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Does public opinion matter in Ukraine? The case of foreign policy

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Abstract

The article critically surveys the impact of domestic public opinion on foreign policy in Ukraine by integrating it within theories of public opinion. Studies of public opinion in Ukraine have not given due weight to the unique characteristics of the Ukrainian 'public', which differs greatly from the Western public. Ukrainian society is passive, atomized and its power is 'submerged' relative to that of the state. The article argues that public opinion is of minimal importance in the area of foreign policy.

Keywords: Public opinion; Ukraine; Foreign Policy; Russophones; Nationalism; Identity

Introduction

The future direction of Ukraine's foreign policy has been a major concern for scholars and policy-makers for over a decade, and public opinion polls on the topic have been numerous. The thinking is that public opinion polls hold part of the answer for the future of a geopolitically important country. Public opinion polls have been cited to bolster the argument that Ukraine will, or should eventually, ally itself in one way or another with Russia and/or the CIS (Wilson, 1997a; Lieven, 1999a, b; Shulman, 1998a,b, 1999). In addition, the US government-funded polling and focus group research has been undertaken by the Office of Media Reaction and Research of the US Information Agency (now in the Department of State), and the Agency for International Development. The results of these polls

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are used to identify areas of progress and future funding priorities. This, of course, has important policy implications, including in the area of foreign policy. For example, NATO commissioned a poll of Ukrainian attitudes toward the alliance in 1998, and found support for Ukrainians joining NATO to be quite low (Galin, 1998). A 1994 NATO/National Defense University Conference on the Partnership for Peace referred to opinion polls that pointed to the Ukrainian public's preference for participation in the CIS as a major impediment toward the government's ability to 'move West' (Simon, 1995).

Yet, contrary to what one might expect from polls, in 2002, the Kuchma government saw fit to declare its intention to join NATO. For the past decade, a cornerstone of Ukrainian foreign policy has been to avoid and/or weaken the CIS, not to join it. Thus, a question is raised which is often applied to polling in other countries: Does public opinion on foreign policy in Ukraine really matter? What is the role of public opinion in Ukrainian politics, and how is this role different from the Western nations? Does Ukraine even have a 'public'? These questions must be addressed if the Western scholars and government are to draw useful conclusions from polls conducted in Ukraine. Little of the polling research on Ukraine has been placed within any type of context—not only the context of the body of the Ukrainian public opinion as a whole but also mainline theory on the use of public opinion polls.

This article seeks to undertake two tasks. First, we provide an overview of the current state of what constitutes the Ukrainian public, to illustrate that it is highly passive and inert. Second, we will apply mainline theory on the use of public opinion polls to the question of the Ukrainian public opinion on foreign policy issues. Our hypothesis is that Ukrainian public opinion on foreign policy is of rather limited importance and does not guide Ukrainian foreign policy. The Ukrainian public is divided, passive, and not terribly concerned with foreign affairs. We apply a pluralist model of public opinion to Ukrainian foreign policy to investigate the character of Ukrainian public opinion on foreign policy—its structure, intensity and direction, as well as other characteristics.

The article is divided into three parts. First, there is a discussion of what constitutes the 'public' in public opinion theory, and how this differs between the West and Ukraine. Two models of public opinion are presented, pluralist and participatory. Second, the Western theory and Ukrainian reality are integrated using the pluralist and participatory models. Third, the Ukrainian public's foreign policy preferences are discussed.

The Western 'public' in public opinion theory

Western democratic theory has placed a primary importance on the existence of a 'public' and its relationship to the state. Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau in particular struggled with how a public, whether a *polis* or those coming together to form a social compact, would ultimately maintain authority over the general direction of a state's actions. All saw the creation of the state as stemming from the actions of society, and that the 'public' was important to varying degrees as a com-

munity of the ruled, who had needs and interests which rulers had to respond to. However, the views of the aforementioned democratic theorists on the seamless and organic nature of the relationship between state and society seemed increasingly anachronistic by the 20th century, as understanding of the political behavior of mass societies became more sophisticated. Edmund Burke and James Madison both grappled with the potential for violence in mass societies and the deep contradictions between state and society, and believed the *polis* had the capacity to change into a mob. In the modern age, the 'public' of mass societies was also seen to be ignorant, distracted, prone to demagoguery and motivated by self-interest. In the 20th century USA, theorists of pluralism such as Lippmann (1925), Dahl (1956) and Key (1964) more or less dispensed with the idea of the 'public' as being a community, which could always express itself coherently. They viewed the public as an amalgam of disparate interest groups that only rose to object when their specific interests were threatened by opponents, majorities or minorities, and/or the state. Both also implicitly or explicitly defined the 'public' as a body of people who are concerned and/or interested in a varying number of issues, at varying times and of varying degrees of importance to them. This we term the 'pluralist' school of public opinion.

In short, when it comes to politics, *not everyone is interested, not everyone is fully informed, and not everyone cares*. But what is crucial to understand is that a segment of a population—even a small minority—can have tremendous influence if they are highly committed and act upon the basis of their self-interest—particularly when they are threatened. This is the pluralist's minimalist definition of the modern 'public'. The pluralist school discounted the potential of society to initiate change without the behest of leaders.

The opposite view is taken by the 'participatory' school of public opinion: society did not simply wake up and react when its interests were threatened, it could act independently in its own right, and in fact can be active and 'elite-directing'. With strong civil society and adequate 'social capital', it even addresses social problems and needs independently and without elite direction (Almond and Verba, 1963, 1980; Inglehart, 1990; Danton, 1991; Putnam, 1994; Yankelovich, 1991).

Thus, the general trend line in the Western pollsters' view of the 'public' has changed. It began, from Lippmann (1925), with the suspicious view of a largely uninformed public, whose role was simply to retrospectively judge the activities of elites. Over time, it changed to the current view of a dynamic, well-informed, 'elite-directing' public, capable of addressing fairly complex issues without the direction of elites. The reality is of course somewhere in between these two views, but American pollsters, and Americans in general, tend to favor the view of the public of the latter type. This is evident in the pride about the US civil society. It also means a heightened interest in, and attention to, public opinion polls, because North Americans and Europeans live in a society where public opinion really does matter, in many cases. However, we should not assume that because public opinion matters in the West, it matters elsewhere, including in Ukraine.

Characteristics of the submerged Ukrainian 'public'

There has been little integration of studies of post-Soviet Ukraine within public opinion theory or discussions of the attitudes of Ukrainian elites to public opinion. Shlapentokh (1999) found that in Russia the elites have little interest in polls and therefore ignore them. The relationship between state and society in Russia is such that political elites 'look upon the masses as an ever mutable thing, a population that endures rather than rebels, obeys the current political authority, and even votes for it' (Shlapentokh, 1999, p. 458). If the situation in Ukraine is the same as what Shlapentokh found in Russia, we also have to ask ourselves the same question: does the 'public' matter in Ukraine?

Unlike the upbeat view of the efficacy of the US and West European public presented by the Western pollsters, the view of the Ukrainian public by Ukrainian sociologists is far bleaker. Indeed, passivity is the essential characteristic of the Ukrainian 'public' as a whole. One might also speculate that the Ukrainian 'public' is actually several 'publics'; the result of political, regional, linguistic and cultural cleavages.

But the most important cleavage is the one between state and society; in terms of the power relationship between the two, the Ukrainian 'public' has a submerged character. Throughout the 1990s, the proportion of Ukrainians willing to become involved in civic activity and strikes was always low, even at a time of deepening socio-economic crisis. The public only makes itself evident during elections and during times of crisis, such as the series of demonstrations during the 'Kuchmagate' scandal since November 2000.[1] Even these were attended by only 20,000–50,000 people (in comparison demonstrations in much smaller Moldova in early 2002 attracted upwards of 80,000). The majority of the participants was from central and western Ukraine. As few as 7.4% felt themselves to be full fledged citizens or 'hospodari' (*Ukrainska Pravda*, 26 September, 2002). 90–92% believed they have no influence on local or central authorities (*Dzserkalo Tyzhdnia*, 24–31 August, 2002). Only a small minority—13.8%—of Ukrainians are willing to take part in political protest, a figure similar to the 11–14% of the large Soviet urban centers who participated in protests in the Mikhail Gorbachev era (*Dzserkalo Tyzhdnia*, 14–21 September 2002 and Beissinger, 2002, p. 89). A poll by the Razumkov Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies found that only 4.7% believed that society can be changed through exerting influence on the authorities (*Ukrainska Pravda*, 26 September, 2002). The submerged public of the rest of the country was essentially passive.

This passivity is the result of the following six factors.

[1] The Kuchmagate crisis began in November 2000 when a presidential guard secretly taped President Kuchma making threatening statements about an opposition journalist, Heorhiy Gongadze, who was found murdered two months later. See Taras Kuzio, 'Ukraine One year After Kuchmagate,' *RFERL Newsline*, 28 November 2001.

Withdrawal from politics

The prevailing view of the apolitical nature of Ukrainian society stems first of all from the communist legacy of the near absolute destruction of independent societal institutions, the legacy of terror and the atomization of the populace. Ukrainian sociologists overlay this with colonization and the degradation of Ukrainian language, culture and national identity. There is also the socio-economic crisis of the first decade of independence. This has the effect of impoverishing the society, forcing it to try to further protect itself from the vagaries and abuse of a highly corrupt yet powerful state, which operates as a large patronage machine and continues to exploit, threaten, and manipulate the powerless and atomized masses (Derhachov et al., 1996; Riabchouk, 1998).

The perceived 'anomie' of the Ukrainian populace was initially so worrying to the National Security Community that they took note of it in a report written for the National Institute of Strategic Studies (NISS), the research arm of the National Security and Defense Council. The report, titled *Ukraine on the Path to Ideological Identification* was written by one of its more prominent scholars (Valevskyi, 1994). Five elements of Ukraine's political culture were described and illustrated with public opinion data:

1. *Pragmatism*, or a shying away from ideologies of the right and left.
2. *Marginalization*, a general feeling of hopelessness and lack of confidence in the future, due to dire economic circumstances.
3. *Ambivalence* about the future course of the nation.
4. '*Departization*', the Ukrainian population's aversion to identification with specific political parties, favoring instead specific political leaders by 'intuition' rather than rationality; and
5. *Regionalism*.

However, despite the withdrawal of the population from politics, ideological polarization still existed; political extremism coexisted with 'departization', only in different sectors of the public. The strongest ideological orientation was the communist one, to which roughly one-sixth of the population adhered. Therefore, according to Valevskyi (1994), Ukrainian mass consciousness was both polarized and amorphous. It lacked a unifying national idea or ideology, and none of the existing ideological orientations had the support of a majority of the population. This, combined with the poor performance of the elite, caused Valevskyi (1994) to sense a deep crisis of authority.

Valyevski's (1994) early assessments of the Ukrainian public have since been confirmed by other wide-ranging studies, including Rose's (1998) cross-national studies, Ferguson's (2000) studies for the International Foundation for Election Systems, and Panina and Golovakha's (1999) studies for the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences. Generally speaking, all these studies of Ukrainian political attitudes find the following:

1. an aversion to political parties,
2. nearly universal dissatisfaction with the state of the economy,
3. distrust of leaders and governing institutions, with the exception of the armed forces,
4. lack of faith in the future,
5. lack of efficacy; that is, the ability to influence events,
6. wide and widening gap between elites and public.

Nonetheless, it is quite evident that the Ukrainian public is a far different public than that which exists in the West. The Ukrainian public is resigned, ambivalent, anxious about the future and concerned primarily with survival. This is not to say, however, that the Ukrainian society is completely inert—in fact there are very important networks of personal and clientelistic relationships people use to address problems. The Ukrainian society still lacks organizations to mediate between society and state, and to organize societal interests before the state. In short, there is no functioning 'feedback loop' between society and the decisions of political elites and institutions (Ferguson, 2000, p. 3). Most importantly, the Ukrainian public feels itself to have very little power relative to the ruling regime. Western publics, on the other hand, exhibit a great deal of trust in governing institutions and are elite-directing, active and engaged in the political process. Public opinion carries far more weight in the West because governing institutions are to varying degrees responsive to it (Aberg, 2000).

Perhaps, both these views are exaggerated, but the fact remains that 'the public' in the West is a far more important political actor than 'the public' in Ukraine. On the positive side, however, the Ukrainian public does express a desire for reform and for the country to become more democratic, and it exhibits a respect for the democratic process. Political extremism and ethnic intolerance do not seem to be a cause for concern.

National identity and civil society

There is no all-Ukrainian reformist movement because of the low levels of national integration across Ukraine. This prevents the creation of sufficient levels of trust across different regions to allow for the creation of a pan-Ukrainian civil society.

The low levels of trust evident in post-communist states reflect an 'atomized, cynical and exploitative' public (Lovell, 2001, p. 30). The mistrust towards institutions and politicians that emerged under communism continued to grow in post-Soviet Ukraine (Hans, 2001). 71.1% believe taxes will be stolen or confiscated by the authorities (*Ukrainska Pravda*, 26 September, 2002). Only 6.6 and 5.9% support Leonid Kuchma as president and have trust in the presidential institution, respectively (*Ukrainska Pravda*, 28 September, 2002).

What perhaps differentiates western and central Ukrainians from their eastern and southern counterparts may be that the former have a great intensity of attachment to a country they see as 'theirs' which they believe has been hijacked. They,

therefore, wish to become involved in civic affairs to effect change in 'their' country. Such an intensity of attachment to Ukraine does not exist in eastern Ukraine where a territorial loyalty to Ukraine competes with regional, pan eastern Slavic, and Soviet revivalist identities.

In the Soviet era, western and central Ukraine produced the majority of the republic's dissidents and Rukh was based in these same two regions. Opposition activists and demonstrators were drawn from the same two regions during Ukraine's largest demonstrations in 2001–2002 during the 'Kuchmagate' scandal. This pattern was repeated in the March 2002 elections when these regions voted for the opposition socialists and national democrats.

In the late Soviet era, the 'Kuchmagate' scandal and the March 2002 elections, eastern and southern Ukraine has not become involved in civic activity. A far deeper Soviet legacy and ambivalent national identity has made these two regions more prone to manipulation into voting for the 'sovereign communist' Kravchuk in December 1991, the 'anti-nationalist' Kuchma in July 1994 and the pro-Kuchma For a United Ukraine (ZYU) election bloc or the communists in March 2002.

National democrats is the main political group that mobilizes along civic and national lines. Democratization, economic reform, national revival and 'returning to Europe' continue to be intimately bound together in post-Soviet Ukraine. Eastern and southern Ukrainian-based centrist parties do not mobilize along civic lines, because they are dominated by oligarchs and the executive—the very same groups who prefer a controlled polity, non-active citizenry and weak civil society.

Centrist oligarch parties are also the area of Ukraine's political spectrum that is devoid of any ideology (in Ukrainian the 'boloto', or swamp). Lacking any strong ideological preferences or ethno-cultural base, eastern Ukrainians find it difficult to mobilize.

The link between national identity, civic activity, public efficacy and foreign policy orientation was clearly seen in the March 2002 elections. Although Yushchenko is Ukraine's most popular politician, his Our Ukraine bloc did not become a Ukrainian equivalent of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) headed by Vojislav Kostunica, who was able to mobilize both democratic and nationalist anti-communist mass opposition to former President Slobodan Milosovic in October 2000. In Ukraine, the creation of a similar mass movement as in Serbia or other central and eastern European states is made more difficult because of the national question that prevents Yushchenko and Our Ukraine obtain the same level of support in eastern as in western Ukraine. In the March 2002 elections, Our Ukraine failed to cross the 4% barrier in the half of seats elected proportionately in only two Donbas *oblasts*. But, even in the remainder of eastern and southern Ukraine, it never reached the same levels as in western Ukraine where it swept the region in a landslide.

In eastern and, to a lesser extent, in southern Ukraine the population voted either deliberately or were manipulated into voting for the pro-Kuchma ZYU. ZYU came first in Donetsk *oblast*. ZYU was able to utilize 'administrative resources' to an unbelievable extent only in eastern and southern Ukraine, not in western or central Ukraine. The reason for this lies in a more malleable and sovietized

population that lacks the resources and social capital to mobilize in defense of its rights. The resources and social capital are required for mobilization by any group (Cohen, 1985; Shils, 1995; Dawson, 1996, p.10–33; Manent, 1997; Smith and Wilson, 1997; Levinger and Franklin, 2001; Neuberger, 2001). The unavailability of these resources has translated into passivity for eastern Ukrainians on domestic and foreign policy issues.

Russophone delegative democracy

Ukrainian Russophile activists Mykhailo Pogrebynsky and Vladimir Malynkowitch bemoaned in a roundtable convened by the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (April 25, 2001) entitled 'What Kind of Ukraine Does Russia Need?', that the civil society is closely linked to the national identity in Ukraine. In the absence of an active civil society in Russophone regions of Ukraine public opinion, they believe, it is irrelevant and the public can be effectively ignored by Ukraine's elites.

An example of the lack of attention to eastern and southern Ukrainian views on foreign policy is the decision to move towards NATO membership which was announced in May 2002. This was made a month after the elections because to have done so in the elections would have reduced votes for ZYU and increased them for the communists in eastern Ukraine. After the elections were over, this fear of the reaction of eastern Ukrainians was no longer an issue because of their passivity between elections. Kuchma could also risk this move because he would no longer need to test his popularity in any future election, having only two years to run in his second and final term.

Eastern and southern Ukrainians only become involved in politics and civic activism in elections when their more numerous votes in regions such as the Donbas with its ten million population are sought after by election blocs. Even during elections, the use of administrative resources makes their voting behavior more pliable. Between elections, the more passive eastern and southern Ukraine are ignored by Ukraine's elites. Discussions of Ukraine that have therefore defined it as a 'delegative democracy' have missed the point (Kubicek, 1994; O'Donnell, 1994) as this term only applies to eastern and southern Ukraine, not to the remainder of the country, which is active both between and during elections. Indeed, western and central Ukraine are the strongholds of the opposition movement against Kuchma and the oligarchs. Three out of four opposition blocs gained most of their votes in the March 2002 elections in Ukrainophone western and central Ukraine—Our Ukraine, the Tymoshenko Bloc and the Socialists. Only the communists gained the bulk of their votes in eastern and southern Ukraine.

National identity, support for reform, an active civil society and a pro-European orientation are therefore closely linked in Ukraine, as they are in other post-communist states (Kuzio, 2002b).

Weakness of Russian nationalism

The weakness of Russian nationalism in Ukraine, in contrast to Ukrainian nationalism (Kuzio, 2002a), is another factor that works against the articulation of an eastern orientation in foreign policy. In the 1998 and 2002 Ukrainian parliamentary elections, Russian nationalist blocs failed miserably, in contrast to national democratic ones. Eastern Ukrainians had the opportunity to vote in the March 2002 elections 'For the Union of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia' bloc and thereby translate their public opinion preferences into seats in parliament. But they did not. In contrast, the polling preferences of western and central Ukrainians were translated into votes for Our Ukraine, the Tymoshenko bloc and the Socialists.

The Russian Bloc and the For the Union of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia bloc obtained a total of only 1.16% in proportional voting nationwide in the 2002 elections. This was even less than the 1.61% total captured by the Russian nationalist Social–Liberal Alliance (SLON) and the Soyuz (Union) party in the March 1998 elections. In contrast, Our Ukraine came first with nearly 24% in the 2002 elections. It is Russian, not 'Ukrainian nationalism', that is therefore a 'minority faith' (Wilson, 1997a; Lieven, 1999a, b).

Linguistic groups

In the mid 1990s, it was popular among the Western scholars, journalists and intelligence agencies to divide Ukraine into two roughly equal linguistic groups based on 'language of preference', and not 'native language' as in the Soviet census (Wilson, 1997a). This perception of a country divided along linguistic lines was seemingly made plausible by the outcome of the second round of the presidential elections in July 1994 when western and central Ukraine voted for the incumbent, Kravchuk, and eastern and southern Ukraine for Kuchma.

Recent studies have shown that dividing Ukraine into two linguistic groups is convenient for the Western political scientists but it is unable to capture the complexity and fluidity on the ground (Ponarin, 2000; Poppe and Hagendoorn, 2001). Many Ukrainians use the Ukrainian and Russian languages inter-changeably, as seen in Kyiv, where polls have found that one-third use Ukrainian, another third Russian and the remainder use both languages.

Barrington (2001) found that 57% of Ukrainians based their identity upon citizenship, followed by ethnicity (34%) and only 12% on language. A Russophone conglomerate has not emerged in Ukraine.

Elites and public opinion

Ukrainian sociologists understand that public opinion in Ukraine does not carry the importance to the political leadership which public opinion in the West does. The clearest evidence of this difference is the widespread use in Ukraine (and Russia) of 'expert polls', such as those performed quarterly by the Center for Peace Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine (CPCFPU, 2000), to obtain clues as to the future foreign policy course of the country.

These polls focus on elites in academia and foreign policy institutions, and provide evidence for a remarkable gap between elites and the public. They show that only 3.9% of elites believe that the public influences foreign policy, only slightly more than the Rada (2.8) and the media (1.8). The presidential administration (91.7%), oligarchs (56.3) and lobbies (38.2) exert the main influence on foreign policy (CPCFPU, 2000). According to the CPCFPU, the Ukrainian society is not involved in foreign policy discourse.

Differences in elite–mass opinions are not unusual, even in the USA, due to the fact that publics tend to be rather risk-averse, while elites are more concerned with issues of national interest and security (Reilly, 1999). As Ukraine's elites were committed to building an independent state, their priority was Russia's recognition of its borders and support from the USA and NATO for its sovereignty and territorial integrity (Hopmann and Shenfield, 1997; D'Anieri, 1999). Hurfitz and Peffley (1987; p. 1103) stated that, 'the complexity of international affairs makes the policy domain a very ambiguous and difficult one for the public to follow, at least without having to pay substantial costs'. In the case of Ukraine, where foreign policy is extremely elite-driven, elite polls provide far better clues as to the future foreign policy orientation of the country. Mass views are ill defined and play only an indirect role in shaping foreign policy in Russia and even in the West (Malcolm et al., 1996, p. 188).

Structure, intensity and direction—toward a fuller understanding of the foreign policy preferences of the Ukrainian 'publics'

There would be little sense in examining Ukrainian public opinion using the participatory model of public opinion, or to insist that public opinion in any way 'directs' the actions of elites in Ukraine. It may, however, be useful to examine foreign policy issues in light of the pluralist model of public opinion.

Pollsters who undertake in-depth studies of particular issues for candidates and marketing firms typically measure various characteristics of opinion, in order to determine its structure—who believes what and why. Also important are intensity and stability. Intensity is typically measured by various rankings and scales, in order to determine how passionate the public feels on a certain issue, and how it is likely to act. Stability refers to opinions held over time, to determine if opinion is volatile, which typically indicates that the public is uninterested, uninformed, or simply responding to heightened media awareness without yet having formed an opinion. Pollsters also ask related questions to provide context for results.

For this section, we used longitudinal poll data on foreign policy issues, in order to obtain a better idea of intensity and stability. The data below were provided by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and SOCIS/Gallup; we also draw on a NATO-commissioned poll.

As mentioned earlier, virtually every poll on the foreign policy preferences of the Ukrainian public indicates a strong preference for some sort of alliance or integration with other eastern Slavic states (see Kuzio, 2002d). Yet, in May 2002, the Ukrainian leadership indicated its intention to join NATO. Geopolitics aside,

public opinion has generally not been a good indicator of Ukraine's foreign policy choices. A problem may exist in looking at public opinion data as a whole. As we have outlined above, the Ukrainian public is highly divided and passive. We have also illustrated how the pluralist model of public opinion views not a single 'public', but a variety of them, each concerned with different issues at different times.

The divergence in foreign policy preferences of Ukraine's regions is well-known and has been adequately covered by Shulman (1998a, b, 1999). However, there is also the issue of intensity; this is important to the pluralist model, because a minority which aggressively acts on its preferences is more effective than a silent majority. Shulman (1998a, b, 1999) accepts that the intensity of opinion among Lviv elites on foreign policy issues is higher than that of Donetsk. Western Ukrainians are opposed to integration with Russia even if it has beneficial effects on the Ukrainian economy, and believe much more strongly than eastern Ukrainian elites about the correct foreign orientation for Ukraine.

The intensity issue is also observed in Galin's NATO poll. Taken in March 1998, here is the regional breakdown of sentiment on military threats to Ukraine (Galin, 1998, p. 8–10)

Q. Does an external military threat to Ukraine exist?

	Yes	Probably	No	Probably No	DK/NA
West	12.3	9.8	7.0	45.9	25.0
Kyiv	13.5	5.8	17.3	46.8	16.7
North	6.6	3.9	4.9	63.5	21.1
Central	11.0	9.3	14.2	49.1	16.3
Southern	8.9	3.9	7.1	56.1	23.9
Eastern	10.5	6.4	10.4	51.9	20.8
Crimea	7.1	6.3	8.9	50.9	26.8
Total	10.3	6.9	9.6	51.8	21.4

In addition, the NATO study found that the regions most concerned with military threats were also far more likely to name Russia as the threat rather than some other country:

Q. From which countries does the military threat to Ukraine come?

	Russia	W. Eur.	E. Eur.	USA	Other
West	61	12	11	9	7
Kyiv	46	17	15	11	10
North	29	22	16	24	4
Central	34	18	17	26	4
Southern	17	28	12	40	3
Eastern	15	25	16	34	10
Crimea	18	23	18	32	9

Therefore, western and central Ukrainians are more likely to feel that the country is threatened (although the level of concern is not high), and are more likely to identify Russia as the source of the threat. The intensity of opinion on foreign policy issues and Russia is greater in western and central Ukraine than in the rest of the country. Not only does the western and central Ukrainian public have more intense opinions on foreign policy, it is fairly politically motivated, and the center-right of the Ukrainian political spectrum, particularly Rukh and Our Ukraine, are strong there. The western and central Ukrainian public also has a certain amount of efficacy—it elects leaders who share their views on foreign policy, and places them into position of power. This was clearly seen in the March 2002 elections when western and central Ukrainians voted for Our Ukraine, the Tymoshenko bloc and the Socialists while eastern and southern Ukrainians voted for pro-presidential forces or the communists.

The makeup of the 1994–1998 parliamentary foreign affairs committee was also illustrative: a total of 11 members of the 21-member committee were from the parliamentary right, while only three Communists and one Socialist were represented (Chudowsky, 1998). In addition, the two previous foreign ministers, Hennadiy Udovenko and Borys Tarasiuk, were favorites of the right; Udovenko went on to lead a splinter group of Rukh after leaving his post. Both Tarasiuk and Udovenko are members of the Our Ukraine bloc. Konstantin Morozov also joined the national democrats after resigning in protest from the position of Defense Minister in Autumn 1993 and is today an Our Ukraine supporter.

In examining the structure of Ukrainian public opinion using the pluralist model, it becomes evident that the western central Ukrainian 'public' has a disproportionate level of power, due to the intensity of its opinions on foreign policy and its ability to convert its preferences into actual policy outcomes. In the pluralist model, a vocal minority is more influential than a silent majority on an issue of great importance to it.

This is not to say that Ukraine is a pluralist society—it is not. It is simply to say that the western and central Ukrainian public has a deeper intensity of opinion, it has acted on its preferences, and its leaders have been able to carve foreign affairs out as their own priority policy area. They have been aided by the fact that the rest of Ukraine is not terribly concerned about foreign affairs. The next table illustrates that to the Ukrainian public, foreign policy issues have drastically decreased in importance during the 1990s. In fact, virtually all major issues (respondents are asked to name three) pale in comparison to the state of the economy:

Q. Which problems in Ukraine concern you the most?

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001
Living standards	74	72	66	79	83	89	76
Crime	49	55	50	42	45	37	43
Ukraine's security	25	23	20	16	15	10	16

Relations w/Russia	29	28	23	21	16	9	21
Revival of Ukr. nation	11	9	7	9	4	4	8
Russian language	5	5	6	5	4	2	5
Crimea and Black Sea fleet	9	5	7	3	4	1	–

Relations with other states might also be viewed in the context of increasing social differentiation among ethnic groups in Ukraine, here measured by a 'social distance' scale of one to seven. One means that the respondent would accept a member of a certain ethnic group as if they were a member of his/her family, while two would indicate acceptance as a friend, three as a neighbor, and so on. Seven indicates that members of that ethnic group should not be allowed into Ukraine.

There is a slight increase in the social distance between ethnic Ukrainians and other nationalities in Ukraine, but the increase is very modest. As a whole, levels of tolerance and acceptance have been steady or improved somewhat:

Ethnic Ukrainians only—Social Distance Index

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001
UK'phone UK	1.70	1.72	2.03	2.27	1.83	1.77	2.01
Rus'phone UK	1.78	1.84	2.06	2.34	1.97	1.97	2.15
Russians	1.95	2.06	2.45	2.55	2.25	2.21	2.13
Belarussians	2.32	2.49	3.05	3.18	3.04	2.94	2.94
Jews	3.63	3.74	3.89	3.97	3.96	3.86	3.92
Poles	3.85	3.84	4.16	4.23	4.23	4.20	4.05
Gypsies	5.15	5.14	5.15	5.35	5.40	5.46	5.42

All ethnic groups—Social Distance Index

	1994	1996	1998
Ukrainians	1.83	1.43	1.46
Russians	2.25	2.06	2.01
Belarussians	2.70	2.62	2.52
Jews	3.83	3.83	3.88
Poles	4.44	4.52	4.60
Gypsies	5.09	5.28	5.44

Therefore, relative stability in foreign policy preferences is accompanied by relative stability in attitudes toward ethnic groups. There are few changes in societal attitudes to bolster any radical shifts in foreign policy views.

When asked to choose one option, Ukrainians as a whole prefer a foreign policy orientation toward Russia and the CIS.

Q. Which way of development would you prefer?

Develop relations with

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
CIS	40.5	38.8	31.8	23.7	23.8	18.4
Russia	17.5	14.8	14.4	4.5	5.0	4.8
Eastern Slavs	–	–	–	24.3	23.7	23.9
Total 'Eastern option'	*58.0*	*53.26*	*46.2*	*52.5*	*52.5*	*47.1*
Western nations	13.3	13.9	15.9	13.8	12.8	16.4
Self-sufficiency	13.3	14.4	18.5	16.1	17.7	19.7
Do not know	9.5	10.8	12.2	11.3	9.3	9.7

For the above question, determining the stability of opinion appears to be made more difficult by the addition of the answer on integration with Russia and Belarus in 1997. This option appears to have drawn a great deal of support from better relations with Russia and the CIS. The trend line for Russia and the CIS was clearly in a downward trajectory from 1994, but with the eastern Slavic union question added, the Ukrainian public nevertheless has shown rather consistent and somewhat stable preference over time for integration with eastern Slavic countries and the CIS.

Therefore, we added the 'eastern option' line, which was the sum of preferences for better relations with Russia, Belarus, and/or the CIS. However, it should be noted that there have been very subtle shifts upward in those who believe Ukraine should rely primarily upon itself and those who prefer better relations with the West. One might argue that there has been a very slight downturn in support for the 'eastern option', but this is complicated by volatility, for example, a 12 point drop in support between 1994 and 1996.

Ukrainians' desire for close relations with Russia is made more obvious in the following table.

Q. What relationship with Russia would you prefer?

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001
Closed borders, visa and customs regime	15	14	18	13	11	10	9
Ukraine and Russia should be independent but friendly—open borders, no visa or custom regime	49	49	53	53	50	52	56
Should united into a single state	34	31	25	30	36	35	32
DK/NA	3	6	4	4	3	3	2

These longitudinal findings basically support the arguments of Shulman, (1998a, b, 1999), Wilson (1997a) and others on the public's foreign policy preferences, and bolster them by showing how solid the pattern of support for an eastward foreign policy orientation is. There has been very little variation over time, even in light of

periodic tensions over issues such as energy and the Black Sea Fleet. There is little movement on inter-ethnic issues.

However, what is not investigated fully is the structure of opinion—the difference between the foreign policy views of central and western Ukraine and the rest of the country, as well as the difference in intensity. As a whole, one cannot therefore make the argument that the opinion is volatile or unstable. Foreign policy is extremely low on the list of the public's priorities. Although opinion is stable, it is *not very intense*; it would appear that Ukrainians exhibit highly 'materialist' attitudes and are trying to survive. They are therefore not very concerned about foreign policy. Polls find that Ukrainians are more concerned with socio-economic than political matters.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to illustrate how, in the case of Ukraine, the reporting of a majority opinion on a certain foreign policy direction, and its use as a predictor of future choices, are highly problematic. This is because of three reasons.

First, the role and importance of the 'public' in Ukrainian politics are far less than in the West; scholars should avoid looking at public opinion in Ukraine from a Western perspective. Instead, we should adopt a comparative perspective that accounts for the reality of societies in a highly difficult post-communist transition.

Ukrainian society is not like the Western society, and is not likely to achieve a post-materialist, 'elite-directing' role anytime soon. While Ukrainians may prefer closer relations with Russia, they are not in a position to direct their leaders in that direction through a mass civic or nationalist movement.

Second, the importance of foreign affairs to the average Ukrainian is quite low, compared to the all-important issue of the economy. This raises the question of what would happen to Ukraine's national cohesiveness; should the state ever begin to deliver on the preferences of the public in that regard. This of course is a topic for further research.

Third, as per pluralist theory of public opinion, a western and central Ukrainian public with marked intensity of opinion on foreign policy issues has been able to act and to influence leaders. Meanwhile, the pro-Russian majority, with less intensity of opinion and less success in setting the foreign policy agenda, has not.

While this may be problematic from the point of view of nation-building, it is not unusual for committed minorities in any society to have an inordinate impact on policy. In addition, the current situation is not static; if there is competition over foreign policy between rightist and leftist parties, there may be some movement in terms of policy, but this is highly doubtful. That is because foreign policy in Ukraine is a largely elite-driven process in which major decision-makers act in response to external, international events, and not public opinion, such as Ukraine's decision to apply for NATO membership in May 2002 (Kuzio, 2002f).

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