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Nationalism and International Politics: Identity and Sovereignty in the Russian–Ukrainian Conflict

PAUL D'ANIERI

International politics in the former Soviet Union are difficult to understand in terms of contemporary international relations theories, because these theories accord little role to nationalism, one of the most important factors in the region. This article uses a constructivist approach to examine the effects of national identity disputes on international politics. In the case of Ukraine and Russia, dispute over the two states' distinctiveness leads to a Ukrainian fixation on sovereignty, the main marker of identity in the international realm. The focus on sovereignty leads to policies unexplainable by conventional international relations theories.

The international politics of the former Soviet Union present a problem for theories of international relations. Scholars who hope to use international relations theories to explain relations among the successor states will be stumped, because extant theories cannot apprehend the central role played by the forces of nationalism and national identity. Nationalism and unresolved issues of national identity play a pivotal role in shaping the region's politics, yet such factors are given little attention in mainstream international relations theory. K.J. Holsti writes that 'No major approach to international relations theory has emphasized the prominence of nationalist behavior as an important characteristic of the contemporary international system.'[1] The question, therefore, is whether international politics in the former Soviet Union can be analyzed in a way that uses the insight of international relations theory without neglecting the context of nationalism and national identity.

The problem is evident in the Ukrainian–Russian relationship, which is arguably the most significant in the region and which has attracted the attention of many scholars concerned with general security problems in Europe. Many of the issues over which the two countries bicker go back to questions of national identity and to the thousand years of history they share, and much of literature on the region deals with these issues.[2] But mainstream international relations theories, be they liberal, realist, or

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Marxist, make little or no reference to issues of identity and nationalism, focusing instead on models of international interaction based on rational action and material structural factors, and exogenizing the formation of preferences and the actors' identities.

This neglect of nationalism has left scholars in a quandary. Those who study the international politics of the region are left in an uncomfortable if familiar no-man's land between 'area studies' and political science. How to talk about nationalism in a way relevant to other international relations scholars? How to discuss the international politics of the former Soviet Union without it? Social construction theories of international politics provide the necessary bridge between nationalism and international politics, but so far they have not been applied to questions of nationalism and national identity. While neither claiming that nationalism explains everything, nor endorsing all the uses to which social construction theory has been put, this essay will show how a constructivist perspective can shed light on the relationship between nationalism and international politics. In doing so, it will explore the roots of the Ukrainian–Russian conflict and the prospects for the future.

The argument that emerges from this approach connects history to contested national identities, contested national identities to disputes over state sovereignty, and disputes over sovereignty to conflict on the material issues – such as economic relations and arms control – with which international relations scholars concern themselves. The question of sovereignty links post-Soviet politics and international relations theory. Sovereignty undergirds the international system and our understanding of it, but because in most of the world sovereignty is unquestioned, it has ceased to be a focus of analysis. However, questions of sovereignty are a driving force in the politics of the former Soviet Union. Understanding why sovereignty is contested, and why it is so important, helps explain why the states in this region behave in ways that seem unexplainable in terms of conventional international relations theories.

This approach will help explain a pattern of behaviour that is puzzling from the perspectives of conventional international relations theory. Ukraine has pursued a strategy of national self-reliance in economic affairs, while simultaneously giving its nuclear weapons to its main adversary, Russia. Realism explains the economic policy but not the security policy. Liberalism explains the security policy but not the economic policy. The problem is that those theories focus on material incentives. In its pursuit of a national identity goal, the recognition of its separateness from Russia, Ukraine has in fact pursued a coherent policy across the two cases. National identity issues do not make material interests irrelevant, but they crucially influence the interpretation of those issues.

Briefly, national identities are in tension because both states seek to construct their identities out of the same historical material, most notably the legacy of Kievan Rus. This issue is exacerbated by diverging interpretations of later relations between Russia and Ukraine. Because sovereignty is the main marker of identity in the international system, and because Ukrainian identity is questioned by many, the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian sovereignty become vehicles for asserting that identity, and a certain amount of separateness of Ukraine's interests from Russia becomes necessary to Ukraine. At the same time, Ukraine's determination to be separate undermines Russia's conception of its identity. In the two cases examined here, material issues that seem relatively straightforward from the perspective of conventional theories became arenas of conflict because of their implications for sovereignty and identity. In sum, the Russian–Ukrainian conflict is driven not simply by conflict of interest, but by conflict of identity.

The article begins with a brief analysis of international relations theory, showing why it is unable to address the problems of nationalism and national identity. A review of social construction theory shows how it endogenizes many of the crucial issues that have been 'bracketed' by conventional approaches. The following section develops an approach to nationalism and international politics based on a constructivist understanding of Russian–Ukrainian relations. This approach is then used to explain the development of the Ukrainian–Russian relationship before and after 1991, by tracing the causes and the effects of the emphasis on sovereignty. The goal of the empirical sections is to show specifically how national identity issues with deep historical roots affect policy choices today.

Nationalism and International Relations Theory

The problems involved in understanding the impact of nationalism and national identity on international politics are illustrated by Stephen Van Evera, who developed a list of 21 possible hypotheses linking nationalism and war.[3] The length of Van Evera's list indicates the diffuseness of the effects of nationalism, but the exclusive focus on war as the result of nationalism is perhaps too narrow. The effects of nationalism on economic relations, and on conflict short of war, receive even less attention than its effects on war. In the former Soviet Union (and much of the rest of the world) it seems reasonable to believe that nationalism and national identity have important effects on international politics apart from their role as causes of war.

The dominant approaches in international relations theory, Neorealism

and Neoliberal Institutionalism, rest on a common set of assumptions: the international situation is anarchical, states have to be concerned for their security, and states generally react to these constraints as unitary rational actors. Despite their differences, the two schools of thought both embrace rational choice analysis, explaining state behaviour as the rational response to given conditions. Both assume certain kinds of fixed state interests, rather than making them an object of analysis. Both, in their recent incarnations, are largely 'structural' in nature, assuming that the constraints created by international politics leave little room for domestic choice. Finally, their definition of 'structure' is strongly materialistic.[4] It is based on concrete factors such as the distribution of weapons and of wealth, rather than on cultural, ideological, or intellectual factors. Similarly, the proliferation of domestic politics approaches to international politics has bypassed the question of nationalism, focusing instead on such staples of political science research as the analysis of public opinion and interest groups.[5]

Social Construction and National Identity in International Politics

One way to incorporate nationalism and national identity in international relations theory is through social construction theory.[6] While familiar to students of nationalism,[7] social constructivism is a newcomer to international relations theory. Developed by Alexander Wendt and others, social constructivist approaches to international politics challenge the notion that material structure, notably international anarchy and the balance of power, determine the nature of international political relationships. Rationalist accounts assume the identities and interests of the actors, and then try to infer behaviour. Social construction theory is premised on the notion that identities and interests are not 'given' and that they need to be explained prior to an examination of behaviour. From the constructivist perspective, the development of social structures and identities is contingent, such that a 'history of ideas' is needed to explain why a particular structure or identity developed. In this case, national and state identities are constructed, and we need to understand the history of that construction to understand how different actors relate to each other today.[8]

Once constituted, however, security identities tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies, for two reasons. First, once defined, the social system confronts its participants as an objective fact – it is not easily changed in the short term. Second, the very nature of identity implies some interest in maintaining stability, implying a certain inertia. The early years of a new relationship are therefore formative, for once cast, the relationship may be difficult to alter. For this reason, the early years of Ukrainian and Russian statehood are critical.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that in the constructivist approach, the structure and its agents mutually constitute one another through continuous interaction. The actions that states take are not independent of peoples' descriptions of the states, what Ian Hacking calls 'the looping effect of human kinds'.[9] Actors are constrained by structure, but they do have choices, and over time, the choices they make can redefine the structure or reinforce it. Mutual constitution of actors and the international situation is especially important in considering nationalism. Just as it is possible for nationalism to affect international politics, it is possible for international politics to affect the level and content of nationalism in individual states, altering the context of future interaction. In other words, the 'causal arrow' between nationalism and international politics points in both directions. Russian–Ukrainian relations are not only affected by nationalism, but those relations, if acrimonious, can exacerbate nationalism, in a reinforcing cycle.[10] Indeed, leaders' anticipation of the domestic effects on national identity may be an important motivation for certain foreign policies.

Unlike structural-rational approaches, social construction approaches focus on precisely the sorts of problems that national identity raises in international politics.[11] Most important, the identity of the actors becomes a question rather than an assumption. From this perspective, national identity, not just nationalism, becomes crucial to international politics. It is not only the strength of nationalism, but the *content* of national identity, that influences international relationships.[12] In this case, it is frequently repeated that Russia cannot accept Ukrainian independence, but it is seldom discussed why this is so, or why the Polish–Ukrainian relationship, historically just as bitter as that between Russia and Ukraine, has become so friendly. The root is not simply Russian and Ukrainian nationalism, but rather national identity, and in particular a conflict between a Russian historical myth in which medieval Kiev is the cradle of Russian civilization, and a Ukrainian historical myth which flatly contradicts the Russian one. To the extent that Russian and Ukrainian national identities are based on these contradictory myths, they constitute a zero-sum game. In international politics, this conflict is manifested in hyper-sensitivity about sovereignty, which is the main marker of identity in the international realm. To a large extent conflicts of interest between the two states are rooted in conflict over identity.

In a constructivist approach, constraints on state behaviour are viewed as constructed historically through practice, not just simply by current material factors of power. Thus historical interaction also becomes a question. How have national identities developed historically, and with what content has history imbued them? This approach takes us beyond the

simple assumption that nationalism leads to war, and provides us with a more nuanced look at its effects on international politics. We must also ask whether current practice is reinforcing or undermining the conceptions that have previously developed. Together, these questions address the main insight of social construction theory, that agents and structure mutually define each other. The legacy of interaction constrains what agents can do, but the behaviour of those agents can redefine the structure over time.

From this perspective, two questions arise specific to the issue of nationalism in Russian–Ukrainian relations. First, to what extent did the two nations' historical interaction prior to 1991 construct a relationship that was already one of conflicting interests by the time Ukraine became independent? Second, to what extent have practices served to reinforce rather than redefine the existing identities? These two questions will form the main body of this essay. The conclusion will address the possibility for a redefinition of Russian and Ukrainian security identities in the future and assess the theoretical implications of this case and the constructivist approach.

In sum, constructivist approaches examine how actor identities and interests are determined by social interaction, rather than by material constraints, as assumed by mainstream international relations theories. In this respect, constructivist approaches present themselves as competing explanations. In another respect, however, they are complementary explanations, offering a means of explaining what rationalist-structural theories tend to take for granted: the identity of the actors and their preferences. The argument is not that 'identity' explains more than 'interest', but that identity is an important determinant of interest, and that material definitions of interest such as those predominant in contemporary international relations theory are too narrow to grasp the impact of nationalism. A growing number of scholars point out the complementary roles to be played by rationalist and interpretive approaches, an approach supported by this analysis.[13]

This article does not assert that nationalism alone can explain the Ukrainian–Russian conflict, nor does it posit a theory of nationalism and international politics. The goal, which is based on the premise that nationalism is properly a subject of international relations theory, is more limited: to develop an explanation of the role of national identity issues in Russian–Ukrainian relations that considers both the forces of nationalism and the constraints of the international realm. The central claim is that we cannot understand the conflict over basic material issues such as economic relations and nuclear disarmament without studying the national identity concerns raised by those issues.

History and Identity of Ukraine and Russia: One People or Two?

Are Russia and Ukraine older and younger brother, as in the Russian nationalist tradition? Are they fraternal twins, separated sometime after birth, but miraculously reunited, as in the Soviet tradition? Or are they unrelated neighbours, whose superficial similarities hide their fundamental difference, as Ukrainian nationalists assert? History seems to leave Russian and Ukrainian state identities in a contested and hence antagonistic relationship.

For many people today (not only in Russia), it is difficult to conceive of Ukrainians as a distinct people and of Ukraine as a distinct society. Thus Mark von Hagen recently spurred a lively debate in the pages of *Slavic Review* by asking 'Does Ukraine Have a History?'[14] For the last three centuries, most of Ukraine has been part of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. The languages are not dissimilar, and the status of Ukrainian as a 'separate language' or a 'dialect of Russian' is contested, despite agreement among western linguists that such distinctions are arbitrary. Most important perhaps, Russians see Kiev as the cradle of their civilization. Many Ukrainians resent this view, and perceive their history as that of a separate people repeatedly subjugated and exploited by Russia and Poland.

For our purposes, the important point is that the view of Ukraine and Ukrainians as indistinct from Russia and Russians has turned the cultural, historical, and linguistic similarities between the two states from potential grounds for cooperation to sources of conflict. Historical interaction tends to make close ties between the states seem natural to Russia, but threatening to many Ukrainian citizens and elites (not all, but enough to make close ties with Russia controversial). Because questioning Ukraine's distinctiveness calls into question its right to sovereignty, the Ukrainian state as well as Ukrainian nationalists react by going out of their way to assert their distinctiveness, even when material interests might dictate a joint approach to certain issues. The problem is symbolized by the name 'Ukraine' which in both Russia and Ukrainian means 'on the border' but leaves crucially unclear on which side of the Russian border Ukraine lies. An overview of some of the most important historical disputes helps explain the roots of contemporary identity disputes.

Russia and Ukraine both trace their origins to the state of Kievan Rus, which emerged on the banks of the Dnieper River in the tenth century and adopted Christianity and fell to internal division and Mongol attacks in the thirteenth century.[15] There remain significant differences in interpreting the legacy of Kievan Rus.[16] The traditional Russian interpretation is that the civilization that began in Kiev was transferred, via Vladimir, to Moscow, such that modern Russia is the heir to Kievan Rus, and that Ukraine is part

of Russia. Ukrainian nationalists, however, contend that the Kievan torch was passed via Volhynia and Galicia to modern Ukraine, and that modern Russia originated separately in Muscovy.

> This controversy over the question of who are the legitimate heirs to the Kievan tradition – the Russians or the Ukrainians – which has continued to the present day, has had a profound impact on the development of the cultural perception, historical awareness, modern national consciousness, and the national mythology of the intelligentsias and even common people of the two sides involved.[17]

The tracing of modern Russia's roots to Kiev helps explain why mainstream Russian elites feel so strongly that Ukraine is an important part of Russia, and that Russia without Ukraine is a country shorn of its roots.[18] Nikolai Travkin, founder of the Democratic Party of Russia, states:

> For Russia and Ukraine alike, Kiev is our common home, the source of our common language, common religion, and common culture. We share a common value system. Every Russian understands these fundamental facts. No matter how history proceeds – how presidents and parliaments behave – a Ukrainian will always be a Russian's closest friend. In the development of Russia's foreign policy, then, these cultural considerations must stand on an equal footing with economic principles.[19]

While Russia and Ukraine both trace their origins to Kievan Rus, significant differences emerged in later development. After the collapse of Kievan Rus and the retreat of the Mongols, Muscovy slowly emerged as the power centre of Russia, and under the Tsars became one of the most powerful and autocratic states in the world. Meanwhile Ukraine was unable to establish its independence as others fought over its territory.

In the mid-seventeenth century the Ukrainian Cossacks, under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, attempted to repel the Russians and Poles and create an independent state. In order to protect the new state from Poland, however, Khmelnytsky sought an alliance with the Russian Tsar in the Treaty of Pereiaslav (1654). The result was not the expulsion of the Poles from western Ukraine, but the subjugation of the nascent Ukrainian state to the Russian Tsar, who interpreted the treaty as putting Ukraine under his authority. Ukraine remained divided between Russia and Poland, and the eastern portion was increasingly integrated into the Russian empire politically, economically and culturally.

The Treaty of Pereiaslav has become an important symbol in Ukrainian attitudes towards treaties with Moscow today.[20] While Russia regarded the treaty as a voluntary decision by Ukraine to (re-)join Russia, Ukrainian

nationalists then and since have argued that Russia cynically used a military alliance to conquer Ukraine. The Ukrainian historian Mikhailo Hrushevsky argued:

> What [the Ukrainians] wanted was aid in their struggle for independence from Poland and freedom from the landlords, but Muscovy appeared to look upon Ukraine as a new territorial acquisition for herself, over which she gained complete control.[21]

Whose interpretation is correct is impossible to say.[22] The more important point is that Ukrainians today view those events as reason to be very cautious about signing any sort of agreement with Russia.[23] Despite the fact that the events in question were three centuries ago, they are constantly mentioned in Ukrainian discussions of relations with Russia. At the same time, Russians view 1654 as the date of the 'reunification' of Russia with Ukraine, the importance of which was marked by Khrushchev in his transfer of the Crimea to Ukraine on the tricentennial anniversary of Pereiaslav in 1954.

During the civil war that followed World War I, the Bolsheviks promised Ukraine autonomy in order to gain support there. When the war with Poland ended, there were two treaties, one between Poland and Soviet Russia and another between Poland and the Ukrainian SSR.[24] The Soviet Constitution adopted in December of 1922 'took the form of a treaty among the several states', thus seemingly confirming Ukrainian sovereignty.[25] In fact, the independence of the Ukrainian government was steadily eroded during the centralization and collectivization in the late 1920s, and then eliminated altogether. As with the Treaty of Pereiaslav, the Union Treaty of 1922 is viewed by many Ukrainians today as a reason to be leery of treaties with Russia even when Ukrainian sovereignty seems guaranteed.[26]

Soviet rule added to the legacy of acrimony between Ukraine and Russia. Stalin's brutal policy towards Ukraine was partially responsible for many Ukrainians greeting the German army as a liberator in the summer of 1940 – Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi of L'viv stated: 'We greet the victorious German Army as a deliverer from the enemy.'[27] While two million Ukrainians fought in the Red Army in World War II, another 220,000 fought with the Germans.[28] Following the defeat of Germany, western Ukrainian nationalists continued to fight a guerrilla war for independence, and were not completely suppressed until the early 1950s.[29] Many veterans of this war are prominent in the Ukrainian nationalist movement today.

This contested history, characterized both by separateness and by togetherness, has left two key questions about identity and interest for the post-independent era; and to that extent the new era has not begun with a 'clean slate'. First, there is an unresolved ethnographic/national identity

question: are Ukrainians and Russians one people or two? Historical and linguistic connections – and the dual tracing of origins to Kievan Rus – leave this question open for many – in Ukraine as well as in Russia. More significantly, Ukraine is internally divided in terms of national identity, with some identifying with Ukraine, some with Russia, some with both, and still others with the Soviet Union. Because Ukrainian identity is fundamentally questioned by many, the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian sovereignty become vehicles for asserting that identity, and a certain amount of separateness of Ukraine's state interests from Russia is necessary for that assertion.[30] Because Ukraine is seen by some as indistinct from Russia, it is necessary to find interests of Ukraine that are distinct from those of Russia.

Russia's national identity is also at stake, as Vladimir Lukin points out: 'The starting point for any discussion about the interests of Russia has to be a discussion about Russia itself. What kind of country are we talking about – territorially, politically, ideologically?'[31] Similarly, Sergei Stankevich asserts that 'the practice of our foreign policy...will help Russia become Russia.'[32] Every nationality is based on a myth of origin, and for centuries Russia and Russians have traced their origins to Kievan Rus. If Kievan Rus is to be the foundation of the Ukrainian, rather than the Russian nation-state, then the Russian nation-state has lost an important part of its presumed historical foundation. If nations are 'imagined communities' constructed upon a particular interpretation of a convoluted past, Russia and Ukraine find themselves trying to use the same historical building materials to build their national and state identities. In these terms, conflict is inevitable. The issue is particularly important for states in the process of state-building, where statehood is still ill-defined and civic nationalism is weak. Because assertion of Ukrainian identity domestically would lead to unrest in the ethnically divided state, the government has de-emphasized the issue domestically and compensated in the more favourable international arena.

Second, the question of future relations between the two states has been complicated by the 'lessons' taken from past interactions. Can Ukraine trust Russia? Some Ukrainians cite the long history of dominance as evidence that Russia simply cannot tolerate an independent Ukraine, and therefore is a serious threat. For them, the Pereiaslav agreement and the 1922 Union Treaty seem particularly relevant to future cooperation. Russians tend to view those same events as natural and voluntary decisions by Ukraine to pursue unity with Russia. Neither of these opinions is unanimous, but their existence demonstrates the potential for a troubled history to colour perceptions of current events.

The crucial question in assessing this history is whether it so tainted Russian–Ukrainian relations that it was inevitable that after independence the two states should define their security interests as competing. Clearly

much of the raw material for conflict existed: disputes over state identities, resentment in Ukraine over Russian domination, and injured pride in Russia over its fall in international prestige. Thus, at the time of independence, a committed group of Ukrainian nationalists was eager to move Ukraine away from Russia and already defined Russia as Ukraine's primary security threat, while in Russia resentment over Ukraine's secession and the need to force Ukraine to rejoin Russia were voiced immediately.

At the same time, however, it is important to note the substantial opposition in Ukraine to an anti-Russian policy. Andrew Wilson establishes in impressive detail how extreme Ukrainian nationalism is in fact 'a minority faith':[33]

> Ukraine's large Russian community...and a substantial number of ethnic Ukrainians do not share the nationalists' vision, and see Ukraine and Russia as intimately linked by a common history of mutual interchange as much as by colonial dependency. Moreover...the latter point of view is as much a part of the Ukrainian intellectual tradition as nationalism, with a pedigree stretching back to Gogol, Kostamarov, and beyond.[34]

It appears that a substantial portion of Ukrainian opinion supported Leonid Kravchuk's bid for independence, while envisioning a continuing close and friendly relationship with Russia. This strain of thought indicates that the togetherness of the past, as well as the conflict, has informed current identities. Even after Ukraine's declaration of 'sovereignty' within the Soviet Union in 1990, Dmytro Pavlychko, head of the Taras Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Society and later a prominent nationalist spokesman on foreign affairs in the parliament, said that 'an immediate secession from the Soviet Union is, first of all, impossible...We are not yet mature enough as a people for complete independence. There are many Russified Ukrainians; there are many who will view such a step negatively.'[35] Thus despite the legacies of the past, most Ukrainians have not become 'anti-Russian'. Since independence, eastern Ukrainian commercial interests, among others, have argued that, like it or not, the economic fate of the two states was bound together. Moreover, in each of Ukraine's two presidential elections, the 'nationalist' candidate has lost to one promoting closer ties with Russia.[36] Similarly, the initial response from the Yeltsin administration to Ukraine's overwhelming referendum vote for independence was quite positive. Russian reformers seemed to understand that attempting to reintegrate Ukraine was incompatible with trying to build a 'normal' Russian state.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that Ukraine's historical relations with Poland were every bit as bitter as with Russia. Indeed, the Ukrainian Cossack leader Khmelnytsky signed the treaty of Pereiaslav with Russia

because it was regarded as a lesser threat than Poland. In Galicia Ukrainians faced denial of their national identity and repression of national activity as recently as 1939, and many Poles consider Ukrainian Galicia to be Polish territory, for it had been under Polish control for centuries until the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact.[37] Yet since 1991, Polish–Ukrainian relations have been cordial, and the whole range of potential territorial issues and historical legacies have been downplayed.[38] There are obvious geopolitical reasons why Ukraine's relations with Poland have been so different than those with Russia, but the ability to bury the historical animosities between Poland and Ukraine demonstrates what is possible and stands in stark contrast to the ongoing return to historical argument between Ukraine and Russia, whether the issue be borders, language rights, or the status of Crimea.

Constructing Conflict 1991–97

While an amicable Ukrainian–Russian relationship seemed possible in 1991, a certain amount of conflict has become institutionalized by 1997. The two states appear doomed to clash over the degree of economic and political integration in the region, the role of Russia as a regional hegemon, and the ability of Ukraine to conduct an independent foreign policy. The purpose of this section is to identify the specific events and policies that have served to reinforce, rather than undermine, the salience of the identity issues that remain from the past, and thus to cause the two states to define their interests as conflicting.

Ukraine's desire to assert a separate identity from Russia led to a number of specific policies that convinced many Russians that Ukraine desired not only to be independent, but to challenge Russia's dominant role in the region. This helped Russia shift from 'fraternal relations' to power politics. On the other side, Russia's ambivalence about Ukrainian independence, and its efforts to preserve regional integration convinced many Ukrainians that Russia sought an end to Ukrainian independence. These two tendencies have interacted to produce a series of policies which reinforced one another in a way that turned the original fears of both sides into self-fulfilling prophecies. At the beginning of this process, there was little reason for the two states to regard each other as security threats, but by the end, no other evaluation was possible.

Here we focus on two areas where presumably common interests instead became conflicting interests. First, the two countries are so highly interdependent in trade that cooperation in this sphere is essential. Not only might we expect a high degree of cooperation to prevent economic collapse, but we might expect this cooperation to 'spill over' into other areas of the

relationship. In the event, trade has become an area of conflict. Second, in the case of nuclear weapons, a potentially deadly quarrel was resolved, but the process of resolution poisoned the relationship, perhaps critically. It needs to be emphasized that nationalism was not necessarily the only driving force behind these issues – material issues were also at stake. But in both cases, the lingering issues of national identity – particularly on the Ukrainian side – coloured the debate in decisive ways, and thus became entrenched in the post-Soviet era.

Trade Ties

During the imperial and Soviet eras, the Russian and Ukrainian economies became tightly intertwined. Russia and Ukraine are each other's largest trading partners. For many in both states (as well as for most western economists) this creates a clear and objective mutual interest in the preservation of trade ties. The law of comparative advantage as well as the costs of disrupting trade flows dictate that both states have an immense stake in preserving existing trade ties in the short term, even if they need to be adjusted in the long term due to new conditions. Even this seemingly objective reality is controversial, however, and the controversy demonstrates how important the meaning attributed to a single set of conditions can vary, and how drastic the implications of varied meanings are. Rather than focusing on the common interest in trade ties, it is equally possible to focus on the power implications of trade ties (or on the national identity implications), which imply not only separate but contradictory interests.

Whether economic interdependence is a reason to cooperate or one more lever in the game of power politics depends largely on whether the overall security interests of the two countries are determined to be coincident or contradictory. For many Ukrainians, the legacy of the past is not simply one of economic interdependence that must be dealt with, but of economic exploitation that must be destroyed, and of homogenization that must be reversed.[39] For example, Leonid Kuchma's 1993 signing of an economic union was attacked in western Ukraine, where there were calls for strikes and for Kuchma's resignation. A L'viv newspaper headlined 'The agreement crucifies Ukraine and she will never be resurrected,' and the author, a local government official, asserted that 'In the conditions of integrated interdependence, such coordinating structures will deprive Ukraine of its economic freedom...Thus a deprivation of economic freedom will lead to a deprivation of political freedom.'[40] For them, the driving impetus towards independence was the notion that Ukraine was being exploited by Russia and would be better off without it (which helps explain why so many ethnic Russians in Ukraine voted for independence and why so many have reconsidered independence now that hopes of prosperity have

been dashed). For those Russian leaders who seek to bring Ukraine back into the fold, interdependence is a means to that end.[41] Thus what seems an obviously cooperative relationship in light of economic theory and the political theory of interdependence is turned into an arena of conflict as a result of underlying disputes over national identity.

Following the Ukrainian declaration of independence, there was great uncertainty regarding relations between Ukraine and Russia, as there was among all the former Soviet republics. In the short term, establishing a separate Ukrainian economy was not on the government's agenda. Indeed, the opposite was true, as Ukraine and Russia undertook to assure each other that previous arrangements would continue to operate until some new ones could be made. In October 1991, two months prior to Ukraine's independence referendum, Kravchuk stated: 'For us, the Union with Russia is a cornerstone of Ukraine's policy...Contacts with Russia are our long-term and far-sighted principal policy. This is our history, our roots, and we have to take this into account.'[42] He repeated this view in his first address to the parliament following the independence referendum and his election as president, naming 'integration of Ukraine's economy with the economy of the former union states' as one of 'our first steps in the area of economics'.[43] Thus the original plan for fuel deliveries for 1992 was simply to continue them at their 1991 levels, and the Commonwealth treaty promised coordinated economic policies, even if it created no real mechanism for reaching or implementing such policies.

These intentions changed completely in early 1992. While Russia was advocating an economic union in late 1991, it was also planning to adopt an economic reform package, which Ukraine was not ready to do. Ukraine acknowledged the need to reform to some extent, and the need to coordinate polices, but was entirely unprepared. The links between the economies, however, meant that whether Ukraine was ready or not, it would have to deal with Russia's liberalization. When Russia proceeded to free prices at the beginning of January 1992, neighbouring economies were thrown into turmoil. Goods, and food in particular, flowed from the other republics to Russia, where prices were now higher. Two broad problems were created, one in trade and one in currency. First, higher prices in Russia created a flight of goods from Ukraine to Russia, and corresponding shortages and price rises in Ukraine. Second, the higher prices in Ukraine created a shortage of currency.[44] Ukrainian First Deputy Prime Minister Konstantin Masik complained:

> Our view was not taken into account even though a majority of republics supported us. Representatives of Russia were firm in the decision to introduce free prices as of January 2, giving us no time to

> resolve the numerous problems...In 24 hours we have to work out for the president, the Supreme Soviet and the Government of the Ukraine methods to protect the population.[45]

The liberalization of prices created a second problem, in monetary liquidity. With the drastic increase in prices, there was no longer enough currency in many of the economies to allow trade. While Ukraine could issue ruble credits on paper to industries, the only facilities to actually print more currency were in Russia. Having followed Russia (more or less) in price liberalization, the other economies found themselves in a massive currency shortage. Russia increased its share of currency emissions from 2/3 under the Soviet Union to 80 per cent in 1992. Because sufficient currency was not forthcoming, Ukraine began to introduce 'coupons' in January 1992.[46]

From the perspective of economic reform, Russia may have been doing the other republics a favour by forcing them to embark on a price liberalization that most other leaders did not have the desire or domestic strength to implement on their own. To many in Ukraine, however, these measures demonstrated that Ukraine's deep interdependence with Russia meant that Ukraine was not in fact free to do what it pleased in its domestic economy. It could not really choose its own pace of reform, and could not choose when to establish its own currency. Having established Ukrainian sovereignty at the beginning of December, Ukraine's leaders were dismayed to find out at the end of the month how little *de jure* sovereignty really amounted to in conditions of deep interdependence. Aleksandr Yemelyanov, first deputy chairman of the Government Economic Council of Ukraine lamented:

> 'Welcoming the Minsk accords, [officially dissolving the Soviet Union and forming the CIS] we thought we did away with the dictate of the centre. We did do away with administrative dictate, but the economic one remained. It is in the hands of those who own the money-printing machine.'[47]

The desire to establish economic autonomy commensurate with Ukraine's juridical sovereignty drove Ukrainian policy in the following months. Kravchuk's sanguine attitude about economic relations with Russia had vanished by the end of January, 1992: 'Our dependence on Russia is dependence on the ruble...The ruble zone...forces us to move away from Russia.'[48] Establishing the separateness of the Ukrainian economy became a goal in itself.

In March 1992, the Verkhovna Rada adopted a measure on 'Fundamentals of National Economic Policy'. The policy provided for little domestic reform and focused instead on establishing economic

independence from Russia, including a plan for a separate currency and a rapid departure from the ruble zone, barriers on imports from Russia, and a refocus of exports towards western markets.[49]

The economic plan focused on independence rather than reform, and was based on the contention that:

> at a time when Ukraine has become an independent state and the Union centre has ceased to exist, our economy continues to be managed from afar...In practice Ukraine has not taken, indeed has not been able to take, any serious independent decisions on the economy...Ukraine's complete dependence on the existing integration in the two states' economies, Russia's usurpation of functions bequeathed by Union financial, banking, and other systems, and its monopoly on ruble printing facilities across the whole ruble area – all of these things place our economy in a very difficult position, which is growing steadily worse.[50]

The program contained four main policies, which together constituted a recipe for economic isolation:[51] First, it called for the establishment of a Ukrainian currency, a policy motivated both by the currency shortages, and by the symbolic value of a Ukrainian currency. Second, it called for a restriction on imports from Russia, in order to reduce Ukraine's vulnerability. Third, it called for a reorientation of exports to other, less imposing states of the FSU and the West. Fourth, it envisioned using Ukraine's economic power to negotiate favourable deals where possible, by taking advantage of its monopoly position on certain goods and the large amount of transit through Ukraine.

While economic tension might have been reduced by greater Russian tact, it was clearly exacerbated by subsequent Ukrainian policy. By severing the two highly interdependent economies, Ukrainian policy inflicted hardship on large numbers of citizens on both sides of the border, strengthening those in both countries who saw Ukrainian independence as unacceptable. This reaction in turn spurred Ukrainian nationalists to even more strident emphasis on Ukrainian independence and sovereignty.

In this way, what appeared to be a naturally cooperative economic relationship became a self-reinforcing conflict. The two states started in December 1991 with what can be considered a single economy, and thus joint interests. Within six months, however, the economies had been largely separated for the purposes of asserting national distinctiveness. Once the economies were separated, a whole series of differences over economic policies from the mundane (such as customs rules) to the profound (such as energy supplies and transport) have lent substance to the original notion that the two states' interests did not coincide.

National identity was not the only factor driving Ukraine's economic isolation. Trade barriers and hyperinflation allowed privileged elites to reap immense profits through rent-seeking activities. Pandering to Ukrainian nationalism allowed Kravchuk and his supporters to remain in power, at least for a while. But if separation were not popular among voters as well as elites, it would not have been possible. In fact, in several cases both Kravchuk and Kuchma have tried to moderate the policy and found such changes politically untenable. Even if the primary motivation of the elites was cynical, the importance of national idenity was a circumstance within which they worked, not something they created.

Ukraine's economic autonomy program was aimed much more at asserting sovereignty than at improving the economy, which indicates why standard liberal interdependence theory cannot explain this case. In fact the policy cost Ukrainians dearly. Even in the official justifications, the rationale was not that Ukraine's economy would improve, but that Ukraine's economy would be separate, and would be administered only by Ukrainian authorities. If Ukraine's sovereignty were not so new – and under question from Russia – such policies would not be necessary. The need to establish a separate identity played a fundamental role here, overwhelming the material interest in continued cooperation.

Ukrainian Nuclear Disarmament

The process by which Ukraine agreed to surrender its nuclear weapons led to the entrenchment of the identity conflict, demonstrating how, in the Ukrainian–Russian relationship, things go wrong even when they go right. Ukraine inherited an immense nuclear arsenal from the Soviet Union, and many in the region and elsewhere feared a nuclear clash, or leakage of nuclear materials from allegedly inept Ukrainian control. Ukraine pledged before independence to disarm unilaterally, and has finally finished the process. In the mean time, however, Russian (and American) policy on Ukraine's weapons convinced Ukraine of its insecurity and reinforced its resentment at its second-class status, while Ukrainian haggling over the terms of disarmament helped turn the focus of the relationship to the sphere of military competition.

Ukraine did not initially focus on its military security in its policy on the nuclear weapons. Had it done so, it probably would not have promised to give them up in the first place. From a strictly military strategic standpoint, the weapons could conceivably guarantee Ukraine's security much the way Britain's or France's weapons do. The problems in converting the Soviet arsenal into a usable asset for the Ukrainian military would be immense, but were not beyond Ukraine's technical ability.[52] And even in the short run, possession of the weapons would force Russia and the rest of the world to

take Ukraine seriously. The fact that Ukraine disregarded this aspect of the weapons suggests that Ukraine did not initially view its relationship with Russia in terms of military competition.

In this respect, Ukrainian nuclear disarmament highlights the problems with applying conventional international relations theories to the former Soviet Union. Prominent theorists such as Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, and Barry Posen all contended that the nuclear weapons guaranteed Ukraine's security, and that Ukraine should keep them.[53] Posen even asserts that nuclear deterrence will help ameliorate the negative effects of nationalism in the relationship. From this perspective, it is impossible to explain why Ukraine surrendered the weapons. To understand the acrimonious debate and the final resolution, we must instead focus on the identity implications of the issue, which were manifested as a struggle over the recognition of Ukraine's sovereignty.

Ukraine's 1990 declaration of sovereignty took care to assert Ukraine's desire to become a neutral non-nuclear state, an intention repeated when Ukraine declared independence in the summer of 1991. At this point, a series of misunderstandings began which obscured this point for the next two and a half years. The most fundamental misunderstanding was that in asserting its desire to be a non-nuclear state, Ukraine had not, in its view, made a unilateral commitment, or a commitment binding on it with the force of a treaty. Rather it was a statement of an intention, the details of which would be worked out later. As Ukraine later sought compensation and security guarantees, such requests were seen in Russia and the West as backtracking on a prior obligation, a view which only caused frustration in Ukraine.

Between 1991 and the Trilateral Agreement of January 1994 which finally resolved the issue, Ukraine's fixation on asserting its sovereignty drove the negotiations.[54] First, Ukraine consistently battled the notion that Russia was the sole legal successor to the Soviet Union. It therefore claimed a share of all Soviet assets, including embassies abroad and military forces and equipment on Ukrainian territory. Nuclear forces, in Ukraine's view, fell in this category, and though it intended to surrender the weapons, it insisted on its rights until that point. Initially, that meant insisting that Ukraine become a party to the START-I Treaty if that treaty were to bind Ukraine, and insisting that Ukraine participate in future negotiations concerning the weapons on its territory. Jack Snyder asserts that Ukraine's assertive policy on ownership of the weapons 'stems not from confident swagger, but rather from its own self-doubts about the solidity of newly won sovereignty.'[55] 'The more Russia and the West ignored Ukraine while continuing to focus on nuclear disarmament, the larger the pro-nuclear lobby grew in Ukraine.'[56]

Recognition of Ukrainian independence was an important area of misunderstanding between the West and Ukraine at this time. The West, hoping to see the Soviet Union preserved, withheld recognition until after Ukraine's December independence referendum. This itself irked Ukrainians, who expected a much better reception, and the feeling was exacerbated by the tendency of western leaders to make recognition conditional on Ukraine's accepting non-nuclear status. When Ukraine countered by trying to use the weapons to force recognition, it only increased fear and anger among western leaders, and therefore the pressure to withhold recognition. The two sides managed to create a great deal of ill will over a relatively minor issue, but Ukraine at this point was unwilling to compromise on any sovereignty issue.

Second, the focus on sovereignty meant asserting Ukraine's ownership of the weapons. In a policy statement issued 10 September 1991, opposition leader and presidential candidate Vyacheslav Chornovil reasserted his support for a non-nuclear Ukraine, but questioned transferring the weapons to Russia because Ukraine was 'a rightful heir to all the material and technical resources, including weapons, of the former Soviet Union.'[57] The problem with simply transferring Ukrainian weapons to Russia was that it implied that Russia had a special status in the region, including sole rights to certain assets of the former Soviet Union. At a time when, on another front, Ukraine was frustrated by Russia's assertion of ownership over other essential Soviet assets, including hard currency reserves, embassies, and the UN Security Council seat, the issue was a very touchy one. In February 1992, Kravchuk protested Yeltsin's announcement that nuclear weapons would be cut further as part of START-II: 'The strategic weapons belong to the Commonwealth of Independent States. So how can the Russian president cut weapons he does not have?...Our strategic potential may not be very great, but it is not up to him to decide its fate.'[58] Because Ukraine was so focused on the principles of sovereign equality, the idea of denying ownership rights of any assets was difficult to accept, even if it made sense on political and strategic grounds.

The ownership of the weapons was significant in particular in relation to the START I Treaty. Ukraine insisted that further negotiations concerning nuclear weapons could not be conducted simply by Russia and the US, because that would imply that Russia was the sole successor of the Soviet Union and the owner of nuclear weapons in Ukraine.[59] US and Russian negotiators feared this position because it meant trying to reconcile the position of five states (Belarus and Kazakhstan would also be included) rather than just two in the ensuing negotiations. The ownership question was linked to a more practical one in the short term: control of the weapons for the time they remained in Ukraine. The Ukrainian parliament asserted

its sovereign (if temporary) rights to 'control over the non-use of nuclear weapons on its territory'.[60] By focusing on its ownership rights, Ukraine unintentionally convinced many in Russia and the West that it intended to retain the weapons and scuttle the START I treaty. The dispute was resolved only with the signing in May 1992 of the Lisbon Protocol, which finessed the problem by making Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan parties to START I, while simultaneously committing them to surrendering their weapons, thus making their participation in future negotiations moot. Ukraine gave in on the substance in return for vindication of its sovereignty, appending to the Protocol a letter stating that Ukraine had 'voluntarily renounced the right to possess nuclear weapons, to which it was entitled as one of the equal legal successor states of the former USSR...'[61]

In addition to demanding a role in the treaty process, Ukraine, in its focus on sovereignty, insisted that because it owned the weapons, it should be compensated for getting rid of them. This too increased tensions. Ukraine felt that it was simply getting its share of money out of the weapons, many of which were partially constructed in Ukraine. In light of Ukraine's voluntary decision to surrender the weapons, Ukrainian leaders saw compensation not only as just, but as a small price for the other states to pay, given their fears. In the West and Russia, the demand for compensation was seen at best as a cynical ploy to get some additional aid and at worst as another attempt to retract the earlier commitments to disarm. The West and Russia never viewed Ukrainian disarmament as a voluntary step, but as a compulsory one, and they were therefore less inclined to compensate Ukraine for it.

The economic and ownership issues raised by Ukraine's focus on sovereignty were crucial in the process. Before they arose, Ukraine was willing to surrender the weapons without much discussion. Once these questions did arise, shortly after independence, the process became hopelessly bogged down, such that even the week before the final agreement, knowledgeable observers were predicting indefinite continuation of the impasse. Once Russia and the US gave Ukraine equal status in the negotiations, made vague security guarantees, and promised nominal financial compensation, recognizing in principle Ukraine's sovereign equality, agreement was relatively straightforward. Both the amount of the compensation and the nature of security guarantees provided were much less than Ukraine hoped for, but its assertion of its sovereignty was to a large degree vindicated.[62]

The Trilateral Agreement on Nuclear Weapons, signed by Kravchuk, Yeltsin, and Clinton in January 1994, essentially resolved the lengthy conflict over Ukraine's nuclear weapons. The text of the agreement is concerned much more with what Ukraine is to receive than with its

commitments.[63] Ukraine committed itself under the agreement to 'accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty in the shortest possible time,' and to 'ensure the elimination of all nuclear weapons, including strategic offensive arms, located on its territory in accordance with the relevant agreements and during the seven-year period as provided by the START I Treaty...' The treaty did not oblige Ukraine to anything it had not previously agreed to at one time or another, but did commit Ukraine to some actions (such as accession to the NPT) which it had been reconsidering.

In return for recommitting Ukraine to nuclear disarmament, the agreement explicitly acknowledged the equality of the three states and their 'respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of each nation'. This statement, while somewhat vague, was extremely important for Ukraine in symbolic terms, because it had initially reconsidered its nuclear stance largely because of the perception that it was being regarded as Russia's inferior. Ukraine used its nuclear weapons primarily to augment its sovereignty, and hence its national identity, not to ensure its security. In this respect the national identity question is crucial to understanding the international politics of the region.

In its effects as well as in its causes, Ukrainian disarmament was more a question of identity than of military security, where the material issue – nuclear weapons – took a back seat to the symbolic one – sovereignty. Ukraine became convinced that Russia did not respect its sovereignty, and Ukraine's hesitation to give up the weapons convinced many Russian leaders that Ukraine was a threat to Russian security (in addition to being a wayward province). In the process of achieving a result that everyone agreed upon in 1991, the two sides (with the help of the US) did immense damage to the relationship, by convincing each other that their security interests were largely incompatible. Ironically the process of Ukrainian disarmament helped construct the Ukrainian–Russian conflict that today is the dominant security problem in the region.

Conclusions

This analysis has shown how concerns over national identity, and the link between international politics and national identity, drive contemporary Ukrainian–Russian relations. The intertwined history and contested identities of the two states are sufficient to keep relations between the two states prickly, even without an active revanchist movement in Russia. A variety of political and economic issues which, absent the politics of national identity, might be seen as inherently cooperative (as in Western Europe) are instead seen as conflictual. Two questions remain for the conclusion: First, what are the prospects for the future: Might the conflict

slowly evaporate? Might it erupt into war? Second, what contribution does a constructivist approach make to our understanding of the role of nationalism in international politics?

Neither a substantial lessening of tensions nor the outbreak of war is likely in the foreseeable future. The continuation of significant but bounded animosity is likely as long as the question of national identity remains central to the relationship. As discussed above, conflict over identity will provide an ongoing source of misunderstanding and conflict of interest. Russian reformers have adopted many of the claims of Russian nationalists, and the desirability of reintegrating the former Soviet Union is now taken for granted in Russia. Russian citizens' regret over the dissolution of the Soviet Union actually increased between 1993 and 1995, and Russians support Chechnya's independence more than Ukraine's.[64] In Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, the 'pro-Russian' candidate won the presidency in 1994, but subsequently jettisoned most of the integrationist platform. While anti-Russian nationalism is weak in Ukraine, support for Ukrainian sovereignty is solid, and politicians have benefitted from asserting it. The events since 1991, and the shift to the right in both states' foreign policies, have served to exacerbate the tensions that already existed, and conflict has to some extent become institutionalized. The conflict is sufficiently well entrenched that it is becoming a condition itself, and is to some degree self-perpetuating.

At the same time, notions of similar identity, as well as practical material incentives (primarily economic) work to keep the conflict within bounds. Both the Ukrainian and Russian governments have tried to promote 'civic' rather than 'ethnic' nationalism, in order to focus issues of national identity on the contemporary independent state rather than on debates about ancestry and past injustices.[65] While such efforts may be motivated primarily by the need to curb domestic ethnic tensions in the two countries, to the extent they succeed they will help reduce the need to assert national identity and state legitimacy through the international arena. More basically, only the most extreme Russian nationalists advocate the use of force to reintegrate Ukraine, and only the most extreme Ukrainian nationalists advocate military confrontation with Russia. While nationalism undoubtedly brings conflict into the Ukrainian–Russian relationship, it is unlikely to bring war, despite conventional wisdom about nationalism and international politics.

This article demonstrates the contribution that a constructivist approach can make in understanding the Russian–Ukrainian conflict and in understanding the relationship between nationalism and international politics more broadly. This approach allows us to examine the role of nationalism and national identity not simply as the residual variance unexplained by the predominant theories, or as 'irrationality' that cannot be

explained, but as a fundamental factor that can be applied across a variety of international interactions. In this respect, three conclusions are in order that transcend this case to the study of nationalism and international politics more broadly.

First, the focus on war as the primary effect of nationalism in international politics is too narrow. While it is obvious that nationalism may increase the chances for war, many other important effects result as well, and we will miss these if we focus only on war. In this case economic cooperation – the subject of a great deal of international relations theory – is impeded for identity rather than material reasons. Moreover, even in a case where nationalism has powerful and pervasive effects, it may not increase the chances of war. The same 'closeness' of identity that creates a desire for separation can also make war highly undesirable. Studies of nationalism and international politics therefore need to focus on the content of nationalist sentiment as well as the strength of it.

Second, nationalism and national identity will assert themselves in international politics in cases where sovereignty, for one reason or another, is contested rather than 'given'. This is not surprising, since many authors define 'nationalism' as the doctrine that each ethnic group or nation should have its own sovereign state. Nationalism seemed to disappear as a force in post-war Europe, not because nationalism was spent as a force, but because borders were fixed and sovereignty largely uncontested. In this sense nationalism is not absent in Western Europe, but is a fulfilled goal, and thus only a latent force. With borders in eastern Europe in a state of flux, and questions concerning which groups deserve and desire sovereign states, national identities are threatened and efforts to assert them through state sovereignty manifest themselves as 'nationalism'. One sees this to a much lesser extent in Western Europe, where sovereignty is not fundamentally challenged, but may be somewhat curtailed by the delegation of prerogatives to the EU.

Third, state sovereignty can be seen more profitably as a variable than as a fundamental condition of the Westphalian international system. While international relations scholars take sovereignty for granted, in fact many states, including the new ones of the former Soviet Union, cannot. Viewing sovereignty this way helps us view different regions as varieties of the same phenomenon rather than as incomparable regions. Eastern Europe is not different from the West because nationalism matters in one place and not in the other, but because nationalist goals (the possession of sovereign statehood) are more threatened in one place than in the other. States pursue sovereignty as well as economic efficiency, and economic efficiency is the sole motive only when sovereignty has been completely satisfied. Therefore states that pursue nationalist policies may be operating according to the

same rules as other states, but simply in different conditions. Nationalism is therefore not an aberration in international relations, but varies in part as a function of the security of sovereignty and of national identity.

By showing a rational basis for the pursuit of symbolic goals, defining sovereignty as a variable helps to establish a link between nationalism and the rationalist theories that dominate the study of international politics. In Liberal international cooperation theory, for example, states seek to cooperate when they have a material incentive to do so. In that view, the desire deliberately not to cooperate in order to assert identity (nationalism), can be seen only as irrational, and beyond explanation. However, if sovereignty and national identity are important state goals that are attained to varying degrees, then the pursuit of sovereignty can be viewed as rational and purposeful. Rational choice approaches to international politics will remain useful as long as actors' goals – material and non-material – are completely specified.

One can debate whether a constructivist approach is superior to or 'explains more of the variance' than conventional approaches, but to some extent the question misses the point. The value of this approach is not to replace others, but to answer some of the questions that they cannot. In this case, given Ukrainian emphasis on separateness and Russian unease about this separateness, rationalist theories might be useful to explain the interaction. Indeed, Ukrainian economic policy can be accounted for by Realism. But such approaches cannot tell us why these priorities (as opposed to those prevailing in Western Europe) must be considered 'givens'. Nor can they tell us why Ukraine's relations with Russia differ so greatly from Russia's relations with Belarus or Ukraine's with Poland. In this way the constructivist approach occupies a prior position in the analysis.

While nationalism and national identity have been overlooked in contemporary international relations theory, they need not be, and the increasing recognition that these factors are much more pervasive than previously believed provides good reason to try to understand more fully the links between nationalism and international politics. The approach used here focuses on the links between contested national identities, the assertion of sovereignty, and conflict over material issues. It has perhaps raised as many questions as it has answered, but in doing so indicates a problem in need of further exploration.

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NOTES

1. K.J. Holsti, 'Change in the International System: Interdependence, Integration, and Fragmentation', in Ole Holsti, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alexander L. George, eds, *Change in the International System* (Boulder: Westview, 1980). Jack Snyder states that 'nationalism is one of the gravest but least understood issues facing the international community today'. See 'Nationalism and the Crisis of the Post-Soviet State', *Survival*, Vol.35 No.1 (Spring 1993), p.5. Stephen Van Evera states that 'scholars have written widely on the causes of nationalism, but said little about its effects, especially its effects on international politics.' See 'Hypotheses on Nationalism and War', *International Security* (Spring 1994), p.5.
2. Prominent examples in an extensive literature are: Roman Szporluk, ed. *The Influence of National Identity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); Alexander J. Motyl, ed., *Post-Soviet Nations*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds, *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). On nationalism in Ukrainian–Russian relations, see Roman Szporluk, 'Reflections on Ukraine after 1994: The Dilemmas of Nationhood', *Harriman Review* (March–May 1994), pp.1–9; Roman Solchanyk, 'Russia, Ukraine, and the Imperial Legacy', *Post-Soviet Affairs* Vol.9, No.4 (1994), pp.337–65; Charles F. Furtado, Jr., 'Nationalism and Foreign Policy in Ukraine', *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.109, No.1 (1994), pp.81–104; Astrid S. Tuminez, 'Russian Nationalism and the National Interest in Russian Foreign Policy', in Celeste A. Wallander, ed., *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, (Boulder: Westview, 1996); and James Richter, 'Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity', in Wallander.
3. Van Evera, 'Hypotheses on Nationalism and War'.
4. See Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* Vol.46, No.2 (Spring 1992), pp.391–5; and Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.15.
5. Holsti, pp.25–6 discusses the reasons for the exclusion of nationalism from international relations theory.
6. On social construction approaches to international politics, see Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It', and 'The Structure-Agent Problem in International Politics', *International Organization* Vol.41, No.4 (Summer 1987), pp.335–70; Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *Culture and Security*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Emanuel Adler, *The Power of Ideology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
7. Prominent constructivist approaches to ethnicity and nationalism include Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991); and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See the collection of essays in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds, *Becoming National* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
8. On constructivism as the history of ideas, see Ian Hacking, 'The Social Construction of What?' Unpublished manuscript, University of Toronto, 1996, p.15.
9. Ian Hacking, 'The Looping Effects of Human Kinds', in D. Sperber, D. Premack, and A.J. Premack, eds, *Causal Cognition: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
10. See Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.202.
11. In this article I distinguish between 'national identity' and 'nationalism'. National identity refers to how individuals identify themselves, and correspondingly who they identify as 'others'. Nationalism has been defined in a great variety of ways, but for us it is sufficient to define it as any of the variety of doctrines advocating that political order be based on considerations of nationality.
12. On the quantity vs. the content of nationalist thought, see Barry R. Posen, 'The Security

Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict', *Survival*, Vol.35, No.1 (Spring 1993), p.30.

13. See Barry Weingast, 'A Rational Choice Perspective on the Role of Ideas: Shared Belief Systems and State Sovereignty in International Cooperation', *Politics and Society* Vol.23, No.4 (December 1995), pp.449–64; John Ferejohn, 'Rationality and Interpretation: Parliamentary Elections in Early Stuart England;' and James D. Johnson, 'Rational Choice as Reconstructive Theory', both in Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed., *The Economic Approach to Politics*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1991).
14. See Mark von Hagen, 'Does Ukraine Have a History?' pp.658–73; and George C. Grabowicz, 'Ukrainian Studies: Framing the Contexts', pp.674–90; and replies by Andreas Kappeler, Iaroslav Isaievych, Serhii Plokhy, and Yuri Slezkine, in *Slavic Review* Vol.54, No.3 (Fall 1995).
15. For general treatments of Ukrainian history, see Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* 2nd ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto: 1994); and Michael Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), which epitomizes the Ukrainian nationalist historiography. On Russian–Ukrainian Relations, see Peter J. Potichnyj, *et al.*, eds, *Ukraine and Russia in their Historical Encounter*, (Edmonton: Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies, 1992); and Alexander J. Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence: Ukraine after Totalitarianism*, (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), Chapters 2 and 3.
16. See Jaroslaw Pelenski, 'The Contest for the 'Kievan-inheritance' in Russian–Ukrainian Relations: The Origins and Early Ramifications', in Potichnyj, *et al.*, pp.3–19; Wilson, Chapter 1; and Subtelny, pp.52–3.
17. Pelenski, p.3.
18. Different, but essentially parallel typologies of the Russian foreign policy debate are offered by Solchanyk, 'Russia, Ukraine, and the Imperial Legacy', pp.342–8, and by Jeremy Lester, 'Russian Attitudes to Ukrainian Independence', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol.10, No.2 (June 1994), pp.193–233.
19. Nikolai Travkin, 'Russia, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe', in Stephen Sestanovich, ed., *Rethinking Russia's National Interests* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), p.36.
20. See John Morrison, 'Pereyaslav and After: The Russian–Ukrainian Relationship', *International Affairs*, Vol.69, No.4 (1993).
21. Hrushevsky, p.296.
22. The events surrounding the treaty of Pereiaslav are discussed in Subtelny, pp.134–7 and in Hrushevsky, pp.293–6 and pp.311–12. The original text of the treaty has been lost, though one Ukrainian professor of history told me he believes the Russian government has the original, but has kept it secret because it vindicates Ukraine's view.
23. See Vasyl' Kremin', Borys Parakhons'kyi, and Petro Sytnyk, 'Ukraïna i Rosiia: Sfery Konfrontatsiï i Spivrobitnytstva', *Rozbudova Derzhava*, Vol.2 (February 1993), p.3.
24. Hrushevsky, p.557.
25. Hrushevsky, p.558.
26. Thus Taras Kuzio asserts that the 1993 CIS Charter, which Ukraine refused to sign, 'closely resembled' the 1922 Union Treaty. Taras Kuzio, 'Ukraine and Its 'Near Abroad',' *Politychna Dumka/Political Thought*, Vol.3 (1994), p.198.
27. Sheptyt'skyi's pastoral letter of 30 June 30 1941, quoted in John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, 3rd ed., (Engelwood, Co.: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1990), p.56.
28. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.37.
29. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism*, Chapter XIII.
30. Ukraine needed to assert its independence not only to Russia, but to an often sceptical world as well. France's former president Valery Giscard d'Estaing commented in 1993 that 'the independence of Ukraine is about as ridiculous as the separation of the Rhones-Alpes region of France' quoted in Taras Kuzio, 'Russia as Ukraine's Constituting 'Other',' Unpublished ms., University of Birmingham, 1996, p.3.
31. Vladimir Lukin, 'Russia and Its Interests', in Sestanovich, *Rethinking Russia's National Interests*, p.106. This type of thinking is documented in detail in Solchanyk, 'Russia, Ukraine, and the Imperial Legacy', pp.339–42. Lukin Chairs the Russian Duma's foreign

relations committee and was formerly Ambassador to the United States.
32. Quoted in Richter, 'Russian Foreign Policy', p.69.
33. Wilson, Chapter 5.
34. Wilson, p.173.
35. *Ukrainian Weekly*, 5 August 1990, p.12, as quoted in Paul Robert Magocsi, 'A Subordinate or Submerged People: The Ukrainians of Galicia under Habsburg and Soviet Rule', in Richard L. Rudolph and David F. Good, eds, *Nationalism and Empire, the Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Union*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp.105–6.
36. This point is to some extent obscured by the fact that Leonid Kravchuk played the role of the 'pro-Russian' candidate in 1991, defeating nationalist Vyacheslav Chornovil, and then took the role of nationalist in 1994, losing to Leonid Kuchma, who ran advocating economic union with Russia, but reconsidered after the election.
37. See Subtelny, Chapters. 17 and 22 on the bitterness of Ukrainian–Polish relations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
38. See Ian J. Brzezinski, 'Polish–Ukrainian Relations: Europe's Neglected Strategic Axis', *Survival* Vol.35, No.3 (Autumn 1993), pp.26–37.
39. Economist Volodimir Bandera asserts that Ukraine suffered the greatest loss, measured as share of GNP. 'The historical evidence shows that for well over half a century, at least ten per cent of Ukraine's national output has been given up annually.' See Volodimir N. Bandera, 'National Income Transfers and Macroeconomic Accountability from the Standpoint of Ukraine', in I.S. Koropeckyj, ed., *The Ukrainian Economy: Achievements, Problems, Challenges*, (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1992), p.386.
40. Valerii Kalyniuk, 'Dohovir Ukraïny rozipne I vona vzhe nykoly ne voskresne', *Vysokyi Zamok*, 4 September 1993, p.1. The author went on to compare the economic union treaty with the Soviet union treaty of 1922, and concluded that 'The similarities between the two documents are remarkable.'
41. In early 1996, the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy proposed to reintegrate much of the former Soviet Union using Russia's inherent economic dominance. See *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 May 1996. The report is discussed, and excerpts translated, in Scott Parrish, 'Will the Union Be Reborn?' *Transition* (26 July 1996).
42. Leonid Kravchuk, on Radio Kiev, 10 October 1991, in FBIS-SOV-91-198, 11 October 1991, p.64.
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