vol.80, no.3 (May-June 2001), 73-86.

8. S. Birch, "Nomenklatura Democratization: Party Formation and Electoral Clientelism in Post-Soviet Ukraine," *Democratization*, vol.4, no.4 (Winter 1997), pp.40-63 and Paul Kubicek, "The Limits of Electoral Democracy in Ukraine," *Democratization*, vol.8, no.2 (Summer 2001), 117-39.

9. See O. Haran and O. Majboroda, *Ukrainski Lvivi: Mizh Leninizmom i Sotsial-Demokratieiu* (Kyiv: Kyiv Mohyla Academy, 2000).

10. Roman Szporluk, "West Ukraine and West Belarussia: Historical Tradition, Social Communication, and Linguistic Assimilation," *Soviet Studies*, vol.31, no.1 (January 1979), 76-98.

11. See A. Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s. A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), D. Arel, "Ukraine—The Temptation of the Nationalising State," in V. Tismaneanu, ed., *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E.Sharpe, 1995), 157-88, and David Laitin, *Identity in Formation. The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). For alternative views see T. Kuzio, *Ukraine. State and Nation Building*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), T. Kuzio, "Nationalising States or Nation Building: A Review of the Theoretical Literature and Empirical Evidence," *Nations and Nationalism*, vol.7, part 2 (April 2001), 135-54 and Eduard Ponarin, "The Prospects of Assimilation of the Russophone Populations in Estonia and Ukraine: A Reaction to David Laitin's Research," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 52, no.8 (December 2000), 1535-41.

There is no evidence to support the supposition that had national democrats come to power in Ukraine the country would have gone the Trans-Caucasian route rather than the Baltic one, particularly in the light of the lack of religious or ethnic hostility between Russians and Ukrainians.

In Central-Eastern Europe regimes changed as a consequence of “collective non-violent civic action...,” produced by mass movements campaigning on nationalist and democratic platforms.¹² National democrats were only able to push Ukraine towards independence with the assistance of the national communists, which meant that both sides had to compromise.¹³ The national communists, who were de-ideologized products of the Leonid Brezhnev era of stagnation, successfully transformed their political power into economic influence in the second half of the 1990s. Former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko pointed out, “We had a clear political orientation prior to independence (when national democrats dominated the agenda) and none after independence (when former national communists-future oligarchs took over).”¹⁴

The mistake of Western scholars was always to assume that centrist oligarchs possessed *any* interest in national questions or that they were disinterested in state independence, in which they had a strong *raison d’être* to legitimize their defection from the anti-independence KPU.¹⁵ Nation-building policies (historiography, symbols and, to a lesser extent, language and culture) were delegated to the national democrats, while they acted as border guards to ensure that policies in sensitive areas such as language remained evolutionary and thereby did not upset the Russophone constituency.¹⁶

12. A. Karatnycky, “Nations in Transit: Emerging Dynamics of Change,” in *op cit.*, A. Karatnycky, A. Motyl and A. Schnitzer, 17.

13. Bohdan Nahaylo, *The Ukrainian Resurgence* (London: Hurst and Co, 1999) and T. Kuzio, *Ukraine. Perestroika to Independence*, 2d ed. (London and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin’s Press, 2000).

14. *Tserkalo Tyzhnia*, 28 April-4 May 2001.

15. This point is made by P. D’Anieri, *Economic Interdependence in Ukrainian-Russian Relations* (New York: New York State University Press, 1999).

16. The leader of the United Social Democrats, Viktor Medvedchuk, has openly talked of how his father’s links to the Ukrainian nationalist underground led to his family being deported to Siberia in the 1940s, where he was born.

The former national communists-oligarchs were willing to delegate these areas because they had nothing to offer in place of national symbols or Mykhailo Hrushevsky’s historiography. Soviet nationality policies had also instilled a commonly accepted view that “Ukraine” was the homeland of a titular nation—ethnic Ukrainians—and non-Ukrainians, who together comprised the civic nation. An independent state needed a “state language”; otherwise, it would go the way of de-nationalized Belarus. There was little opposition to learning or reviving one’s Ukrainian to become, or return to being, bilingual (the major criticism has not come from domestic groups but externally from Russia itself).

In turn, the national communists-oligarchs have been—and remain—distrustful of Russia, which was reinforced when Russia supported Sovietophile President Alyaksandr Lukashenka over Kuchma-type Trade Union leader and opposition leader Uladzimir Hancharyk in the September 2001 elections.¹⁷ This has meant that they have agreed with their national democratic colleagues that Ukraine needs to maintain the CIS at a distance and use “strategic partnerships” with the U.S. and NATO to deflect Russian proposals for integration.

As Karatnycky has pointed out, how the communist system collapsed and what followed very much depended on the “strength of the national idea.” The fact that the national democrats could *not* take power because they were unpopular in eastern Ukraine has allowed the national communists to become oligarchs by preventing elite turnover and fundamental regime change. A history of past failures at achieving independence¹⁸ and the precariousness of national democratic support, which has averaged only between one-quarter and one-third of popular support, has led to a vocal constituency in both Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora who prioritize the *derzhava*, agreeing to keep reform on the back burner in the interests of state-building. Meanwhile, they turn a blind eye to corruption in order to “induce” the former Soviet Ukrainian elite to continue supporting statehood and

17. See T. Kuzio, “Identity and Nation-building in Ukraine: Defining the ‘Other,’” *Ethnicities*, vol.1, no.3 (December 2001), 343-65.

18. In any one year Ukraine could celebrate three “independence days”: 22 January (1918), 30 June (1941) and 24 August (1991). The official holiday is the latter.

not sign another Periaslav treaty with Russia.¹⁹ Alternative arguments are made that corruption is no worse than in the Soviet era.²⁰

The collection of policies promoted by the national democrats, which consisted of political and economic reform, de-sovietization and integration with Europe, and which are being successfully implemented in the three Baltic states, could not, therefore, be implemented in Ukraine. Instead, Ukraine went the “muddle way,” which was characterized by an unwillingness to break fully with the Soviet past or its geopolitical space and the perversion—but never negation—of the very terms “democratization” and “market economy.”

The third legacy in Ukraine was that upwards of one-third of the population lies outside either the KPU or the national democratic camps. They are likely to live outside western Ukraine and are maybe either Russophone or bilingual. Not supportive of the programmatic “package” offered by the national democrats, they have also been unwilling—despite a decade of socio-economic crisis—to support a return to the past and hence have not voted for the KPU.

Initially, genuine centrist political parties such as the Ukrainian Social Democrats attempted to gain support among this segment of the population. But, they failed and these genuine centrist parties then gradually moved into the national democratic and anti-oligarch-Kuchma camps. In their place “independents” have been traditionally elected in districts where Russophones and Sovietophiles predominate, while the KPU has been successful in winning seats on the party lists.²¹ “Independents” have created top-down centrist parties (e.g., Labor Ukraine and Regions of Ukraine), captured genuine centrist parties (the Greens, United Social Democrats and Peoples Democrats), defected from a left party

(the Peasants) to a new one (the Agrarians) or created a completely fake party after evolving from organized crime boss into presidential advisor (Oleksandr Volkov and his Democratic Union). Not surprisingly, these parties have little to do with what their titles claim (protection of the environment, defense of regions and labor or promoting democracy). They are regionally based (Agrarians in Galicia, Labor Ukraine in Dnipropetrovsk, Regions of Ukraine in Donetsk, United Social Democrats in Kyiv) and therefore usually represent regional “parties of power” (Labor Ukraine and Regions of Ukraine took over from Hromada and the Liberals as the “parties of power” with links to state patronage and “administrative resources” in Dnipropetrovsk and the Donbas).

More importantly, they represent the de-ideologized spectrum of Ukraine’s political groups. Only the national democrats and the left have concrete ideological programs that represent polar opposites—a complete break with the Soviet past through reform and integration with Europe and Trans-Atlantic (i.e., the EU and NATO) structures or a total return to the former USSR. The national democrats look to the Baltic states and Central-Eastern Europe, while the KPU looks to Belarus (KPU leader Petro Symonenko endorsed Lukashenko in the 2001 Belarusian elections).

The de-ideologized centrists lack any ideology and are unable to develop a vision for the country they lead because they are products of the Soviet past who cannot fully escape its twin legacies.²² Therefore, they have positioned themselves midway between both of their ideological competitors through alliances with each side at different times. Yulia Tymoshenko, head of the anti-Kuchma Front for National Salvation (FNS) bloc, explained the lack of ideology and directionless state of Ukraine as follows:

Leonid Danylovych (Kuchma) simply acts without any kind of strategy. All his policies are based upon tactical manoeuvres. Kuchma continually moves from one dead end to another. At one moment he is convinced that an orientation towards Moscow is better. The vector of

19. In 1654 Ukraine and Muscovy, as Russia was then called, signed the Periaslav Treaty which Russians and Soviet historiography and nationality policy proclaimed to be the “reunion” of two peoples but which Ukrainians see as leading to centuries of Russian rule and the loss of a ruling elite. See Serhii Plokhy, “The Ghosts of Pereyaslav: Russo-Ukrainian Historical Debates in the Post-Soviet Era,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 53., no. 3 (May 2001), 489-505.

20. Interview with Professor Roman Szporluk in *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 26 August 2001.

21. In the 1998 and 2002 parliamentary elections 50 percent of deputies were elected in majoritarian districts and 50 percent on party lists. In the 1994 elections 100 percent of the seats were elected according to majoritarian principles. Party lists are preferred by ideological groups (the KPU and National Democrats) whereas the centrist oligarchs prefer majoritarian elections.

22. See F.M. Rudych et al., *Politychni Struktury ta Protsesy v Suchasnyy Ukrainy* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1995), 34, 36, 58, 63, 112, 195.

Ukraine's (foreign) policy immediately turns towards the East. In a month everything changes. He turns to the West...²³

"Pragmatic" domestic policies are promoted as a centrist alternative to "romantic" national democratic and restorationist KPU policies that are sometimes defined as a "third way" or the "Ukrainian way." These seek to combine policies that do not completely reverse the Soviet legacy (e.g., in the language domain), while ensuring that non-transparent economic reform inordinately benefits the former Soviet Ukrainian ruling elite.

In the foreign policy arena this has manifested itself in a "multi-vector" foreign policy that is deliberately vague so as to be able to adapt to short-term geopolitical changes. Because domestic policies in political and economic reform are insufficiently radical and overly corrupt to allow Ukraine's integration into Europe, its declared foreign policy strategic goals remain impossible to fulfill. Ukraine is no longer portrayed as an anti-Russian "buffer" but as a "bridge" that links Eurasia and Europe. Although being a "buffer" has its drawbacks, it at least placed Kravchuk's Ukraine firmly on one side of the divide within Europe, whereas a "bridge" situates Kuchma's Ukraine with one foot in Europe and the other in Eurasia, constantly wavering between both poles.

Ukraine's European partners constantly ask Ukraine's leaders to demonstrate their "readiness" to promote its "European choice." But this has proven to be impossible. Ukraine's oligarchic centrists have close economic, and often corrupt, ties to Russia and the CIS, particularly through barter and the re-sale of energy. "Consequently, both economic and political interests of these groups are associated with Russia rather than the West."²⁴

This path dependency, which has been convenient for the centrists and Kuchma who have played off the KPU and national democrats, may be changing because of one personality, Viktor Yushchenko. Yushchenko, an eastern Ukrainian married to a Ukrainian-American, was prime minister for eighteen months, during which time he

was probably the first head of government who thought more about the country than enhancing or creating a personal fortune.²⁵ Again, this logically followed from his patriotic, national democratic leanings. In thinking more about the country at large at a time of economic upturn he was able to pay salaries and pensions which had often gone unpaid for months at a time under his predecessors.

A non-corruptible prime minister has become Ukraine's first ever popular politician. This has dispelled the notion that Ukrainians do not trust politicians and institutions because they do not support democratic politics. The real reason was far simpler and more telling. Until Yushchenko came on the scene Ukrainians believed that people only went into politics to enrich themselves and did not care about the welfare of the population at large. Seeing that this was not the case with Yushchenko, the population has given him extraordinarily high popularity ratings of 50-60 percent in a country where politicians regularly receive only single-digit figures. Although he has never hidden his links to national democratic parties, Yushchenko's popularity ratings show that when the national democratic programmatic package is offered by a non-corrupt leader who is also interested in socio-economic issues (and not only nation- and state-building), then there will be support for him.

This phenomenon, therefore, threatens both the centrists, who can no longer claim to defend eastern Ukrainians from "nationalist" western Ukrainians, as well as the KPU, whose voters always represented a mix of hard-line nostalgic communists and those voting for the communists as a protest vote. (Opinion polls have constantly shown that Ukrainians would like to return to the certainties of the low prices and paid salaries of the Soviet era, while valuing the move away from totalitarianism towards democratization.)

Democratization and Economic Reform

Ukraine's last decade can be divided into two halves. Whereas the first half saw progress in

23. *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 17 April 2001.

24. "Opportunities and Obstacles of the Road of Ukraine to NATO," Occasional Report 25 (August 2001), Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine.

25. The editor of Ukraine's respected weekly, *Tserkalo Tyzhnia* (2-8 June 2001), Yulia Mostovaya, sees employees in the Presidential Administration as only following "greed and discrediting materials against their rivals" with no interest in the fate of the state as a whole. The president meanwhile, is "completely directionless."

democratization, this regressed from 1997 onwards as the Kuchma regime entrenched itself in a stronger, corporatist state. Although two parliamentary elections in 1994 and 1998 and presidential elections in 1994 were largely pronounced to be “free and fair” by international observers, the 1999 presidential elections reflected the tendency towards democratic regression already evident in other areas.²⁶ This regression was also evident in the April 2000 referendum, which was ignored by international organizations and has been pronounced as not having been conducted in a “free and fair” manner. The “Kuchmagate” tapes revealed the presence of widespread malpractice in the 1999 elections and the 2000 referendum orchestrated by Kuchma.

Kuchma is in a dilemma over the 2002 parliamentary elections, because he has been put on notice by the West who will be carefully monitoring them. Nonetheless, he is primarily concerned about his personal immunity from prosecution when his term in office ends in 2004. A large opposition presence in the Rada might lead to the launch of impeachment proceedings against him or, at the very least, an unwillingness to grant him immunity from prosecution after he leaves office.

The first half of the 1990s witnessed a growth in independent media, a solidification of civil society and political parties, and advances across a broad front of democratization. In 1996 and 1998 the Ukrainian and Crimean constitutions were adopted, which signaled the impossibility of going back to the Soviet era and an end to any debate as to the peninsula’s status. The adoption of the parliamentary variant of Ukraine’s constitution by the Rada represented a defeat for Kuchma who had always wanted to introduce a Russian-style presidential system. In 1998 Soviet passports also became illegal.

During the second half of the decade Ukraine evolved into an authoritarian, corporatist state. Analyzing opposition to these trends we find that our framework correctly predicts that while the centrists largely supported the consolidation of corporatism the only groups to oppose the executive and support democratization and economic reform were—and remain—the very people that Western scholars have been quick to castigate as “nationalists,” namely, the national democrats.

Moroz’s SPU, which supports the anti-Kuchma opposition on a platform of statehood and democracy, represents the only exception, whereas the KPU have remained suspiciously quiet. During the “Kuchmagate” crisis in Winter-Spring 2000-2001 it was the national democrats, emboldened by Yushchenko as Prime Minister, who demonstrated in support of democracy and created the first serious threat to Kuchma’s presidency. The national democrats were able to halt Kuchma’s plans to take Ukraine down the Belarusian-Central Asian authoritarian paths but were insufficiently strong to remove him in a national-democratic revolution, as in Serbia.

The second half of the decade witnessed a confusing picture. In the external policy domain Ukraine increasingly proclaimed its foreign policy goals as “returning to Europe,” especially under Foreign Minister Borys Tarasiuk from 1998 to 2000; Tarasiuk now stands in opposition to Kuchma and is allied with Yushchenko. In the domestic arena democratization regressed and economic reform stalled and stagnated. Domestic and foreign policies were clearly not coordinated. The Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters without Frontiers condemned Ukraine’s repressive policies towards the independent media. The failure to this day to carry out a thorough investigation of the death of Georgii Gongadze, the journalist kidnapped in September 2000 and found murdered two months later, nearly led to the suspension of Ukraine’s membership in the Council of Europe in 2001.

The Security Service (SBU) under Leonid Derkach, whose son is a leading member of the Dnipropetrovsk-based Labor Ukraine oligarchic group, resurrected some of its old KGB activities (e.g., political surveillance of anti-regime opponents) together with the Tax Administration, and both institutions took part in corruption. It was during the late 1990s that SBU Major Melnychenko, who worked in counter-surveillance in the President’s office, witnessed these negative tendencies at first and utilized Soviet-era bugging equipment (the Presidential Administration is located in the building of the former Central Committee of the KPU) to transcribe 300 hours of taped conversations by Kuchma with his associates that revealed a wide range of illegal activities. Kuchma has never denied the authenticity of the tapes, but has claimed that different segments of his conversations were edited together to incriminate him. Melnychenko defected

26. Sarah Birch, *Elections and Democratization in Ukraine* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

to the United States in April 2001 after living in hiding for six months in Europe.

In 1994 Kuchma came to power arguing that he would resolve the economic crisis that had worsened in Ukraine under his predecessor, especially after the hyper-inflation of 1993. A relatively radical and reformist program (Ukraine's first) was launched in October 1994. Money flowed into Ukraine from international financial organizations after Ukraine agreed to surrender nuclear weapons, which it did in June 1996.

Kuchma's reform program had mixed results. It succeeded in speeding up privatization but failed to lead to structural reform and the creation of more efficient enterprises. Monetary reform in 1996 led to the introduction of the new currency, the *hryvnia*, which has done relatively well, considering the state of the Ukrainian economy. Inflation was also brought under tighter control through monetary stabilization. Nevertheless, Kuchma's promise of ending the economic crisis only occurred in 2000, when the economy began to grow for the first time in a decade. Whether this growth is sustainable with an oligarchic elite mainly interested in exporting capital, not investing, concerned with short-term profits and asset stripping is open to doubt.²⁷

Corruption grew at an alarming rate—Ukraine was ranked 87th out of 90 countries by Transparency International in its corruption league. Upon coming to power in 1994 Kuchma promised to reduce the size of the shadow economy but has failed. In January 2001 the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, Yevhen Marchuk, complained that it was still growing and that 52 percent of monetary transactions took place outside the banking system.

Legislation, committees and decrees failed to resolve Ukraine's corruption problems. They resembled, like much else, mere declarations, not real policies. Charges of corruption against high-ranking officials were instigated only *after* these officials went over to the opposition. Pavlo Lazarenko was brought to Kyiv from Dnipropetrovsk and given two state medals by Kuchma during his year-long tenure as Prime Minister. After he created Hromada, his own anti-Kuchma political party, Lazarenko was threatened with arrest and in 1999

fled to the U.S., where he still resides under arrest, pending request for asylum. It is only common sense to assume that Kuchma and the SBU knew that Lazarenko was involved in corrupt activities but while he was their ally they did nothing against him.

His ally at the time, Tymoshenko, created Fatherland, a new anti-Kuchma party, on the ruins of Hromada and once she also joined the anti-Kuchma camp corruption charges were brought against her dating back to the mid 1990s with the help of the Russian "strategic partner"; she was arrested and then the charges were dropped. Her knowledge of the ways of corruption in the energy sector was the reason Yushchenko appointed her to be Deputy Prime Minister in 2000. She drastically reduced funds diverted to the oligarchs and increased the state budget, thereby ensuring that salaries and pensions could be paid. These funds were being diverted at the expense of Ukrainian citizens' salaries and pensions by pre-Yushchenko Prime Ministers, with the knowledge of the executive and other state bodies. Not only did the process lead to capital accumulation by oligarchs and Kuchma, but it also suppressed civil society because the primary concern of Ukrainians became survival, not politics.

State, Nation-building and Religion

Over the last decade of independence Ukrainian elites have reached a consensus about nation-building in regard to six areas: state- and institution-building, borders and territorial integrity, civic (state) nationalism, language, national minorities and historiography. Consensus at the mass level is still far from secured. Scholars have dubbed this consensus the Ukrainian consociational nation-building model, or, a creole amalgam of Ukrainophone-Russophone identities.²⁸

State- and Institution-Building

Two of the three political forces in Ukraine, the oligarchic centrists and national democrats, support state- and institution-building, but the camps differ as to how the state should function. As the

27. See Robert Kravchuk, *Ukrainian Political Economy: The First Ten Years* (New York: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press, forthcoming 2002).

28. See Arunas Juska, "Ethno-political Transformation in the States of the Former USSR," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.22, no.3 (May 1999), 524-53 and Mykola Riabchuk, "Behind the Talks on 'Ukrainianization': Laissez Faire or Affirmative Action?" in Theofil Kis and Iryna Makaryk, eds., *Towards a New Ukraine II* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2001), 135-142.

“Kuchmagate” tapes have shown, the centrists prefer a non-transparent corporatist virtual state, where what is said is often different to what is undertaken, a feature reminiscent of elements of the Soviet past.²⁹ In contrast, the national democrats look to reforms that would introduce transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

The KPU would not accept the transformation of Ukraine into a *gubernia* within the Russian Federation.³⁰ Ironically, their wish to support *both* sovereignty *and* a new union is similar to the confederation of Soviet sovereign states that national communists in Ukraine supported prior to 24 August 1991. This reflects their own evolution during the last decade towards a Soviet Ukrainian territorial nationalism.

Borders and Territorial Integrity

Votes in the *Rada* in response to either territorial claims on the Crimea or against separatist tendencies by Crimean leaders have always been passed by more than two-thirds of deputies (i.e., a constitutional majority), which is rare in Ukrainian parliamentary politics. All of Ukraine’s leaders have always adopted a tough, non-violent line on Crimea.

Despite the volumes written on the subject by Western scholars and journalists, separatism has not manifested itself in eastern Ukraine in any manner whatsoever (including elections) and Russian ethnic nationalists have been unable to find fertile ground for support. In Crimea, separatism existed for a brief period, but rapidly disintegrated after 1995. The largest party on the peninsula, the communists, have always backed Ukraine’s territorial integrity and were instrumental in adopting the non-separatist Crimean constitution in October 1998 (ratified by the *Rada* in December of that year).

After the adoption of the June 1996 Ukrainian Constitution, Crimean regional parties had to re-register as either all-Ukrainian parties or as regional branches of existing Ukrainian parties. Support for separatism was further undercut after the Russian executive recognized Ukraine’s borders in May 1997, a recognition ratified by the lower and upper

houses of the Russian Parliament in December 1998 and February 1999 respectively.

*Civic (State) Nationalism*³¹

Ukrainian independence was achieved and consolidated through a combination of pressure from the bottom up by national democrats and top down by national communists that continued as an alliance against the third camp, the KPU, who opposed statehood. This alliance continued until November 2000, when “Kuchmagate” irrevocably produced a gulf between the oligarchic centrists and national democrats. Yushchenko’s Our Ukraine bloc attempts to bridge this gulf by being anti-oligarch but pro-Kuchma, positioning itself midway between Tymoshenko’s radical anti-Kuchma FNS and the oligarchs.

Since 1992 civic nationalism has evolved into a widespread phenomenon throughout Ukraine’s elites. This has occurred through the spread of the national idea from national democrats to the oligarchic centrists (where many of the former national communists, such as Kravchuk and Kuchma, ended up) and then gradually into the moderate left (for example, the SPU) political spectrum. Civic (or state) nationalist ideology is common to the ruling elites of all civic states, including Ukraine, and therefore to argue that nationalism is a “minority faith” in Ukraine reflects a lack of understanding of “banal nationalism” and its pervasive and central role in the modern nation-state.³² Ukraine’s elites have not rejected independence, unlike in Belarus, and coupled with the fact that public support for independence has never dropped during the last decade below two-thirds implies that nationalism is a “majority faith” in Ukraine.

Under Kuchma, the nation-building project was not halted, as it was under President Lukashenka in Belarus after 1994. Ukraine’s nation-building project seeks to strike a balance between the Baltic nation-building and Belarusian nation-rejecting paths. This centrist path between two polar opposite projects thereby leads to dissatisfaction on the part of both national democrats (who support a more radical

29. See P. Kubicek, *Unbroken Ties. The State, Interest Associations, and Corporatism in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

30. Jan Urban, “The Communist Parties of Russia and Ukraine on the Eve of the 1999 Election: Similarities, Contrasts and Interaction,” *Democratization*, vol.7, no.1 (1998), 111-34.

31. See T. Kuzio, “Nationalism in Ukraine: Towards a New Theoretical and Comparative Framework,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* (forthcoming, 2002).

32. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995).

state- and nation-building project) and pro-Russian forces (who support the maintenance of the inherited post-colonial status quo). The more abrasive nationality policies of the Kravchuk era were "pragmatized" (i.e., moderated) in the Kuchma era, because Russophone Ukrainians would not accept a radical and swift nation-building project.

Language

The language question did not influence the outcome of either the 1998 parliamentary or 1999 presidential elections. There is declining support for Russian to become a second state language (with virtually no support, again except on the extreme left, for Russians to be a second titular nation). The Russian language has been removed from education and public life in western Ukraine, where nationality policies resemble those implemented in the three Baltic states. Elsewhere in Ukraine the Russian language has not become "foreign." Ukrainianization of the education system has continued under Kuchma and spread to most regions, except the Donbas and Crimea.³³ The proportion of school children instructed in Ukrainian rose from 47.9 percent in school year 1990-91 to 62.8 percent in 1997-98. Meanwhile, the proportion of pupils instructed in Russian declined from 51.4 to 31.7 percent. In pre-schools, 25.3 percent of children are taught in Russian and in higher education 35 percent of students are taught in Russian.³⁴ In higher education the proportion of students instructed in Ukrainian rose from 36.8 percent (1992-93) to 51.2 percent (1995-96).³⁵

Reflecting the legacies of Soviet nationality policies referred to earlier, the Ukrainian authorities continue to uphold the view that the proportion of

pupils educated in a language should approximate the proportion of the corresponding ethnic group within the population.³⁶ In December 1999 the Constitutional Court issued a ruling that explained the language provisions of the 1996 Constitution (such as state administrators using Ukrainian) as applying throughout Ukrainian territory. In January 2000 the Ukrainian Presidential Council on Language Policy Issues approved the government program "On Additional Measures to Expand the Use of Ukrainian as the State Language," which came into effect in June of that year. It called for all officials to be tested for their Ukrainian language proficiency, for the de-Russification of the sports and cultural spheres and for the use of taxation to regulate the import of publications. In the post-Yushchenko era these policies are likely to be watered down.

Ukrainian elites have reached agreement that an independent state needs a state language as an attribute of identity, pointing to Belarus as an example of a country which lost its independence because of a weak national consciousness. Outside of western Ukraine, where Ukrainian is hegemonic, and the Donbas and the Crimea, where Russian remains dominant, bilingualism is growing as affirmative action in education and state institutions legitimizes and rehabilitates Ukrainian as a modern language.

National Minorities

Elite consensus was always in favor of the provision of polyethnic rights and inclusive citizenship, which has been backed by *all* political parties, other than the extreme right. National democrats have always backed the national revival of minorities, since their dispute was always with Russians who never saw themselves as a national minority but as a second ruling titular nation.

The Russian question is made all the more difficult by the fact that not all of the 12 million declared "Russians" from the 1989 Soviet census are really "ethnic Russians"; upwards of half of these may re-identify themselves as "Ukrainians."

33. See Viktor Stepanenko, *The Construction of Identity and School Policy in Ukraine* (Commack, N.Y. : Nova Science Publishers, 1999).

34. Figures provided by Yuriy Bohuts'kyi of the Presidential Administration ("Russia Afraid of Ukraine's De-Russification," *RFE/RL Poland, Belarus, Ukraine Report*, 15 February 2000). 1,195 Russian-language newspapers are published in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry pointed out, in comparison to none in Ukrainian for the second largest national minority of the Russian Federation, Ukrainians. See "Russian Language in Ukraine: Surrealistic Notes," *Research Update, Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research*, Kyiv, vol.6, no.161 (21 February 2000).

35. J. G. Janmaat, "Language Politics in Education and the Response of the Russians in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 27, no.3 (September 1999), 475 and 478.

36. Vasyl' Kremen', Dmytro Tabachnyk and Vasyl' Tkachenko, *Ukraina. Alternatyvy postupu. Krytyka istorichnoho dosvidu* (Kyiv: Arc-Ukraine, 1996), 756-57. The January 2000 program "On Additional Measures to Expand the Use of Ukrainian as the State Language" proposes, "bringing the system of educational institutions into line with the ethnic composition of the population" (*RFE/RL Poland, Belarus, Ukraine Report*, 15 February 2000).

“Russians” in the 1989 Soviet census included not only ethnic Russians but also those from mixed marriages. “Russians” also represented a supranational term that included those who identified with the USSR (the Russian homeland was defined as the USSR, not the Russian SFSR, unlike in the non-Russian republics where two homelands competed for allegiances, the republics and the USSR).

During the mid 1990s the majority Western scholarly view held that Ukraine was divided into two antagonistic linguistic groups with different geopolitical orientations. Similarly, many works studied the Russian “diaspora” as if it were one united group with an allegiance to the Russian Federation. In reality, few had any allegiance to Russia and if they did it was to the non-existent USSR. Separatism toward Russia in eastern Ukraine has never manifested itself.

By the late 1990s this view was being criticized by a growing number of scholars for over-essentializing those who identified themselves as “Russians,” “Ukrainians” or others in the 1989 Soviet census.³⁷ The tendency within Western political science to categorize people into one group or another ignores the confused reality on the ground, particularly in a country that follows the “muddle way” like Ukraine. People have different identities that change over time and that re-prioritize themselves. The number of those defining themselves with a Soviet identity, for example, has declined in the Donbas during the last decade.

By categorizing Ukrainians into only two linguistic groups scholars claimed that Russophones were the largest linguistic group in Ukraine. But, this could only be undertaken by ignoring the fact that a large number of Ukrainians use *both* languages equally. If this bilingual group is taken into account, Russophones are the smallest of the three linguistic groups. This emphasis on linguistic groups also failed to take into account that there has never been any evidence of a unified Russophone community in Ukraine. Such a group would have to unite very different regional cultures spanning the Donbas, Odesa, Kyiv and western Ukraine.

Barrington found that attachment to a Russophone identity was weak in Ukraine (13 percent) and far less popular than that for ethnicity

(34 percent) and citizenship (57 percent). Russian-speaking Ukrainians were closer to their Ukrainian-speaking counterparts on questions such as Ukrainian statehood and the small number who identified as Russophones. They did not constitute a threat to the state, because no Russophone conglomerate exists; mobilization along Russian nationalist, separatist or autonomy seeking lines has not occurred. More importantly, talk by some scholars of “linguistic faultlines” and of the consolidation of Ukraine into two linguistic groups along the lines of Belgium is not occurring.³⁸

Historiography

Despite concerns by some scholars that a “nationalist historiography” (i.e., the Hrushevs’kyi schema) would not be accepted by Russophones,³⁹ this has not materialized into conflict. The only criticism against current historiography has come from the KPU, not centrists. Janmaat and Popson have shown to what extent the same historiography is taught throughout Ukraine’s educational system, regardless of what language is predominately spoken in which region, including in the Crimea.⁴⁰ All shades of political opinion, except the KPU, support the revival of the Hrushevs’kyi historiographical framework. Wanner’s volume was the first in contemporary Ukrainian studies that sought to place nation-building and historiography within an anthropological framework that does not see historiography, myths and legends as unusual, but as commonplace policies adopted within all civic states.⁴¹

37. Rasma Karklins, “The Misunderstanding of Ethnicity,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 48, no.3 (May-June 2001), 37-44.

38. Lowell Barrington, “Russian-Speakers in Ukraine and Kazakhstan: ‘Nationality,’ ‘Population,’ or ‘Neither?’” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 17, no.2 (April-June 2001), 129-58.

39. A. Wilson, “Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine,” in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schopflin, eds., *Myths & Nationhood* (London: Hurst, 1997), 182-97.

40. Germ Janmaat, *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine. Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-Speaking Population* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Geographical Studies, 2000) and Nancy Popson, “The Ukrainian History Textbook: Introducing Children to the ‘Ukrainian Nation,’” *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 29, no.2 (June 2001), 325-50. See my criticism of the continued dominance of Russophile historiography in “History and National Identity Among the Eastern Slavs. Towards a New Framework,” *National Identities*, vol. 3, no. 2 (July 2001), 109-32.

41. Catherine Wanner, *Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine. Post-Communist Cultural Studies* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Conclusion

Ukraine's politics are confusing because they are neither fully reformist nor Soviet restorationist; they are unable to make a break with or effect a return to the Soviet past.

These muddled domestic policies undermine the declared strategic foreign policy goals of "returning to Europe," while keeping the country as a bridge spanning Europe and Eurasia. Muddled domestic policies lead to equally muddled "multi-vector" foreign policies that cannot decide if Ukraine is part of Eurasia or Europe. Some elements of the elite believe that the only way to deal with this question is to make Ukraine's foreign policy even more confusing by declaring that it will rejoin Europe only with Russia, a policy for never rejoining Europe.

The twin legacies of empire and totalitarianism have guided this path dependency during the last decade along a "muddle way." This "muddle way" by its very nature is unstable, as it cannot resolve medium- or long-term problems, provide goals or visions, and is only premised on a narrow corporatist elite participating in the fruits of independence. The muddle way is therefore only a short-term attempt at outlining some elements of policy.

Growing ties to Europe, the successful transition examples of Central-Eastern Europe, and domestic transformations that will eventually lead to a more emboldened civil society, a more active youth and a middle class with a stake in private enterprise and private property suggests that—as in Latin America—the "muddle way" can be changed over time. Latin American and Iberian corporatism has evolved into democratic and market economies since the 1970s.

How, when and at what speed Ukraine moves away from its muddled path and its authoritarian corporatism, depends upon a factor that has been usually castigated by Western scholars of contemporary Ukraine. The choice open to post-Soviet states is a return to the Soviet past, as in Belarus by a Sovietophile regime; continue muddling along as in Ukraine's first decade with oligarchs unclear as to where they are taking the country; or, following clear policies that combine civic nationalism and reform as in the three Baltic states. Yet, ironically, the first decade of Ukraine's independence has shown that there was too little—not too much—nationalism in Ukraine, as

understood in its civic and patriotic variant.⁴² The only alternative to short-term, muddled policies that benefit a small oligarchic elite is a civic nationalism (or patriotism for those who prefer that term) that espouses relatively radical reform that can break with the Soviet past, takes the interests of the country to heart (and not elite clans), while driving the country forward domestically and externally. Greater civic nationalism (patriotism) would ensure that Ukraine's second decade as an independent state would not be as muddled as its first.

Taras Kuzio's (York University, Canada) recent books include *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence* (second edition, St. Martin's Press, 2000) and *Ukraine: State and Nation Building* (Routledge, 1998).

42. See T. Kuzio, "Nationalism in Ukraine: Towards a New Theoretical and Comparative Framework," *Journal of Political Ideologies* (forthcoming, 2002).