

Imagining Ukraine: regional differences and the emergence of an integrated state identity, 1926–1994

GEORGE O. LIBER

Department of History, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL 35294–3350

ABSTRACT. When Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, it did not possess an integrated Ukrainian state identity. Serious differences between those regions which entered the Russian empire and the Soviet Union before 1939 and those annexed since 1939 hampered the creation of a post-Soviet state identity.

Just as the Ukrainian and Russian languages dominate in different regions in Ukraine, attitudes towards economic reform also vary by region. Russian-speaking areas are more conservative in regard to economic reforms than Ukrainian-speaking ones. But despite these regional differences, Ukraine is not on the verge of civil war. Two public opinion polls taken in 1991 and 1994 in Lviv (in Western Ukraine) and in Donetsk (in Eastern Ukraine) document that the citizens of Ukraine possess a common desire for peace and stability. This desire overshadows Ukraine's regional differences and will help create the new post-Soviet Ukrainian state identity.

I

In reaction to the August 1991 coup attempt in Moscow, on 1 December 1991, 90 per cent of the voters in central and eastern Ukraine (part of the Russian empire since 1654–1795), southern Ukraine (part of the Russian empire since 1769–91), western Ukraine (part of the Soviet Union only since 1939–45), and the Crimea (part of Soviet Ukraine only since 1954) chose to separate themselves from the Soviet Union. Separatist stirrings in Ukraine were nothing new, but rarely had they aroused the majority of Ukrainians (who, as of 1989, constituted 72 per cent of the republic's 52 million people), much less the 14 million non-Ukrainians of the republic.

Although each of these regions (with the exception of the Crimea) contained an overwhelming majority of people who came to identify themselves as Ukrainians, each region entered the Russian empire or the Soviet Union at different historical moments, with different levels of socio-economic development, with different religious allegiances (the population of western Ukraine is predominantly Uniate Catholic, whilst the population

of central, eastern and southern Ukraine is predominantly Orthodox Christian), and at different levels of national consciousness. Central, eastern and southern Ukraine experienced long-term Russification and Sovietisation and their populations entered the Soviet Union with a low level of national consciousness. Western Ukraine possessed a population with a high degree of Ukrainian national consciousness. In consequence, west Ukrainians joined the Soviet Union with a well-developed sense of social distance between themselves and the Russians. Independence did not herald the emergence of an integrated Ukrainian state identity; nor did it heal regional rifts, as demonstrated by the parliamentary and presidential elections held two-and-a-half years later. Nevertheless, although these historical and cultural divisions have made these regions march out of step with one another, 'both (Ukrainian) nationalists and anti-nationalists seem fated to struggle against one another within the same state' (Wilson 1997: 199).

On 10 July 1994, Leonid D. Kuchma, a former prime minister, won Ukraine's second presidential election after promising to cooperate more closely with Russia and to speed economic reform. He defeated Ukraine's first president, Leonid M. Kravchuk, who was forced by the electorate to call early elections because of the Ukrainian economic collapse. Kuchma received 52 per cent of the total vote to Kravchuk's 45 per cent (Erlanger 1994: A1). Kuchma won about two-thirds of the vote in eastern Ukraine, where Russians and a Russian-speaking population predominate, and nearly 90 per cent in the Crimea, where 70 per cent of the population identifies itself as Russian. Kravchuk took most of the vote in western Ukraine, the stronghold of Ukrainian nationalism (Erlanger 1994: A6).

This presidential election, as well as the parliamentary elections held in the spring of 1994, highlighted the differences between those regions of Ukraine which had been incorporated into the Russian empire (and subsequently into the Soviet Union in 1922) and those annexed by the Soviet Union after 17 September 1939. The 1994 elections did not necessarily nullify the December 1991 referendum on independence. Voting for Kuchma and closer economic ties with Russia did not mean that the citizens of Ukraine wished to give up their independence. But the votes did indicate serious regional differences in Ukraine, a legacy of the tsarist and Soviet periods (see Magocsi 1996; Subtelny 1994; Szporluk 1997). These historical/regional differences became intimately intertwined with political and linguistic differences, and their overlapping helps to explain why Ukraine lacks a common integrated, 'imagined' community.

According to the social theorist Benedict Anderson, a nation exists as an imaginary entity 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 1992). In order to imagine the 'communion' of Ukrainians, a common set of ethnic boundaries must emerge; the 'other', especially the Russians, must be defined. In the case of the Ukrainians and Russians, these boundaries are

ambiguous. Russians and Ukrainians, according to the political scientist Ian Bremmer:

exhibit a low sense of ethnic schism. They are racially indistinguishable; their languages are distinct and mutually comprehensible; their cultures and histories are closely intertwined; and their religious affiliations, where applicable, are both Christian in orientation. (Bremmer 1994: 264)

Bremmer is correct. Within the former Soviet Union the Russians enjoyed a less antagonistic relationship with the Ukrainians than with any other group besides the Belarusians. But Bremmer assumes, however, that all Ukrainians possess a similar view of their ethnic distance from the Russians. This is a false assumption. Overall, eastern and southern Ukrainians see themselves as more similar to the Russians than do western Ukrainians, who constitute only a quarter of the total population of Ukraine.

In addition to the problem for Ukrainians, in both the east and west, of imagining a community of Ukrainians and defining what it represents, a second problem is how to imagine the newly independent Ukrainian state, which is a home for over one hundred different national groups, of which Ukrainians and Russians predominate (they constitute 94.0 per cent of the total population). This independent state is a new and unexpected phenomenon for Ukrainians in central, eastern and southern Ukraine and amongst Russians.

The new post-Soviet Ukraine now confronts the dual task of nation-building as well as state-building. In the course of their nation-building, the political elites in Ukraine need to decide whether to concentrate on the Ukrainian identity – the majority of the population – or on a supra-national identity encompassing all of the national groups residing in Ukraine. The overwhelming majority of members of the new post-Soviet political elite emerged from the former communist ruling elite, ‘thrust against its will into a new role; its attitude toward local folk culture and rival elite cultures is ambivalent’ (Haas 1997: 37). In the course of state-building, the political elites need to create self-contained and sovereign presidential, parliamentary, judicial and bureaucratic apparatuses which are independent from those of the other former republics of the Soviet Union. These apparatuses will be responsible for guaranteeing the sovereignty of Ukraine, respecting democratic procedures, and introducing economic reforms. The post-Soviet nation-building and state-building processes demand the creation of a new imagined community within the boundaries of the new state of Ukraine.

Imagined communities are socially constructed. Most importantly, they are constructed in the cities, which contain schools, factories, enormous housing units and the mass media. But, until the middle of the twentieth century, Ukraine was not a unified territory, and Ukrainians did not control the cities or the urban institutions.

Between 1939 and 1945 Stalin united the majority of Ukrainians in Eastern Europe into a single Soviet republic, but this unification did not

generate a homogeneous Ukrainian political identity (nor was it intended to). After 1945 this identity became even more regionally fragmented. Western Ukraine became more Ukrainian, and eastern Ukraine became more Russified. Only in 1990–91 did the Soviet Ukrainian elite come to control the mass media in Ukraine and use it to disseminate a multiregional and pan-Ukrainian political message different from that generated in Moscow.

One of the major factors reinforcing the regional fragmentation of Ukraine is the uneven competition between the Ukrainian and Russian languages within the cities. This disparity has limited the emergence of a Ukrainian 'imagined' community. In the course of the twentieth century, the urban population grew at the expense of the countryside. Between 1926 (the year of the first Soviet census) and 1989 (the year of the last Soviet census), the total population of Ukraine grew from 29,019,747 to 51,452,034 (Itogi 1993: VII, 2: 6; Liber 1992: app. 2). Despite the famine of 1932–3, the purges, and the Second World War, the number of Ukrainians grew from 23,218,860 (80.0 per cent of the total population) in 1926 to 37,419,053 (72.7 per cent) in 1989 (Itogi 1993: VII, 3: table 28: 42; VII, 4: table 31: 6; Liber 1992: app. 2).

During this period Soviet policies transformed Ukrainian society from a rural to an urban one. Whereas just over 5 million people of all nationalities lived in the urban centres in 1926, sixty years later more than 34 million lived there. This dramatic growth was reflected in the rise of the urbanised population as a percentage of the total population of the republic from 18.5 to 66.7 per cent (Itogi 1993: VII, 2: table 5: 6, 12, 18; VII, 3: table 28: 42; Liber 1992: app. 2).

Ukrainians came to dominate the urbanisation process. In 1926, 2,536,499 Ukrainians (47.2 per cent of the total urban population) lived in the cities; in 1989 22,573,225 (65.8 per cent) resided there (Itogi 1993: VII, 3: table 28: 42; VII, 4: table 31: 6; Liber 1992). After 1933, they constituted the majority of the urban population (Liber 1992).

But, as an analysis of the 'native language' in Soviet censuses demonstrates, Ukrainians did not dominate the cities culturally after 1933 (except in western Ukraine in 1944). Soviet censuses included the categories 'nationality' and 'native language'; the differences between them provide a measurement, however imprecise, of how many Ukrainians linguistically assimilated themselves to the Russian language. National descent and subjective allegiance defined the first category. The respondent's conversational language, the language used in the family when he or she was a child, the language spoken by the respondent's mother, and the language of his or her nationality defined the second. Both categories were subjective. The difference between the first and the second 'may represent a stage in the overall process of assimilation' (Liber 1992: 61–2).

In 1926, 94.0 per cent of all Ukrainians listed Ukrainian as their native language; only 5.6 per cent listed Russian (Liber 1992: app. 5). In 1989, 87.7 per cent of all Ukrainians considered Ukrainian to be their mother tongue,

and 12.2 per cent considered Russian to be their mother tongue (Itogi 1993: VII, 4: table 31: 6). Among urbanised Ukrainians the position of the Ukrainian language apparently improved from 1926 through 1989. In 1926, 74.5 per cent of urban Ukrainians listed Ukrainian as their native tongue, whilst in 1989 it was 80.9 per cent (Itogi 1993: VII, 4: table 31: 6; Liber 1992: app. 5). In 1926, as well as in 1989, approximately 98.0 per cent of all Russians considered the Russian language to be their native language (Itogi 1993: VII, 4: table 31: 12, 14; Liber 1992: app. 5).

At first glance these figures (despite minor variations) do not suggest a decline in the state of the Ukrainian language. But the current reality is more complex. Of the 34,297,231 men and women residing in the cities in 1989, 18,556,776 (or 54.1 per cent) considered Ukrainian to be their native or second language and 15,137,984 (44.1 per cent) listed Russian (Itogi 1993: VII, 3: table 28: 28). Thus, the percentage of urban residents claiming Ukrainian as their native language is significantly less than the percentage of people living in Ukrainian cities and identifying themselves as Ukrainians. Conversely, the percentage of urban residents claiming Russian as their native language was higher than the percentage of urban residents claiming to be Russian.

One's 'native language', moreover, varies by region. The Russo-Ukrainian language competition is predicated on the percentage of the urbanised population by province (*oblast*) and region as well as the number and percentage of Ukrainians and Russians living in the cities. As Tables 1 through 4 demonstrate, the more urbanised regions and those cities with higher concentrations of Russians tipped the balance in the direction of Russian as the native language of urban residents.

In the course of the 1930s and after the Second World War, the Soviet government transferred hundreds of thousands of Russians to Ukraine, especially to the cities. In the long run, this government-sponsored migration moved more Russian-language speakers to the cities, which reinforced the Russian-speaking urban environment.

According to Table 1, eastern Ukraine, southern Ukraine, and central Ukraine constitute the most urbanised regions of Ukraine. According to Table 2, the most urbanised regions in Ukraine contain a high percentage (but not a majority) of Russians. Only in the Crimea do Russians demographically dominate the cities (as they do the entire peninsula). Central Ukraine and western Ukraine, the two major farming regions and the two regions with the lowest level of urbanisation, contain the largest percentages of Ukrainians residing in the cities. According to Table 3, eastern Ukraine and southern Ukraine possess a high percentage of Ukrainians with Russian as their native language; central Ukraine and western Ukraine possess the lowest.

If we add the number of urbanised Russians (98.0 per cent of whom speak Russian exclusively) and Ukrainians whose native language is Russian (see Table 4), we can calculate the core urban Russian-speaking

population. This core population speaks Russian almost exclusively and dominates six of the twenty-six provinces of Ukraine. Not surprisingly, these six provinces are located in eastern and southern Ukraine. These figures do not indicate, however, that the Ukrainian language predominates among the populations of Ukraine's other twenty provinces. Outside of western Ukraine, simple majorities do not signify the predominance of Ukrainian. The outcome of language competition is rarely decided by the simple majority of one language group over another.

In the competition between the Ukrainian and Russian languages in the cities, there is a 'tipping point', a transitional zone that signifies the possible overtaking of one language by another. Tracing the demographic growth of Russians and the Russified population of the cities is easy, but establishing the 'tipping point' in each region and city is more difficult.

Nevertheless, outside of western Ukraine, this 'tipping point' is approximately between 25 per cent and 35 per cent. As Tables 1 through 4 demonstrate, the transition from the Ukrainian language to Russian occurred at a point when 25 per cent to 35 per cent of the urban population was composed of Russians and/or Russian-speakers.

After 1933, the deliberate actions of the Soviet government and Communist Party, combined with the cultural similarities, urban growth and Russification of the cities, limited the idea of a Ukrainian imagined community. By narrowing the social functions of Ukrainian, blurring the differences between Ukrainians and Russians, and marginalising Ukrainian culture, these central institutions limited the options Ukrainians could use to define their own national identities (see Dzyuba 1974).

The Soviet government and Communist Party also narrowed the outlets for teaching and using Ukrainian and expanded those for Russian. By the 1960s the overwhelming majority of teachers in the primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher learning taught in Russian. The state-owned publishing houses published the overwhelming majority of their books in Russian, and most radio and television broadcasts were in Russian. Even computer programming texts were written in Russian. By propagating the superiority of the Russian language and culture and by creating incentives for its study and social use, the Soviet government effectively marginalised the Ukrainian language.

In addition to marginalising Ukrainian, the Soviet government and Communist Party purposefully blurred the cultural differences between Ukrainians and Russians, especially after the Second World War. The ceremonies commemorating the 300th anniversary (1954) and the 325th anniversary (1979) of the Treaty of Pereiaslav, which 'united forever' the fraternal Ukrainian and Russian peoples, the 1500th anniversary of the founding of Kiev (1982), and the 1000th anniversary of the Christianisation of Rus' (1988) reinterpreted the past according to current political criteria. These criteria portrayed the union of Ukrainian and Russian peoples as inevitable and 'eternal'.

Table 1. Level of urbanization by region and province, 1989

Region/province	Total urban population	Urban % of total population
<i>Eastern Ukraine</i>		
Donetsk	4,791,165	90.2
Luhansk	2,464,765	86.3
Zaporizhzhia	1,567,839	75.6
Dnipropetrovsk	3,218,479	83.2
Kharkiv	2,488,425	78.4
<i>Southern Ukraine</i>		
Crimea	1,684,269	69.3
Odessa	1,725,049	65.7
Nikolaev	870,350	65.5
Kherson	755,224	61.1
<i>Central Ukraine</i>		
Kiev (province)	1,031,587	53.6
Poltava	981,161	56.1
Chernihiv	749,848	53.1
Sumy	877,916	61.5
Cherkasy	801,941	52.5
Kirovohrad	730,382	59.5
Zhytomyr	813,500	52.9
Khmelnysky	717,046	47.1
Vynnytsia	842,543	43.9
<i>Western Ukraine</i>		
Lviv	1,612,012	59.1
Ivano-Frankivsk	589,016	41.7
Ternopil	470,887	40.5
Volyn	514,055	48.6
Rivne	526,681	45.2
Zakarpattia	506,464	40.7
Chernivtsi	394,415	41.9

Source: Statisticheskii komitet Sodruzhestva nezavisimyykh gosudarstv, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda*. Minneapolis: East View Publications, 1993 (vol. VII, 2; table 6: 24–153).

Table 2. Number and percentage of urbanised Ukrainians and Russians, 1989

Region/province	Urban Ukrainians		Urban Russians	
	No.	%	No.	%
<i>Eastern Ukraine</i>				
Donetsk	2,329,669	48.6	2,199,688	45.9
Luhansk	1,214,442	49.3	1,162,160	47.1
Zaporizhzhia	942,706	60.1	554,270	35.3
Dnipropetrovsk	2,197,851	68.3	872,414	27.1
Kharikv	1,465,186	58.8	910,468	36.6
<i>Southern Ukraine</i>				
Crimea	373,419	22.2	1,211,923	72.0
Odessa	883,831	51.2	621,246	36.0
Nikolaev	612,409	70.4	214,425	24.6
Kherson	533,085	70.6	188,213	24.9
<i>Central Ukraine</i>				
Kiev (oblast)	864,010	83.8	139,523	13.5
Poltava	805,498	82.1	152,223	15.5
Chernihiv	645,505	86.1	84,156	11.2
Sumy	723,432	82.4	141,098	16.1
Cherkasy	678,102	84.6	105,223	13.1
Kirovohrad	594,496	81.4	114,927	15.7
Zhytomyr	630,049	77.4	105,973	14.8
Khmelnysky	599,755	83.6	76,330	10.6
Vynnytsia	706,713	83.9	94,539	11.2
<i>Western Ukraine</i>				
Lviv	1,366,201	84.7	188,923	11.7
Ivano-Frankivsk	523,557	88.9	53,925	9.2
Ternopil	440,283	93.5	24,011	5.1
Volyn	462,707	90.0	42,986	8.4
Rivne	464,439	88.2	49,518	9.4
Zakarpattia	374,760	74.0	43,143	11.5
Chernivtsy	277,446	70.3	55,497	14.0
Kiev (city)	1,853,143	72.4	534,798	20.9

Source: *Itogi* 1993: VII, 2: table 6: 24–153.

Table 3. Urban Ukrainians and their native language, 1989

Region/province	Urban Ukrainians No.	Native language speakers of:	
		Ukrainian	Russian
<i>Eastern Ukraine</i>			
Donetsk	2,329,669	1,285,313	1,042,060
Luhansk	1,214,442	734,939	479,252
Zaporizhzhia	942,706	663,910	278,572
Dnipropetrovsk	2,197,851	1,782,287	415,191
Kharkiv	1,465,186	1,069,189	395,789
<i>Southern Ukraine</i>			
Crimea	373,419	166,888	206,316
Odessa	883,831	535,946	347,178
Nikolaev	612,409	457,722	154,543
Kherson	533,085	428,588	104,394
<i>Central Ukraine</i>			
Kiev (province)	864,010	832,128	31,760
Poltava	805,498	762,636	42,637
Chernihiv	645,505	580,948	84,156
Sumy	723,432	663,430	89,870
Cherkassy	678,102	650,000	27,872
Kirovohrad	594,496	558,914	35,462
Zhytomyr	630,049	589,139	40,892
Khmelnysky	599,755	577,640	22,043
Vynnytsia	706,713	676,033	30,564
<i>Western Ukraine</i>			
Lviv	1,366,201	1,340,045	26,055
Ivano-Frankivsk	523,557	516,234	7,286
Ternopil	440,283	437,716	2,514
Volyn	462,707	456,826	5,832
Rivne	464,439	455,596	8,771
Zakarpattia	374,760	362,745	8,716
Chernivtsi	277,446	260,431	16,935
Kiev (city)	1,853,143	1,457,914	394,755

Source: *Itogi* 1993: VII, 2: table 6: 24–153.

Table 4. Urban Russians and Ukrainians whose native language is Russian, 1989 (no. and %)

Region/province	Urbanised Russians and Russian of Native Language Speakers No.	Percentage of total urban population
<i>Eastern Ukraine</i>		
Donetsk	3,241,748	67.7
Luhansk	1,641,412	66.6
Dnipropetrovsk	1,287,605	40.0
Zaporizhzhia	832,842	53.1
Kharkiv	1,306,257	52.5
<i>Southern Ukraine</i>		
Crimea	1,418,239	84.2
Odessa	968,424	56.1
Nikolaev	368,968	42.4
Kherson	292,607	38.7
<i>Central Ukraine</i>		
Kiev (province)	171,283	16.6
Poltava	194,860	19.9
Chernihiv	148,600	19.8
Sumy	230,968	26.3
Cherkasy	133,095	16.6
Kirovohrad	150,389	20.6
Zhytomyr	146,865	18.1
Khmelnitsky	98,373	13.7
Vynnytsia	125,103	14.8
<i>Western Ukraine</i>		
Lviv	214,978	13.3
Ivano-Frankivsk	61,211	10.4
Ternopil	26,525	5.6
Volyn	48,818	9.5
Rivne	58,289	11.1
Zakarpattia	51,859	10.2
Chernivtsi	72,432	18.4
Kiev (city)	929,553	36.3

Source: *Itogi* 1993: VII, 2: table 6: 24–153.

In order to prevent an alternative point of view to the Soviet state-sponsored one, the government destroyed the free-thinking intelligentsia in the purges of the 1930s and replaced them with second-rate substitutes. The arrests, executions and deportations effectively strangled the consolidation of a common, imagined Ukrainian community.

After the Second World War, the Soviet government segregated western Ukrainians from eastern Ukrainians by means of residence permits. After 1945, the passport system together with residence and work permits (introduced in late 1932) hampered the movement of people from regions with a high level of Ukrainian national consciousness to those with a lower level of national consciousness. A number of students from eastern Ukraine studied in western Ukraine, but few people moved permanently from one region to another. The difficulty of finding out about positions in other cities and the scarcity of housing throughout Ukraine (and the former Soviet Union) still make it nearly impossible to do so.

Local newspaper distribution (or the lack thereof) became another means of segregating regions. Soviet central and Ukrainian republican newspapers were available throughout Ukraine (as are Moscow and St Petersburg newspapers today), but local newspapers were and still are unavailable in other Ukrainian cities. Today one cannot purchase local Kharkiv newspapers in Lviv, nor local Lviv newspapers in Kharkiv. This top-down newspaper distribution prevented the emergence of an information network, which would have informed the populace of events and opinions in other cities and would have created and spread 'complementary communications habits' (Deutsch 1953: 169) throughout Ukraine. The effect of these historical circumstances can be seen today in the continued lack of distribution of local newspapers beyond their cities of origin.

The Soviet government succeeded in isolating Ukraine from the rest of the world, making Russia and the Russian language the intermediary. Few Western books were translated into Ukrainian, and very few students learned non-Soviet languages. Before Gorbachev's glasnost, a disproportionately small number of scholars from Ukraine travelled to the West. This marginalisation transformed Ukraine into an 'imperial periphery' of the Soviet Union, a state itself on the periphery of the world economy and Western civilisation (Szporluk 1997: 86).

In the course of the twentieth century, Ukrainians came to dominate the cities demographically, and since 1 December 1991, this dominance has extended to the political realm. But Ukrainians never came to control the cities culturally (except in western Ukraine). Even with independence, it is unclear how the Ukrainian government can Ukrainianise the cities culturally without alienating the critically important Russian and Russified urban constituency in eastern, central and southern Ukraine.

The Soviet and Stalinist legacies have left the current Ukrainian government with serious constraints (Motyl 1997). In the 1920s and early 1930s, on the eve of the famine and the purges, it seemed that the

demographic Ukrainianisation of the cities would lead to cultural Ukrainianisation, then to a limited political Ukrainianisation. Instead, Stalin destroyed the urban cultural institutions that would have established a new integrated 'imagined' community for Ukrainians as well as a power base for the Ukrainian national communists.

The destruction of these institutions created a cultural and political vacuum for the current post-Soviet Ukrainian government, which has made its nation-building, state-building, and economy-building efforts very difficult, if not impossible, to implement. In the absence of an integrated 'imagined' community, the overlapping of these regional, political, linguistic and cultural differences in Ukraine in a period of economic downturn have created a very fragile political situation.

II

In 1991 and 1994, two public opinion polls probed these regional differences. The first surveyed post-secondary students and residents of Lviv, Donetsk and other cities. The second questioned the residents of only two cities: Lviv (1991 population: 802,000), the most important city in western Ukraine, and Donetsk (1991 population: 1,121,000), a major industrial centre in the Donbas in eastern Ukraine (Zastavnyi 1992: 194). These two cities are located at opposite ends of Ukraine, geographically as well as politically. These polls documented how the citizens of Ukraine are divided regionally between the Ukrainian-speakers in the west and the Russian-speakers in the east and south. Economic and political preferences in these regions nearly coincide with linguistic divisions.

At first analysis, the 1991 and 1994 polls document almost insurmountable regional differences. Upon closer examination, however, they reveal that citizens of Ukraine share a common desire for peace and stability which overshadows these regional differences.

These studies confirm the existence of three major identities in Ukraine, especially in eastern Ukraine. These include not only the Ukrainian and Russian identities, but also a transitional Soviet *ethnos*,

which really wants to turn the clock back, which really doesn't have a sense of loyalty either to a Russian state or to a Ukrainian state. It is an *ethnos* whose sense of belonging is linked to regional interests and in which any sense of attachment to . . . a nation state . . . is almost unobservable and unmeasurable. (Congress 1994: 6)

Fifty-three per cent of the Donetsk respondents to the 1994 survey identified themselves as Ukrainians on their old Soviet passports. But 45 per cent of the Donetsk residents felt that the 'Soviet' category, which did not appear as a choice in the old passports, best described them; only 4.9 per cent of the Lviv respondents agreed (Poll, 1994, Question 24). Although the overwhelming majority of those who identified themselves as 'Soviet'

employed Russian as their native language, they did not consider 'Soviet' to be a national identity. Their attitudes towards national identity were apathetic.

This attitude is reflected in the radically differing responses to the statement: 'It doesn't make any difference to me whether I am (nationality) or belong to some other group.' Nearly 80 per cent (78.4 per cent) of the responders from Donetsk 'fully agreed' or 'agreed'; only 37.4 per cent of Lviv residents did (Poll 1994: Question 152).

These figures are not surprising in the context of eastern Ukraine, which is highly Russified. With rare exceptions, all public discourse is conducted in Russian. People living in this environment perceive few, if any, national differences between themselves and their neighbours. Forty-eight per cent of the students at Donetsk State University (the highest percentage of the nine universities in the 1991 survey) claimed *never* to have witnessed any manifestation of inter-ethnic antagonism (only 33.8 per cent of the Lviv students made a similar claim).

Residents of eastern Ukraine are more likely than residents of western Ukraine to affirm that Ukraine and Russia are basically the same (Poll 1994: Questions 104–115). In response to the statement, 'Russia has always exploited us', only 11.9 per cent of the residents of Donetsk 'fully agreed' or 'agreed', whereas 65.9 per cent of the residents of Lviv did (Poll 1994: Question 116). Another question, 'Do you think that the Ukrainians have suffered more, less, or about the same amount as the Russians?', received almost the same pattern of responses.

According to the old Stalinist definition, a nation is 'a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture' (Stalin 1942: 12). Employing this definition, the 1994 survey probed people's attitudes in regard to Ukrainian identity and documented differences between the respondents in both Lviv and Donetsk. Although the majority of respondents in both cities considered a common language, culture, national traditions, spiritual life and a common will for a common political life to be 'very important' or 'somewhat important', the Lviv percentage was higher (Poll 1994: Questions 153–157). But a significant minority of the residents of Donetsk affirmed that a 'common political life' (21.7 per cent) and a common will for a 'common language' (26.3 per cent) were 'not at all important'.

Ukraine does not possess a common language. Even after independence the Russian language continues to dominate public life. Ukrainian clearly occupies a secondary sphere of influence, except in western Ukraine. Residents of this region are far more likely to speak Ukrainian at home or in public than residents of Donetsk. Surprisingly, in 1991, 72 per cent of the students at Donetsk State University replied that a proficient knowledge of the history, culture and language of the Ukrainian people was 'relevant to the fullest extent'. Students at institutions of higher learning in western Ukraine also placed a high priority on this issue (68 per cent to 82 per cent),

but the percentage favouring Ukrainian at Donetsk State University was the highest among post-secondary institutions in eastern Ukraine. Despite student support for Ukrainian studies, only 46.2 per cent of the Donetsk respondents preferred the employment of Ukrainian in lectures and in the administration of their university.

But good intentions do not (and did not!) reflect reality. Contradictions exist between the often vague desires for the public good and one's own personal commitment to that goal. In the same survey, students at Donetsk State revealed that *not one of them* preferred to use Ukrainian exclusively in their conversations with friends, in public or in state institutions (Poll 1991: Questions 28–31).

The public statements and the private realities of the respondents to the language question apparently signify that east Ukrainians prefer 'free choice' in terms of the Ukrainian language. Students do not oppose its expansion into eastern Ukraine, but do not desire to learn it themselves. Even if they did, the Ukrainian and Russian languages would be segregated by function. Ukrainian might be used only in the private sphere, while Russian continued to dominate the public sphere. 'Free choice' favours Russian over Ukrainian.

Just as the Ukrainian and Russian languages dominate in different regions in Ukraine, attitudes toward economic reform also vary by region. In 1994, 58.4 per cent of the Lviv respondents and 65.3 per cent of the Donetsk respondents specified 'economic problems' as the 'most important issue confronting Ukraine today' (Poll 1994: Questions 9–10). Although the residents of Lviv and Donetsk emphasised the importance of economic problems to almost the same degree, they differed in terms of their assessment of the economic downturn within the context of Ukrainian independence.

In 1994, 67.6 per cent of the Lviv respondents and 95.6 per cent of those from Donetsk viewed the economic changes that had taken place since the independence of Ukraine 'negatively' or 'very negatively' (Poll 1994: Question 4). Both sets of respondents perceived a strong possibility of a growth in economic inequality among Ukraine's citizens (46.5 per cent in Lviv; 77.4 per cent in Donetsk) and a rise in inflation (67.5 per cent in Lviv; 89.3 per cent in Donetsk) (Poll 1994: Table 5).

The differences between the responses from Lviv and Donetsk demonstrate that the residents of the first city are more tolerant of economic shortcomings in an independent Ukrainian state than are the inhabitants of the second. But neither set of residents have fully formulated ideas of what constitutes true economic reform, what market mechanisms are, and the consequences of their introduction. In any case, in 1991, only 15.4 per cent of the Donetsk students (as opposed to 30.4 per cent of the Lviv State University students) desired a complete privatisation of the land, a denationalisation of the economy and the introduction of private property (Poll 1991: Questions 86–94).

As the answers to these and other questions demonstrate, the Donetsk respondents placed a greater emphasis on economic issues, but less on economic reform (Poll 1994: Question 4). This seemingly contradictory attitude is not surprising, inasmuch as the mining and heavy industries located there constitute a prime target for restructuring and downsizing.

In reality and in the popular imagination, economic reform is closely connected with the high possibility of unemployment. In 1994, 52.5 per cent of the Lviv respondents and 31.5 per cent of the Donetsk respondents 'fully agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement: 'A good job is one that has a good income even if it means unemployment' (Poll 1994: Question 139). Despite the overall fear of unemployment, the majority of Lviv residents appear to be greater risk-takers than Donetsk residents.

Why do some regions of Ukraine contain more risk-takers than others? Of the many psychological, social, economic and political reasons for these differences, one reason stands out. Attitudes toward economic reform are closely tied to connections with the West.

Over the course of several decades, the Soviet government isolated Ukraine and its citizens from the West. In its place, the Soviet government increased Ukraine's communications networks with Russia and the other Soviet republics and attempted to assimilate Ukraine politically and economically. In doing so, the Soviet government narrowed the political and economic options in Ukraine. Even after five decades of Soviet rule, western Ukraine has maintained its regional distinctiveness from the rest of Ukraine. Still, the Soviet experience influenced this distinctiveness.

One 1994 survey question best demonstrated the end result of this decades-long socialisation process to the Soviet order, 'Do you ever listen to news programmes broadcast by Western radio?' Forty-nine per cent of the surveyed residents of Lviv claimed to listen; only 15.8 per cent of the Donetsk residents did (Poll 1994: Question 3).

Donetsk's grounding in the Donbas industrial and mining region (an area 'hotly contested between Ukraine and Russia'), its lack of exposure to the West and to Western ideas, and its long-term Sovietisation and Russification contributed to its contradictory views of Ukraine's identity and future (Wilson 1995). Despite Donetsk's long-term relationship with Russia, 41.5 per cent of the 1994 Donetsk respondents considered Ukraine a part of the West (52.8 per cent in Lviv). Only 31.9 per cent of those from Donetsk considered the new country a part of the East (only 11.5 per cent of the Lviv residents considered it so) (Poll 1994: Question 103).

Although 41.5 per cent of Donetsk residents considered Ukraine a part of the West, 57.0 per cent envisioned it joining a greater federation, including Russia (see Table 5). A minority (37.9 per cent) saw Ukraine remaining a totally independent country, joining the European Union, or becoming a part of a larger Central and East European federation.

Is this a contradiction? Not necessarily. Instead, it may reflect an imprecise and uncoordinated interpretation of the terms 'East' and 'West'.

Table 5. What will Ukraine's future orientation be? (%)

	Lviv	Donetsk
Ukraine will remain a totally independent country	62.2	13.3
Ukraine will become part of a greater federation, including Russia	5.4	57.0
Ukraine will become part of the European Community	25.2	18.0
Ukraine will become part of a greater federation, including Central and Eastern Europe	5.9	6.6
Ukraine will fragment into several separate countries	1.3	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Poll 1994: Question 61.

It may also reflect a 'realistic' assessment of the integrated Soviet economy of the past and Ukraine's dependence on it for energy supplies, raw materials and semi-finished and finished products.

The two polls confirm the existence of overlapping multiple national identities in Ukraine – Ukrainian, Russian and Soviet. In different regions these identities mould different attitudes and responses. In western Ukraine, the differences between Ukrainians and Russians are clear-cut; in eastern, central and southern Ukraine, the differences are ambiguous. In these three regions, it is difficult to evaluate to what extent Ukrainians have become Russified and to what extent they have become totally Sovietised (Aspaturian 1968). Usage of Ukrainian or Russian is not the sole determinant of national identity, but it predicts one's position with regard to economic reforms. Even in western Ukraine, Ukrainians possess some affinity with the values of the old regime.

In an imperfect manner the Soviet old regime provided full and secure employment, rising real incomes, socialised human services, heavily subsidised prices for essential goods and egalitarian wage policies (Cook 1993). In the post-Stalin period, a tacit agreement to trade political compliance for personal security emerged. The breakup of the USSR and the collapse of the post-Soviet Ukrainian economy have torn this contract to shreds and have brought people to the precipice of the unknown, which frightens the people and exacerbates heretofore regional, linguistic, economic and religious differences.

III

These differences tend to impede the establishment of an integrated 'imagined' community. Until the spring of 1995, the political leadership of the Crimea threatened to secede from Ukraine (Bremmer 1993; Solchanyk

1992a, 1992b; Wilson 1993, 1994a, 1994b). Other regions sought greater autonomy within Ukraine (Jung 1993).

Not surprisingly, the 1994 poll revealed ambivalent attitudes among the residents of Donetsk towards Ukraine. In response to the statement, 'My region would be better off if it were not a part of Ukraine', 21.8 per cent of the respondents in Donetsk agreed or fully agreed (only 7.4 per cent in Lviv did); 46 per cent of the Donetsk residents disagreed or fully disagreed with this statement; 30.8 per cent 'could not say exactly' (Poll 1994: Question 136).

In response to a second question, a variation of the first, the gap between responses in Lviv and Donetsk narrowed. Nearly 90 per cent of the respondents in Lviv and 70.9 per cent in Donetsk fully agreed or agreed with the statement, 'My region has a common destiny with the rest of Ukraine.' Only 3.7 per cent in Lviv and 5.9 per cent in Donetsk disagreed or fully disagreed (Poll 1994: Question 138). Although the interviewers never defined the term, 'common destiny', the respondents undoubtedly assumed that they shared a common fate with other regions in Ukraine. It is unclear whether or not the respondents interpreted the term 'common fate' to mean that the present-day borders of Ukraine should remain intact.

In spite of these ambiguous responses, one major conclusion emerges from these polls. Despite its problems, Ukraine is not on the verge of civil war.

The answers to one of the questions in the 1994 poll indicate an overwhelming support for social tolerance and political stability. One of the most important questions asked: 'It doesn't matter what language people speak as long as they support Ukraine. Do you agree or disagree?' (Poll 1994: Question 135). Residents of both Lviv and Donetsk answered this question in the affirmative, with almost the same level of support. Even though 'support for Ukraine' was not defined by either interviewers or interviewees, 82 per cent of the Lviv residents 'fully agreed' or 'agreed' with this question; as did 79.7 per cent of the Donetsk residents.

The responses to this question demonstrate that the people of Ukraine, one of the major killing fields of the twentieth century, prize peace, stability and order. Despite predictions espousing fragmentation, chaos and civil war after the collapse of the USSR, there has not been any mass bloodshed in Ukraine. Civil war has not erupted in Ukraine as it has in Georgia or Tadjikistan. The presidential-parliamentary constitutional crisis in Ukraine has not been resolved by tanks as occurred in Moscow in October 1993. Despite Russo-Ukrainian tensions over the Crimea and the Black Sea fleet, war has not broken out between these Slavic neighbours.

The heated 1994 presidential and parliamentary elections did not stir violence. With the replacement of Leonid Kravchuk by Leonid Kuchma in the summer of 1994, an orderly transition took place, making Ukraine one of the few former Soviet republics to witness such a smooth transfer of power.

Although an integrated Ukrainian state identity does not exist, a respect for Ukrainian boundaries does. Polls taken in 1991 and 1992 documented that 82 per cent of the people of Ukraine did not want any border changes, an attitude that conforms with the Ukrainian commitment to political stability. In May 1992, only 6 per cent of those surveyed thought that the borders should be re-examined; 12 per cent did not know or had no opinion (Martyniuk, 1992a; 1992b).

Ukrainians felt more strongly than other participants that the state's borders should not be changed; 85 per cent of all Ukrainians favoured keeping Ukraine intact; 74 per cent of all Russians felt the same. A province by province review of attitudes toward Ukraine's territorial integrity does not reveal significant deviations from Ukraine-wide patterns. Crimea, however, presents an exception.

Half of the Crimean respondents thought that Ukraine's borders should remain unchanged. While some respondents felt that Crimea should break away from Ukraine, only 13 per cent of the respondents said that the Crimea should be a part of Russia.

Conclusion

Despite their serious regional differences, exacerbated by differences in linguistic and economic preferences, the majority of citizens of Ukraine exhibit a loyalty to the Ukrainian state without feeling an allegiance to the Ukrainian nation. The majority in eastern and southern Ukraine want regional self-government and the Ukrainian government's acceptance of the cultural peculiarities of their regions. They wish for closer economic ties with Russia, some form of regional autonomy and curbs on the gradual Ukrainianisation of areas as envisaged by the 1989 law on language. These aspirations for greater autonomy do not imply secession.

Polls indicate that the citizens of Ukraine possess a common longing for peace and stability. This hope constitutes the core of the 'common will for a common political life'. As long as this common yearning for peace and stability remains, Ukraine will not disintegrate (for different views, see *Economist* 1994; Larrabee 1994; Rumer 1994).

Instead, Ukraine 'seems destined to muddle along'. In the absence of wars or an international economic depression, 'unspectacular progress with respect to state building, political institutionalization, and economic reform should translate into the halting introduction of the rule of law and a gradual improvement in the standard of living' (Motyl 1997: 444). Over the course of time, these slow but steady political and economic reforms will build on this common desire for peace and stability, overcome Ukraine's regional differences, and fashion a new post-Soviet community within the boundaries of the new Ukrainian state.

References

- Anderson, Benedict. 1992. *Imagined Communities*. 2nd edn. New York: Verso.
- Aspaturian, Vernon V. 1968. 'The non-Russian nationalities', in Allen Kassoff (ed.), *Prospects for Soviet Society*. New York: Praeger, 143–98.
- Bremmer, Ian. 1993. 'Ethnic issues in Crimea', *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, 18: 30 April.
- Bremmer, Ian. 1994. 'The politics of ethnicity: Russians in the new Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, 2: 261–83.
- Congress 1994. US Congress, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *The Situation in Ukraine (Spring 1994)*. Washington, DC.
- Cook, Linda J. 1993. *The Soviet Social Contract and Why It Failed: Welfare Policy and Workers' Politics from Brezhnev to Yeltsin*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Deutsch, Karl W. 1953. 'Growth of nations: some recurrent patterns of political and social integration', *World Politics* 5, 2: 168–95.
- Dzyuba, Ivan. 1974. *Internationalism or Russification? A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*. New York: Monad Press.
- Economist*, The 1994. 'Survey: Ukraine', *The Economist*, 7 May, pp. 3–18.
- Erlanger, Steven. 1994. 'Ukrainians elect a new parliament', *New York Times*, 12 June.
- Haas, Ernst B. 1997. *Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress, Vol. 1: The Rise and Fall of Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press.
- Hesli, Vicki L. 1995. 'Public support for the devolution of power in Ukraine: regional patterns', *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, 1: 91–121.
- Itogi. 1993. *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda*, Minneapolis: East View Publications, vol. VII.
- Jung, Monika. 1994. 'The Donbass Factor in the Ukrainian elections', *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, 12: 25 March.
- Larrabee, F. Stephen. 1994. 'Ukraine: Europe's next crisis?', *Arms Control Today*, July/August: 14–19.
- Liber, George O. 1992. *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923–1934*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Magocsi, Paul Robert. 1996. *A History of Ukraine*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Markus, Ustina. 1994. 'Regionalism in Ukraine', *Societies in Transition*, 15 November.
- Martyniuk, Jaroslaw. 1992a. 'Public opinion: Ukrainian independence and territorial integrity', *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, 13: 27 March.
- Martyniuk, Jaroslaw. 1992b. 'Roundup: attitude towards Ukraine's Borders', *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, 35: 4 September.
- Motyl, Alexander J. 1997. 'Structural constraints and starting points: the logic of systemic change in Ukraine and Russia', *Comparative Politics* 29, 4 (July): 433–47.
- Poll. 1991. An unpublished poll prepared by N. I. Chernysh, Iu. V. Vasylyeva, O. L. Holiaka and B. Iu. Poliarush for their monograph, *Natsional'na samosvidomist students'koi molodi (Sotsiologichnyi analiz)*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992.
- Poll. 1994. An unpublished poll prepared by the Ministry of Higher Education of Ukraine, the Institute for Historical Studies at Lviv State University, the Centre for Political Studies at Donetsk State University and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.
- Rumer, Eugene B. 1994. 'Eurasia Letter: will Ukraine return to Russia?', *Foreign Policy* 96: 129–44.
- Solchanyk, Roman. 1992a. 'The Crimean imbroglio: Kiev and Simferopol', *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, 33: 21 August.
- Solchanyk, Roman. 1992b. 'The Crimean imbroglio: Kiev and Moscow', *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, 40: 9 October.
- Solchanyk, Roman. 1994. 'The politics of state-building: centre-periphery relations in post-Soviet Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, 1: 47–68.

- Stalin, Joseph. 1942. *Marxism and the National Question: Selected Writings and Speeches*. New York: International Publishers.
- Subtelny, Orest. 1994. *Ukraine: A History*. 2nd edn. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Szporluk, Roman. 1997. 'Ukraine: from an imperial periphery to a sovereign state', *Daedalus* 126, 3: 85–119.
- Wilson, Andrew. 1993. 'Crimea's political cauldron', *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, 45: 12 November.
- Wilson, Andrew. 1994a. 'The elections in Crimea', *RFE/RL Research Report* 3, 25 (24 June).
- Wilson, Andrew. 1994b. *The Crimean Tatars*. London: International Alert.
- Wilson, Andrew. 1995. 'The Donbas between Ukraine and Russia: the use of history in political disputes', *Journal of Contemporary History* 30, 2 (April): 265–89.
- Wilson, Andrew. 1997. *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zastavnyi, F. D. 1993. *Naseleennia Ukrainy*. Lviv: Prosvita.