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### What happened to the nationalists in Ukraine?

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# What Happened to the Nationalists in Ukraine?

PAUL KUBICEK

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Ukraine's declaration of independence, the long-sought-after goal of Ukrainian nationalists, has not led to nationalist ascendancy in post-Soviet Ukraine. This article examines the weaknesses of nationalist parties and groups and tries to account for this outcome. In addition to strategic mistakes by élites and the structure of Ukrainian society, it suggests that the nationalist discourse is unable to respond to the demands of most people in Ukraine and is associated with failed policies and leaders. It highlights how in key ways the Ukrainian experience has differed from that of other post-communist 'nationalizing' states.

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Ukraine's declaration of independence was hailed by Ukrainian nationalists, both in Ukraine and abroad, as a great victory over their Soviet/Russian oppressors. Ukraine, finally freed of control from Moscow that had 'bled white the national organism',<sup>1</sup> would at last be able to develop its own culture and identity and take its place in a new Europe. Ukraine's independence was celebrated as the cumulation of a long 'national-emancipatory' struggle which had freed the nation from 'foreign slavery'.<sup>2</sup> One Ukrainian writer opined that Ukrainians had voted for a new 'utopian vision' of democracy and European civilization, which many assumed would be easily attainable.<sup>3</sup>

While it is true that Ukrainian independence was widely supported by voters across the country, there were some fears that the new Ukrainian élites would fall victim to the 'nationalizing temptation'<sup>4</sup> and therefore dispense with democratic development or inclusive state-building practices. Certainly, there were and are many nationalist movements in Ukraine, ranging from proto-fascist, militant organizations to the more democratically oriented Rukh. In 1991, nationalists were ascendant, as they proved they could mobilize the population and put pressure on political élites, thereby helping to achieve their long-sought goal of independence. Their opponents feared that their anti-Russian policies and goals of 'Ukrainization' would produce civil strife.<sup>5</sup> Their supporters, particularly in the Rukh movement, assumed that national-democratic movements would

be the vanguard of reform, leading the charge for both political and economic liberalization.

Neither of these forecasts were correct. Despite the persistence of regional and inter-ethnic tensions, there has been no violent conflict in Ukraine. At the same time, there has been very little movement toward far-reaching political or economic reform. The hammer and sickle has been replaced by the Ukrainian trident, but for the most part the Soviet-era *nomenklatura* has been able to preserve its positions of political and economic power. The promises of independence are now lost on many Ukrainians, as they suffer under a corrupt state and a stagnant economy. True, some measures, such as the movement away from Russia and towards the West and the adoption of Ukrainian as the sole official language, have been backed and supported by Ukrainian nationalists. However, what is more striking is their virtual disappearance, except in western Ukraine,<sup>6</sup> from the political scene and from civil society.

This paper traces the developments in the Ukrainian nationalists' camp since 1991. It recognizes a great deal of variation among nationalist parties and movements, but finds that they have been marginalized at the national level. Why nationalism has failed to expand its roots in Ukraine while it has prospered in countries such as Slovakia, Serbia, and Croatia is an interesting question. Changes in the political economy may account for nationalism's relatively unenthusiastic backing in Ukraine, but these other countries have also experienced a sharp economic crisis. Instead, this article suggests that both structural and historical factors in Ukraine, poor choices by the nationalist leadership, and the limitations on nationalist discourse itself account for outcomes in Ukraine.

### **Ukrainian Nationalist Parties and Movements**

One should first recognize that there is not, and has not been, a single unified Ukrainian nationalist movement. True, there is broad agreement among those who would call themselves nationalists or 'patriots' on certain basic issues, especially distrust of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, preservation of Ukraine's territorial integrity, and protection of Ukrainian culture and language. However, among nationalists there is wide variance on what form the Ukrainian state and political economy should take. Broadly speaking, the nationalist movements in Ukraine fall within three categories.

The first, and the one with the largest popular backing, is the national-democratic orientation, exemplified best by Rukh. Rukh (meaning 'movement' in Ukrainian) was founded in 1989 as the Ukrainian Popular Movement for Perestroika, and endorsed Gorbachev's reform measures

while calling for greater Ukrainian cultural and national rights. According to its charter, it upholds the principles of humanism, democracy, *glasnost*, pluralism, social justice, and internationalism, and its main objective is a democratic and humane society in Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> Although its primary base was intellectuals in Kiev and western Ukraine, Rukh made an explicit effort in 1989–91 to reach out to all Ukrainians regardless of their ethnicity. In January 1990 Rukh helped mobilize one million people to form a human chain from L'viv to Kiev (about 450 miles), and in March 1990 Rukh-supported candidates won over a quarter of the seats in national parliamentary elections and gained power in several regional assemblies. By October 1990 Rukh was calling for independence, and helped spearhead the demonstrations that resulted in the fall of the hard-line government and the eventual declaration of independence in August 1991. In 1992, when it re-registered as a political party, Rukh claimed 50,000 members and over two million supporters. It remains the largest party with a nationalist orientation in Ukraine today.

The second nationalist grouping is more hard-line and statist in orientation. It is best represented by the Republican Party, which arose from dissidents in the Ukrainian Helsinki Watch organization, and the Democratic Party, based largely on the intelligentsia and Rukh defectors such as Ivan Drach. Both are much smaller than Rukh and do not have a substantial core beyond Western Ukraine. They are both rabidly anti-communist – one Republican Party leader called for a 'Nuremberg Process' against the communists,<sup>8</sup> and the Democratic Party filed a lawsuit against the communists who had betrayed the nation and sabotaged reforms.<sup>9</sup>

These groups place top priority on national independence. The Republican Party programme, for example, states that all individual rights can only be realized in the context of full national sovereignty and that 'the idea of national greatness of Ukraine is the fundamental principle in the ideology of the Party'.<sup>10</sup> In its thinking democracy often gives way to what Mykola Ryabchuk labels the 'fetish of the state',<sup>11</sup> in which state interests are placed above those of the individual. In this vein, one writer expressed the need for 'state thinking' which will be a 'spiritual cement' for society.<sup>12</sup>

The final grouping can be labelled extreme nationalists, and include groups such as the Ukrainian National Assembly (UNA) and its military wing, the Ukrainian Self-Defence Organization (UNSO), the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN), and the Conservative Republican Party. These groups take their inspiration from earlier Ukrainian anti-Bolshevik 'freedom fighters' such as Stepan Bandera and integral nationalist thinkers such as Dmytro Dontsov, and see the Ukrainian state as under threat – from Moscow, Russian agents in Ukraine, Jews, and/or international financial institutions. Building a strong state to defend Ukrainian interests is their top

priority. Their slogans are 'Ukraine for Ukrainians' and 'Ukraine Above All Else', and they make no effort to reach out to national minorities. They are clearly militant in orientation. For example, UNA declared that Ukraine should re-animate the idea of pan-Slavism with the centre being Kiev; armed men have been sent to Crimea and to Moldova to protect the Ukrainian populations that are 'under attack' there by Russians, and UNA has pretensions on territory in Russia, Poland, Moldova, Belarus, and Romania where Ukrainians live. Democracy, according to one representative of this group, has no chance in today's Ukraine, as it might hinder national development.<sup>13</sup> One leader of KUN suggested that democracy does not teach national consciousness or stimulate 'the national organism' and that top priority must instead be placed on creation of the Ukrainian idea.<sup>14</sup> These extremists alarm many in Ukraine, including Rukh's former leader Viadcheslav Chornovil, who stated there was a 'definite danger in the existence of ultra-nationalist forces'.<sup>15</sup> Despite their ability to grab headlines with their rhetoric, they remain essentially fringe organizations except in certain areas of western Ukraine where they have won elections.

It is worth noting that despite calls to unify forces – the lack of unity among nationalists is often blamed for past failures to establish and preserve a Ukrainian state<sup>16</sup> – these groups are not a coherent bloc. In 1992, the anti-communist Congress of National Democratic Forces failed to hold together, and later Rukh itself split over a variety of issues and personality disputes. In 1994 and in 1998, multiple nationalist candidates ran in the same constituencies, thereby splintering the vote, and nationalists have been unable to form a single faction in parliament. Their lack of unity, however, has been just one of the nationalists' problems since 1991.

### **The 'Honeymoon' with the State, 1991–4**

The result of the 1 December 1991 referendum of independence, in which over 90 per cent of Ukrainians voted for an independent state, was certainly a great victory for the nationalists, but it was not coupled with a complete political 'breakthrough.' On that same day in presidential elections, Leonid Kravchuk, the head of the Ukrainian parliament and leader of the 'national communist' faction, soundly defeated Viadcheslav Chornovil, Levko Lukianenko, and Ihor Yukhnovsky, all from Rukh and backed by various branches and institutions within Rukh. The nationalist trio garnered 29.5 per cent of the overall national vote, including over 80 per cent in L'viv, Ternopil', and Ivano-Frankivs'k (the three oblasts of Galicia in Western Ukraine). Internal divisions obviously affected the campaign, but it was clear that the national mood favoured Kravchuk, who promised social stability and stressed economic benefits of independence.

After Kravchuk's election, the nationalists found themselves in a quandary over whether they should support him. On the one hand, he was the head of the Ukrainian state, and efforts to undermine him might also undermine Ukrainian statehood. He envisioned himself as the Ukrainian George Washington and he became, in the words of one observer, a Ukrainian nationalist '*par excellence*'.<sup>17</sup> He adopted the nationalist discourse, condemning the 'ethnocide' committed against Ukrainians and Russian 'chauvinists' and backing the revival of Ukrainian language, culture, and national self-consciousness.<sup>18</sup> In his battles with an intransigent parliament he clearly tried to appeal to nationalist elements by announcing that 'all patriotic forces should consolidate around the task of state-building' and that they must overcome their differences for this 'greater strategic goal'.<sup>19</sup> In case that appeal for support was not clear enough, he later went so far as to claim 'We [he and his team] are the state'.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, Kravchuk was not the most natural ally of the nationalists. Despite his conversion to national communism, he did hail from the communist *nomenklatura* and, as time elapsed, it became clear that he had little interest in economic reforms and was intent upon centralizing power and stifling democratic development. He was derided by some as head of a 'crypto-communist' 'party of power', a group characterized by 'economic and political conservatism, a penchant for authoritarianism and command-administrative methods, and clan connections'.<sup>21</sup> Opposition was harassed and condemned by Kravchuk as 'speculating on workers and advancing private interests'.<sup>22</sup> Kravchuk's actions and statements led some to warn of a 'counter-revolution' led by communists-turned-nationalists that would attack democracy and civil society while preserving old socio-economic relations and political structures.<sup>23</sup>

After siding with Kravchuk for his first year in office, nationalist forces split over their relationship to the president. Some, such as Mykhailo Horyn of the Republican Party and Larisa Skoryk of the breakaway Rukh organization offered unabashed support to the president. Horyn even issued a statement directing his party's membership to stop any anti-state (and presumably anti-Kravchuk) conversation they heard on public transportation!<sup>24</sup>

The mainstream Rukh organization, led by Chornovil, was more ambivalent. At Rukh's fourth congress in December 1992, he recognized that there had been too much pandering to the 'party of power'. He declared:

Our greatest mistake was to surrender our ideals of independence and democracy to other hands who have always been indifferent or hostile to these ideals. Now we are under practically absolute control of the

former communist *nomenklatura* and the people are presented with a dangerous illusion that there is democratic authority. An unbelievable amount of discredit to our democratic ideals has occurred.<sup>25</sup>

Chornovil argued for a policy of constructive opposition, but Rukh remained largely in the president's corner in his struggle with parliament, organizing a signature campaign to force the dissolution of parliament (which failed) and backing Kravchuk's efforts to centralize power.

Some hard-line and extremist nationalists, however, remained unimpressed with Kravchuk's transformation. Valentin Moroz accused him of organizing the execution of political prisoners while he was a member of the Communist Party, and Stepan Khmara, leader of the Conservative Republican Party, named Kravchuk as head of the Ukrainian mafia. Nonetheless, since Kravchuk's rival for power was a parliament dominated by the loathed unreformed communists, these groups also tended to back a strong presidency.

Unwittingly, then, the nationalists became a pro-presidential, largely *status-quo*-oriented bloc. Despite all his failures, Kravchuk did manage to preserve Ukrainian statehood against Russian coercion and he was sympathetic to the gradual Ukrainization of the state and educational institutions. Criticism of the president was muted for fears it might play into the hands of his opponents on the left. A 'marriage of convenience'<sup>26</sup> had formed between the nationalists and the 'party of power'.

However, for most Ukrainians the *status quo* was far from satisfactory. Inflation soared while production and living standards plummeted. Trust in all state institutions and officials was low, and surveys in June 1993 also revealed that a large majority (68 per cent) did not consider Ukraine a democracy.<sup>27</sup> Their association with Kravchuk had clearly compromised the national-democrats, whose fidelity to principles of democracy and reform were clearly open to question. If one wanted to register protest with the existing system, the nationalist camp did not offer much attraction.

The weaknesses of the nationalists were laid bare in parliamentary elections in the spring of 1994. First of all, they failed to win the adoption of their own mixed majoritarian-proportional electoral law, which would have bolstered the chances of leaders of political parties and undermined the position of 'independents' in the 'party of power'. Second, they could not put forward a unified slate of candidates, thereby splintering their vote. Third, the elections themselves produced a communist-leftist victory. The left won a plurality of the vote and eventually claimed 35 per cent of the seats in parliament to the nationalists 27 per cent, basically the same percentage they had before. Moreover, 69 per cent (76 of 110) of the nationalist MPs came from Kiev or western regions. Statistical analysis



revealed that the results of these elections are best explained by reference not to economic questions but 'national' ones such as relations with Russia and status of the Russian language.<sup>28</sup> The nationalists' position failed to attract Russian and Russophone voters in the south and the east, and overall the nationalists failed to expand their core base of support.

The presidential elections held that same summer produced an even greater defeat for the nationalists, even though they failed to nominate a candidate because they were certain that any one they nominated would lose and would only take votes away from Kravchuk.<sup>29</sup> Six candidates did choose to run, and among them it was Kravchuk who chose to adopt the nationalist discourse, selecting the word *derzhavnist* ('statehood') as one of his primary campaign slogans. Many of Kravchuk's most vociferous defenders came from the breakaway Rukh or from the Republican Party, who overlooked his mismanagement of the state that they purported to so dearly love. As it became clear that his prime rival would be Leonid Kuchma, a former prime minister who hailed from Dnipropetrovsk and was backed by the eastern Ukrainian industrial élite, the wagons circled even closer. Kravchuk, from western Ukraine, would defend the Ukrainian state and would not placate Russians in Moscow or in Donetsk. Kuchma's election would mean civil war. Nationalists, however, were unlikely to bolster their image or win new converts with their blind defence of Kravchuk, clearly a political opportunist. Kravchuk did manage to win the vote in the western regions of the country, including over 90 per cent of the vote in Galicia. Kuchma won elsewhere, overwhelmingly so in the most Russified regions such as Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk. The country was clearly polarized, but the greater population in the east made up for higher turnout in the west. Kuchma won with 52 per cent of the vote. The nationalists were clearly defeated, and awaited the worst from Kuchma.

### **Marginalization, 1994–8**

Kuchma, however, bucked expectations that he would be the puppet of Moscow and the eastern Ukrainian élite. He pushed for closer ties with the West, rebuffed Russian efforts to strengthen the CIS, held firm on maintaining Crimea in Ukraine, lobbied for a radical economic reform programme, and flip-flopped on his policy of adopting two official languages. As Kravchuk had before him, he became, as head of state, the defender of all things Ukrainian. And, as with Kravchuk, he endeared himself to the Ukrainian nationalists and his popularity in the western regions of the country soared.<sup>30</sup>

While some of Kuchma's policies pleased the nationalists, the same pattern and problems under Kravchuk emerged. Kuchma's main opponent

was a more conservative parliament, and nationalist deputies and parties, largely organized into two factions (Rukh and 'Statehood') generally backed Kuchma's bid to strengthen the powers of the presidency. Some economic reform programmes were pushed through, but their passage through the legislature was guaranteed only by the support of a 'centrist' bloc composed largely of enterprise directors and owners.<sup>31</sup> The nationalist forces were unable to push forward many items on their agenda, particularly more rapid free-market reforms.

Generally speaking, however, Kuchma's election did shift the centre of political gravity to the east and the nationalists found themselves marginalized. Political life in the country centred around Kuchma's battle to pass a new constitution with a strong presidency and his dismissal of two prime ministers, Evhen Marchuk and Pavlo Lazarenko, who became too independent-minded and threatened Kuchma's hold on executive power. Corruption was endemic, and fortune and power went to the Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk 'clans'.<sup>32</sup> Nationalist parties were not represented in the government, which remained the domain for elements from the 'party of power'. They were the 'constructive opposition', but their voices and programmes were far less significant than those of the government itself or the communist/leftist opposition.

The sagging fortunes of the nationalists are also revealed in membership and public opinion data. Data from the spring of 1995 reveal that membership in the leading nationalist parties totalled under 100,000 (50,000 of which was for Rukh), and considering these are self-reported figures they are very likely inflated. This compares poorly with figures from 1995 for the Communists (140,000) and the Socialists (72,000) as well as with previous membership figures, which were 280,000 for Rukh in 1989. Moreover, the pattern of over-representation of the western regions grew more pronounced into the 1990s. Ostensibly all-Ukrainian organizations were found on inspection to have branches in the east and south that existed only on paper.<sup>33</sup>

More disturbing are the public opinion data. The 'Democratic Initiatives' centre in Kiev conducted several surveys from 1994 to 1997 asking respondents about levels of trust in various institutions and parties. The results are displayed in Table 1. While it is true that trust in all institutions is low, among the very lowest scores are those for Rukh and 'nationalists', whose scores are less than for the Communist Party, the parliament, and astrologers! What the low score on the 1-to-5 trust index scale reflects is that approximately 70 per cent of respondents in all surveys reported complete or moderate distrust in nationalists and Rukh, whereas about six or seven per cent on average expressed some or total trust in these groups. This gives these groups little base or chance to play a substantial political role.

TABLE 1  
TRUST IN PARTIES AND STATE INSTITUTIONS, 1994-97

Year	Trust in Rukh	Trust in Nationalists	Trust in Communists	Trust in President	Trust in parliament	Trust in Astrologers
1994	1.97	1.84	2.27	2.33	2.29	2.50
1995	1.82	1.72	2.12	2.86	2.13	2.48
1996	1.88	1.81	2.14	2.55	2.09	2.43
1997	1.88	1.81	2.14	2.28	2.03	2.36

Source: Politichny Portret Ukrainy, no. 20. 1998, pp.9-11. The trust index is from 1 to 5.

The most recent blow to the Ukrainian nationalists was the 1998 parliamentary elections. Any hopes that public frustration with the ongoing shenanigans of the 'party of power' would benefit nationalist-oriented parties were again dashed by the results. Among all political parties, Rukh managed to come in second, garnering just over nine per cent of all votes. Other nationalist parties or blocs fared less well: the extremists of UNA and the National Front gained only 3.3 per cent of the vote, almost all of it in Galicia. The election results are displayed in Table 2.<sup>34</sup> Overall, the nationalist parties captured only 17.5 per cent of the votes and a mere 58 seats, both figures representing substantial losses from the previous election. Again, the predictable regional patterns held: the bulk of the nationalists' vote was in the west, and they were practically shut out in the east and south.

TABLE 2  
1998 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS

	% of votes for Rukh	% of votes for other nationalist parties	% vote for leftist parties	% vote for centrists/other
National Total	9.4	8.1	37.3	36.9
West	24.8	17.6	17.3	32.0
Central	7.7	8.7	43.9	31.4
East	3.2	3.2	41.1	44.2
South	5.2	4.3	42.8	39.4
Total Number of Seats	45	13	166	210

Source: Central Electoral Commission Official Data, April 1998

As Ukraine prepares itself for presidential elections in 1999, the nationalist parties are clearly at a loss. Kuchma's primary challengers are likely to be Oleksandr Moroz of the Socialist Party and Natalya Zitrenko of the Progressive Socialist Party, who runs on a pro-Russia, Brezhnev-like platform. Pavlo Lazarenko, a former Prime Minister and crony of Kuchma's

from Dnipropetrovsk, who founded the Hromada (community) Party, now faces prosecution on corruption charges. Rukh is in disarray after the April 1999 car crash that killed Chornovil, and is likely to split into two organizations, neither of which can field a strong presidential candidate. More likely, Rukh will be compelled to back Kuchma, as both main challengers from the left are less supportive of much of the nationalist agenda. The nationalist groups might have their state, but other political forces clearly run it.

### Who are the Nationalists' Supporters?

While we know that nationalist parties and candidates have not fared well in elections, what can we say about the people who claim to support them? What is the profile of the nationalist constituency, and what does that say about the nationalists' place and prospects in Ukrainian politics? To answer these questions, let us turn to a series of public opinion surveys in Ukraine that ask people for their party affiliation or voting proclivity. The surveys that I will use are the 'Eastern Eurobarometers' conducted yearly since 1992 under the aegis of the European Commission. Because they use a standard battery of questions, we can look for changes and development over time in nationalist support and in their constituency through the end of 1996.

Data from the surveys (the 1993 and 1995 surveys did not include questions about party preference) are presented in Table 3.<sup>35</sup> Given the results reported above, it is not surprising that the surveys find only a small fraction of Ukrainians who describe themselves as supporters of any nationalist-oriented party. Moreover, these people are overwhelmingly ethnically Ukrainian and come from the western regions of the country. In contrast, those who support the communists are far less likely to come from the west and, on average, are more likely to be ethnically Russian.

TABLE 3  
NATIONALIST SUPPORTERS, 1992-1996

Category	1992	1994	1996
% Rukh support	5.4	5.3	4.0
% Rukh from west	48.7	52.4	54.2
% Rukh ethnically Ukrainian	93.4	93.7	95.8
Other Nationalists % support	3.1	4.0	2.3
Other % from west	38.6	60.4	44.4
Other % ethnically Ukrainian	90.9	93.4	85.2
% Communist support	n/a	12.4	13.3
% Communist from west	n/a	5.4	8.8
% Communist ethnically Ukrainian	n/a	67.1	72.5

Source: Central and Eastern Eurobarometer surveys

Aside from these easily predictable findings, we are also interested in the socio-economic and broader political profile of nationalist supporters. Logit analyses were performed that took into account a host of socio-economic variables as well as assessments about the overall condition of the country, movement to democracy, and free market reforms. The dependent variable combined both categories of nationalists in order to increase the number of cases. The results are displayed in Table 4. A priori, it is hard to predict what effects like age (would those who lived longer under Soviet system internalize some Soviet values or be more hostile to the old system?), education (would the educated be more tolerant in their outlook or more aware of nationalist issues?) and income might have. These all have very marginal effects and essentially drop out of the equation. What we are left with as primary explanatory variables, aside from region and ethnicity, are 'assessment' variables. That is, those who are more satisfied with overall conditions in the country (GENDEV) are statistically more likely to declare their intention to vote for nationalists. In 1994 and especially in 1996, one also sees that satisfaction with existing democracy (SATISDEM) and improvements in household finances (HHFIN) are also positively related with predisposition to support nationalists, although these figures only reach statistical significance at  $p < .10$ . These findings, however, were absent in 1992, suggesting that over time nationalist supporters became more *status-quo*-oriented. In relative terms, they were more likely to be satisfied with democratic performance and more likely to have reported financial improvement. This finding corresponds with the tendency of the nationalist parties themselves to lend support the president and his policies.

TABLE 4  
LOGISTICAL REGRESSION RESULTS ON NATIONALIST SUPPORTERS

Variable	1992		1994		1996	
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta	Std. Error	Beta	Std. Error
West	.542**	.115	.502**	.134	.375*	.182
Russian	-.318	.196	-.513*	.244	-.225	.238
Male	.199	.109	.299*	.132	.144	.162
Bigcity	-.014	.126	n/a	n/a	.210	.166
SATISDEM	-.015	.134	.204	.153	.279	.185
GENDEV	.241*	.117	.177	.152	.372*	.182
HHFIN	.010	.098	.103	.129	.268	.151
Free Market	-.089	.120	.227	.137	.152	.1841
Constant	-1.716	.401	-1.655	.572	-1.38	.568
% correctly classified	88.45		89.05		93.56	

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Source: Central and Eastern Eurobarometer surveys

It is notable that even though assessments about conditions are rather important, free market orientation does not play a consistent or as large a role. This confirms a notion that, cultural factors held constant, nationalist orientation has increasingly reflected a combination of pride or faith in the state and not a preference for a particular economic programme. Given that the state is now 'Ukrainian' and therefore in a sense a product of nationalism, those who are less satisfied with the economic and political state of affairs will be drawn to different political parties, and indeed one finds a statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) negative relationship in a logistic regression between communist support and GENDEV and SATISDEM. Nationalist supporters are more likely to be their opposites: people more satisfied with the current state of affairs and therefore presumably less likely to endorse sweeping change. This relationship is presented in Figures 1 and 2, which shows the probability of a communist and nationalist orientation, respectively, for a urban, ethnically-Ukrainian, male resident of central Ukraine in years 1996 over various ages. The probability of supporting a nationalist party goes up as one is more satisfied with the level of democracy and the overall state of affairs in the country, and age has little effect; whereas the likelihood of supporting communism goes up with dissatisfaction and with age.<sup>36</sup> The contrasts are striking and, given the very high level of overall dissatisfaction in the country,<sup>37</sup> help account for the poor electoral fortunes of nationalist-oriented parties.

## Discussion

What conclusions can be drawn from the data presented above? Why have the fortunes of nationalist groups and parties waned since 1991? Clearly, the 'conventional thinking' about the 'nationalist temptation'<sup>38</sup> does not apply to the Ukrainian case. The standard thinking on nationalism is that it will be strongest in new states which need sources of legitimacy and even stronger when economic conditions turn sour, as people look to blame outsiders and rally around the defence of the nation and/or state. This has not occurred in Ukraine. True, both post-Soviet Ukrainian presidents have attempted to portray themselves as defenders of the new Ukrainian state and have gained favour with nationalist groups, but they have tried to avoid the conflicts and polarization inherent in any notion of a 'nationalizing state'. Kravchuk and Kuchma have not been like Tudjman in Croatia, Milosevic in Serbia, Meciar in Slovakia or Kocharian in Armenia, all of whom wholeheartedly embrace nationalist discourse and are themselves leaders of nationalist movements or parties. Moreover, the economic decline in Ukraine has been worse than in practically all other post-communist states. Yet, evidence from public opinion surveys in Ukraine suggests that those most dissatisfied are less likely to turn

FIGURE 1  
PROBABILITY OF NATIONALIST PARTY SUPPORT

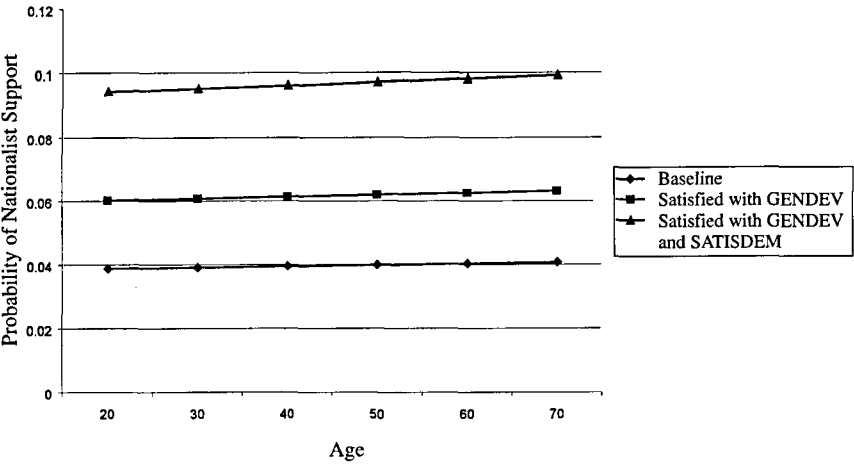
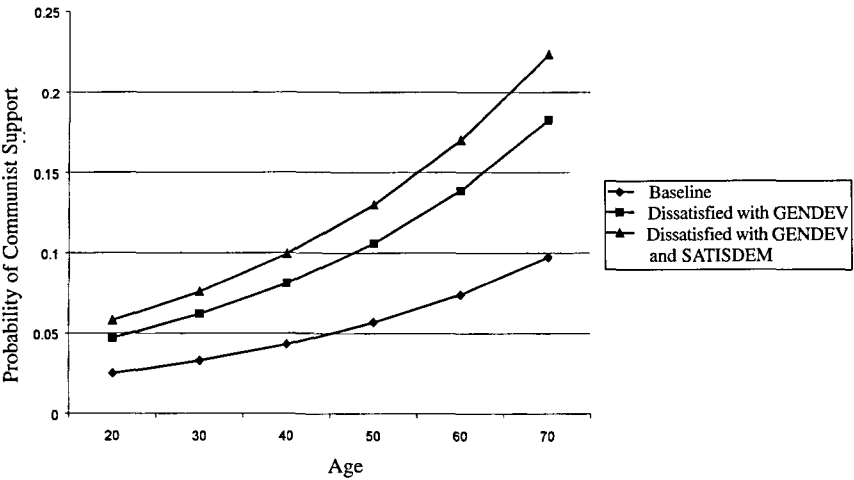


FIGURE 2  
PROBABILITY OF COMMUNIST PARTY SUPPORT



to nationalism. Communism, not nationalism, has been the refuge for those upset with the *status quo*.

How can one account for these differences? First, the strongest cases of post-communism nationalism have been accompanied by military conflict. There is an obvious chicken and egg question here – what causes what – but one could safely conclude that militarized conflict with opposing forces provides a favourable environment for sustaining the nationalist discourse. Ukrainians, on the other hand, are fully aware of the dangers of inter-ethnic conflict and express preference for tolerance and stability. Kravchuk, for example, campaigned as a ‘nationalist’ on the idea that he had helped preserve civic peace, and surveys show that Ukrainians in both Donetsk and L’viv agreed that what language people speak is less important than whether they support Ukraine.<sup>39</sup>

Second, one finds in Ukraine a strong correlation between a worsening socio-economic situation and a decline in all types of civic and political activity, including mobilization around nationalist causes.<sup>40</sup> Ukrainian society is better modified by adjectives such as ‘tired’, ‘frustrated’ and ‘alienated’ than ‘civil’. The fall-off in support for nationalism can be explained as part of this general phenomenon. In cases like Serbia, Croatia and Slovakia, nationalism has been sustained in large part because nationalist leaders and movements control the state and thus can use state resources to further their own causes. This has not been the case in Ukraine, where all the nationalist parties have been political outsiders since independence.

Third, one could argue that much of the nationalist project in Ukraine is complete, and thus nationalism as a discourse has little to offer. Independence has been won, Crimea will remain part of Ukraine, Ukrainian is the sole official language, Ukraine remains aloof from the CIS, and relations with both the West and Russia have improved in such a way to strengthen Ukrainian sovereignty. Going beyond this, such as stripping the Russian language of any protected status or pressing irredentist claims against neighbouring states, has very little support in society. Instead, people in all areas of the country give top priority to economic and personal security. Nationalist discourse cannot address this, and it is little wonder that some erstwhile nationalists from Rukh have joined other movements or parties, such as Reforms and Order, that focus primarily on economic issues. Even in L’viv, surveys in 1997 found that only a minority (31 per cent) think that the ‘renaissance of the Ukrainian nation’ should be a priority for the state.<sup>41</sup> The hollowness of nationalism is exemplified by the fact that most nationalist groups have been unable to mount an effective opposition to the current élite despite ongoing crises in the country. In a sense, they have little to say to appeal to any beyond their core constituency.



Fourth, one should look at the ethnic structure of Ukraine and historical factors as well. Most of Ukraine has long been a part of the Russian/Soviet empire, and some surveys suggest that up to half of all ethnic Ukrainians, outside those in western Ukraine, have been 'Russified'.<sup>42</sup> Russians and Ukrainians share many things in common: the Orthodox faith (again, western Ukrainians largely excepted), the heritage of Kievan Rus', and an eastern Slavic tongue. There is not a 'marker' to divide Russian and Ukrainian as there is to divide, say, Slovak and Hungarian, Armenian and Azeri, or even Croat and Serb. Multiculturalism is also part of Ukraine's history, and this cannot be unmade. Efforts to re-discover the 'true' Ukrainian nation, a concept often developed and defined by western Ukrainians, patronize other Ukrainians and reduce them to an inauthentic, corrupt, or degenerate body. This type of discourse therefore has limited appeal.

Finally, one should also note the mistakes made by nationalist groups, particularly those that purported to have a 'national-democratic' label. Rather than standing by their democratic principles and insisting on a genuine transformation of Ukrainian society, these groups tended to put nationalism and the state first and 'surrender', in Chornovil's words, their democratic principles. This was a costly mistake, and severely constrained their political manoeuvrability. Rather than remaining outsiders pushing for reform, they made an effort to ally themselves with the powers-that-be, although notably the nationalists were never incorporated into the national power structure. By becoming part of the system, they could not capitalize on the feelings of the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians who were not satisfied with the system.

The Ukrainian nationalist movement has essentially painted itself into a corner. Yes, it helped win independence for the state, but by siding with the leaders of this state and being associated with their failures, it cannot campaign as an outside force committed to turning the country around. Appeals to revive the nation will not be well-received outside of western Ukraine, the nationalists' current base but clearly insufficient as a source to gain national power. Ukrainian voters want something more concrete and less anachronistic than defending Ukrainian sovereignty. Until and unless nationalist discourse in Ukraine can be re-defined to address the most pressing concerns of the country, nationalist movements, parties, and their supporters will remain bit players on the national political stage.

#### NOTES

1. Serhei Zhizhko, 'Tut i syohodni: chy isnuye vzahali ukrains'kyi natsionalizm?' *Slovo*, June 1992, p.2.

2. Boris Bujvol, 'Revoliutsiia pislia revoliutsii v Ukraini', *Ukrains'kyi chas*, Vol.1, No.11 (1993), p.69.
3. Mykola Ryabchuk, 'Between Civil Society and the New Etatism: Democracy and State-Building in Ukraine', in Michael Kennedy (ed.), *Envisioning Eastern Europe: Postcommunist Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
4. Dominique Arel, 'Ukraine: The Temptation of a Nationalizing State', in Vladimir Tismaneanu (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995).
5. Ethnic Russians account for 22 per cent of the Ukrainian population, and many Russians live in the very Russified regions of eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Protecting the rights of this ethnic minority and finding ways to bridge the gap between the various regions of the country have been important issues in post-Soviet Ukraine.
6. Western Ukraine, particularly the region formerly part of Austrian Galicia, is often characterized as the 'Piedmont' of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. This region was incorporated into the USSR only in 1939, contains a large number of Uniate Catholics, and was the scene of repeated fighting between Ukrainian and Soviet forces. It was here that Ukrainian nationalist ideas originally developed, and the region remains overwhelmingly (over 95 per cent) ethnically Ukrainian and Ukrainian-speaking.
7. Rukh Programme and Charter, Kiev, 1989.
8. *Post-Postup* (L'viv), 22–28 Oct. 1992, p.6.
9. *Nezavisimost'* (Kiev), 19 Feb. 1993, p.3.
10. *Samostijna Ukraina*, May 1992, p.2.
11. Ryabchuk, 'Between Civil Society'.
12. Arkady Misuno, 'Pro konseptsiiu natsional'no-demokratychnoyi ideologii dlia suverennoyi Ukrainy, iak peredmovu derzhavotvorchoho protsesu', *Ukrains'kyi chas*, Vol.1, No.11 (1993), pp.27–9.
13. Interview with Andrii Shkil, editor of *Natsionalist* (L'viv), Jan. 1993.
14. Zhizhko.
15. *Nezavisimost'*, 13 Nov. 1992, p.2.
16. See statements by numerous officials on the 75th anniversary of the Ukrainian National Republic, reported in *Vysoky Zamok* (L'viv), 26 Jan. 1993.
17. Alexander Motyl, *Dilemmas of Independence* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993) p.150.
18. Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.111–2.
19. Quoted in Ryabchuk, 'Between Civil Society'.
20. *Nezavisimost'*, 23 June 1993, p.1.
21. Mykola Ryabchuk, 'Chy isnuje v Ukraini 'Partiia vlady'?' *UNIAN-Polityka*, 10–16 May 1994, p.4.
22. *Post-Postup*, 15 June 1993, p.3.
23. Bujvol.
24. *Post-Postup*, 15 June 1993, p.5.
25. *Vysoky Zamok*, 8 December 1992, p.1.
26. Ryabchuk, 'Between Civil Society'.
27. *Politychny portret Ukrainy*, no. 1, 1993, p.7.
28. Arel, and Valery Khmel'ko, 'Politieskie orientatsii izbiratelei i itogi vyborov v Verkhovnyi Sovet', *Ukraina segodnia* (Kiev), No.5 (1994), pp.55–63.
29. The closest candidate, besides Kravchuk, to fit the nationalist description was Volodymyr Lanovy, who campaigned more as an economic reformer than as a Ukrainian nationalist. Rukh and other parties, however, gave at best lukewarm support to his candidacy.
30. A survey by the Kiev Institute of Sociology from spring 1995 found that over two-thirds of respondents in Galicia supported Kuchma, even though less than a year before under ten per cent of the people there had voted for him.
31. Paul Kubicek, *The State, Interest Associations, and Corporatism in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
32. 'Vzryv nezavisimosti', *Kommersant*, 6 Aug. 1996, pp.34–7.

33. Wilson, pp.132–3.
34. Leftist parties are the Communist Party, the Progressive Socialist Party, and the Socialist-Agrarian bloc. Nationalist parties are the blocs 'Forward Ukraine!', National Front, Democratic Party-NEP, 'Less Words' and the Christian-Democratic Party, UNA, and the Republican Christian Party. Regions are defined as follows: West: L'viv, Ternopil', Ivano-Frankivsk, Rivne, Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi, and Volyn; East is Donetsk, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia, Sumy, and Kharkiv; South is Odessa, Mykolayiv, Kherson, and Crimea; Central is all others.
35. This group 'other nationalists' includes UNA (not 1992), KUN (for 1993 and 1994), Congress of National-Democratic Forces (1992), the Republican Party, the Conservative Republican Party, and the Christian Democratic Party. The Democratic Party was *not* included because, no doubt due to its name, it draws an amount of support on surveys that in no way corresponds with the support it receives at polls. For example, in 1995 151 respondents (12.6 per cent) claimed to intend to vote for the Democratic Party and in 1996 the figure was 135 (11.3 per cent).
36. One caveat is that since a number of parties have been aggregated, one cannot definitely say that supporters of radical parties such as UNA or KUN are 'satisfied.' Unfortunately, their numbers were too small in the survey to perform a reliable statistical analysis.
37. In the same 1996 survey of 1200 Ukrainians, 68.1 per cent were not satisfied with democracy and 59.8 per cent were not satisfied with the overall development of the country.
38. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, 'The Leninist Debris or Waiting for Peron', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.10, No.3 (fall 1996) pp.504–35.
39. George Liber, 'Imagining Ukraine: regional differences and the emergence of an integrated state identity, 1926–1994', *Nations and Nationalism* Vol.4, No.2 (Apr. 1998), p.203.
40. Kubicek, 1999.
41. The national figure was 17.1 per cent. See Viktor Nebozhenko, 'Politychna elita i politychni protsesy u dzerkali hromads'koi dumky zakhodnoi Ukrainy', *Stavropihion* (L'viv), 1997, pp.66–7. In contrast, 69.3 per cent of those in L'viv thought material well-being was a necessary priority and 37.5 per cent listed protecting the economic interests of citizens.
42. Arel, 1995. He makes this conclusion on the basis of preferred language of interviews for respondents in various surveys, which he claims is a more reliable guide to language use than surveys asking about what language is spoken in the home.