

“Looking Like Wolves to the Forest”:

Ukrainian Statehood between Pereyaslav and a Common European Home

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Abstract

This thesis examines Ukraine's domestic instability and undecided East-West geopolitical orientation in a long-term historical context defined by weak or non-existent statehood and ambiguous and suppressed nationhood. Ukraine's geopolitical environment has been cyclical, in that it has faced an East-West pull especially during brief periods of independence: prior to 1654, during the Russian Revolution and Civil War, and from 1991 to the present. Moreover, Ukrainian statehood was subsumed and quashed by the Russian Imperial and Soviet regimes, the legacies of which have trammelled independent Ukraine's state-building efforts. This long-term perspective sheds light on why parts of Ukraine today – despite the integration-based promises of post-Cold-War Europe – have succumbed to the same logic of Russian imperialism that has been almost consistently exerting itself since 1654.

Introduction

“For Russia, from time immemorial Ukrainians have been and remain not just neighbours, but also a fraternal people... The challenge of responsible public figures is to resist the temptation to artificially divide our peoples for any geopolitical projects or political machinations, but rather safeguard the friendship between Ukrainians and Russians in every possible way... It is unacceptable to subject centuries-old relations to such serious tests for the sake of short-term developments, thereby encouraging younger generations to harbour a mutual grudge by playing with nationalist complexes.”

-Dmitry Medvedev¹

In his 2009 address to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev invoked an imperial vision of fraternity that in fact began with a Ukrainian geopolitical project in 1654 and ended with a Russian geopolitical project in 1991. The Cossack Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky led Ukraine into Russia's orbit in 1654, and the Ukrainian nation subsequently became a 'brother nation' within the Russian and Soviet empires. Yet twice – in 1917, and in 1991 – imperial collapse has shown that Ukraine's East-West allegiances have remained undecided; this has been Ukraine's *long-term test*, ever since Khmelnytsky rode the Ukrainian steppe looking for a protector.

The major scholarship dealing with Ukraine from the Treaty of Pereyaslav – by which Ukraine fell under Russia's domination – to the formation of the Soviet Union (1654-1922) stresses the expansionist and centralizing logic of Russian absolutism and the manner in which it eroded, but never completely eliminated, Ukraine's Cossack heritage. Thus, Ukraine's latent nationhood persisted while its insecure early modern statehood in the form of a Cossack polity was eventually quashed completely by the Russian Empire. The Soviet era (1922-1991) left a paradoxical legacy; within the Soviet Union, Ukrainian national culture was promoted during some phases, while at other times, most notably during Stalin's rule (1928-1953), Ukrainian society itself was lacerated. Yet the Soviet Union also gave Ukraine its own territorial framework, and – after WWII – united western Ukraine with the Ukrainian SSR, which bolstered Ukrainian statehood in the long term. In the context of the USSR's collapse, Ukraine was able to make use of its institutional-territorial Soviet inheritance to declare independence in 1991.

After 1991, Ukraine was also given an unprecedented set of opportunities to join an integrated liberal European order, which Mikhail Gorbachev referred to as “a common European home.”² But Gorbachev left in his wake the beginnings of a wider “common European home” as

¹ Dmitry Medvedev, “Address to the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko, August 11, 2009,” <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2009/08/220759.shtml>

² Gorbachev famously elucidated his concept of a “common European Home” in Mikhail Gorbachev, “Address by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, July 6, 1989,” in *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*, ed. Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, and Vladislav Zubok, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 492-496.

well as a broken Soviet empire, and it is between these two poles that Ukraine vacillates today. While Ukraine has reasserted its national desire to escape Russia's orbit, its weak state institutions have left it floundering between the EU's lofty norms and Russia's aggressive incursions. Since 1991, Ukrainian independence has been compromised in a manner consistent with the rhythms of its history as it struggles to overcome its weak statehood and settle its East-West geopolitical orientation, just as it did during brief windows of independence from 1648-1654 and 1917-1921. These historical burdens, however, are set against the new liberal European security, political, and economic frameworks which began to incorporate Ukraine as a result of Gorbachev's reforms and the Soviet collapse. For most of the period between 1654 and 1991, such substantive opportunities to move closer to Europe lay beyond Ukraine's reach, and these frameworks explain why Ukraine today can even attempt to pursue the kind of "geopolitical projects" that are so "unacceptable" to an imperialist like Medvedev.

Part I: Russian Ukraine, 1654-1922

I. Cossacks on the Margins

In sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the southeastern 'borderland' (*Ukraina*) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, runaway serfs who could survive the Tatar raids that imperilled life on the open steppe formed the ranks of the Ukrainian Cossacks and the free peasants in their midst. A minority of landless, nomadic Cossacks were based in the Zaporog *Sich* – a fortress on the Dnieper River – while their much more numerous counterparts settled the surrounding steppes. When serfdom near the borderlands bore down its hardest, the ranks of the *Sich* would swell. From there, Cossacks would raid Polish towns, Tatar Crimea, even the shores of the Ottoman Empire. The *Sich* was also a perennial "rallying point" for wider Cossack and peasant rebellions. Meanwhile, Cossacks outside the *Sich* were officially registered by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in select numbers to guard the borderlands, and were guaranteed a special set of political rights that allowed for their self-government. Herein lay a source of ferment. Before 1654, the Cossacks repeatedly sought to have these registers and privileges expanded. Polish nobles bristled; Cossacks at times secured the Commonwealth's frontier, but their society was also used as a refuge and school of rebellion by fleeing serfs.³

Timothy Snyder, in his study of how the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth fractured into modern nation-states over the last four centuries, marks the 1569 Lublin Union as the beginning of "early modern Ukraine." Thereby the Commonwealth was formed, but the Lublin Union also

³ G. Patrick March, *Cossacks of the Brotherhood: The Zaporog Kosh of the Dniepr River*, American University Studies; Series IX, History; Vol. 86 (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 1-92 for the pre-1654 era, "rallying point" quotation on 82. March's study focuses specifically on the unique society and history of the Zaporog *Sich*, which existed in a variety of locations around the Southern Dnieper region from the 16th century until its final destruction by Catherine the Great in the late 18th century. March takes great pains to distinguish between the completely free Cossacks of the *Sich* – who before 1654 recognized no higher authority – and the rest of the Ukrainian Cossacks.

transferred Ukrainian territory from the Lithuanian to the Polish part of the Commonwealth. Through Poland, the innovations of the reformation and counter-reformation, in the Polish language, were introduced to Ukraine. Snyder stresses religion as a crucial element in bringing the Ukrainian frontier to a boiling point. Through the 1596 Union of Brest, the Orthodox Church in the Commonwealth recognized Rome's papal authority. This new 'Uniate' Church was anathema to many Orthodox believers, especially the Cossacks of Ukraine. Moreover, the conversion of the Ukrainian gentry to Roman Catholicism signalled the beginning of a Ukrainian-Polish divide along class and religious lines. Between 1569 and 1648, the Polish and Polonized gentry colonized the Ukrainian borderlands until a small number of magnates controlled sprawling *latifundia*, all while the Orthodox peasants and middle-gentry sank into immiseration.⁴ Of those sidelined, the most important was Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the Hetman (1648-1657) who led the uprising of 1648-1654, which at its peak encompassed the rebellion of "close to 200,000 peasant auxiliaries and 40,000 to 60,000 experienced Cossacks."⁵

Khmelnytsky was nonetheless soon forced to come to terms with the geopolitical reality of a borderland hemmed in on all sides by stronger states. He had raised Cossackdom to an unprecedented level of power, but now found himself in a *Zugzwang*; he had no choice but to seek out alliance with or the protection of a surrounding power, a move which would inevitably entail a loss of autonomy. Negotiations with the Commonwealth and the Ottoman Sultan failed. As Orest Subtelny portrays the sequence of events, Khmelnytsky's turn to Muscovy was effected reluctantly, and "Moscow's response [was]... extremely cautious."⁶ Even a cursory overview of this atmosphere reveals that what was to be written into the annals of official Russian history as a "reunion" of the descendants of Kievan Rus' was in fact nothing of the sort. On this point, there is widespread scholarly agreement.

II. The Treaty of Pereyaslav: Statehood and Nationhood

The 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav has often been viewed by historians and populations through the lenses of the modern Russian and Ukrainian nations and the Soviet state; "the years between 1648 and 1667 are seen from a Ukrainian point of view as the time of a great Ukrainian rebellion against Polish oppressors; or from a Russian point of view as the moment when the stray Ukrainian stream found its way into the great Russian river."⁷ The Treaty itself has been

⁴ Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 105-114, "early modern" quotation on 106. Also see Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2000), 123-125.

⁵ Orest Subtelny, *Domination of Eastern Europe: Native Nobilities and Foreign Absolutism, 1500-1715* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 43. For an overview of the uprising, see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 123-138.

⁶ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 129-134, quotation on 134.

⁷ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 117. For a thorough historiographic discussion, see Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 203-204, 208-211; also see Zenon E. Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s-1830s*, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute Monograph Series (Cambridge:

discerned by “the majority of prominent Ukrainian historians” as a vital early step towards Ukraine’s eventual statehood, although Ukraine’s romantic nineteenth century *intelligentsia* sometimes mourned what they saw as Khmelnytsky’s betrayal of the Ukrainian nation.⁸

But Snyder points out that Khmelnytsky in these years was negotiating with Russia and with the Commonwealth in the tradition of a European, and indeed a Polonized noble. Modern ethno-nationalism did not exist at this time; peasant masses were not subject to imperial or noble elites on the basis of ethnicity.⁹ As such, Pereyaslav was not a union brokered between two nations. Omeljan Pritsak and John S. Reshetar Jr. point out the plain fact that is lost on today’s polemicists: “...the Pereyaslav Treaty, like all other treaties of that time, was between two rulers or two states and not between two peoples.”¹⁰ Moreover, there was no “reunion,” because there had never been any “union” between the Muscovy and the Ukraine in the first place.¹¹ Pritsak and Reshetar go on to deny that either cultural or linguistic fraternity played a role in bringing Pereyaslav about; only “common religious faith” and military necessity were factors.¹²

After Pereyaslav, the Cossack polity began to melt into that of the Russian Empire. But Cossack culture remained alive in the folksongs and stories told by the peasantry. The *latent* Ukrainian nationhood of 1654, in the form of Cossack distinctiveness, actually provided an undercurrent of continuity extending to the resurgent Ukrainian nation of the nineteenth century, which could easily be mistaken as “nonhistorical.” The “*incomplete* nationhood,” and indeed incomplete statehood of the Cossacks ended up being salvaged by the nineteenth century *intelligentsia*, and provided a state-building impetus for the modern era.¹³ Major historians of the Russian Empire like Dominic Lieven and Hugh Seton-Watson remind us that the Cossacks were:

...frontier pioneers, robbers, individualists, not docile serfs with collectivist traditions. In short, all the conditions for a separate nation were there: only the consciousness of being a nation was not yet developed... But a sense of being different from the Russians of

Harvard University Press, 1988), 3-6; and Omeljan Pritsak and John S. Reshetar Jr., “The Ukraine and the Dialectics of Nation-Building,” *Slavic Review* 22, no. 2 (June 1963), 236.

⁸ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 138.

⁹ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 114-117.

¹⁰ Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” 236.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 230-236, quotations on 236.

¹² *Ibid.*, 236-243, quotation on 241; also see Plokhy, *Slavic Nations*, 246-249 which stresses that “a nation-based dialogue was hardly possible...” (248).

¹³ Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” 224-255, quotations on 227. Pritsak and Reshetar are critical of Ivan Rudnytsky’s “use of the term “nonhistorical” with reference to the Ukrainian nation in the nineteenth century.” (227) “Dialectics” is a partly a response to Ivan Rudnytsky, “The Role of Ukraine in Modern History (1963),” in *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*, edited by Peter L. Rudnytsky (Edmonton: Canada Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1987), 11-36. Rudnytsky states that “nonhistoricity... simply indicates a rupture in historical continuity through the loss of a traditional representative class.” (12)

Muscovy... and a reluctance to accept orders or institutions from Moscow, they certainly had already in the early eighteenth century.¹⁴

As far as concerns Muscovy – the ‘Russian Empire’ after 1721 – it is important to mark at Pereyaslav the beginning of a geopolitical dynamic that, with few exceptions, continued to exert itself until 1991. This was the beginning of Ukraine as either an object of Russocentric policy or an almost indistinguishable part of a unitary Russian state, but rarely as the subject of its own aspirations. Insofar as we can speak of a Russian nation at this time, we can identify at Pereyaslav what Geoffrey Hosking defines as one of two Russian nations; the nation of Russian imperial elites, which always forged ahead at the expense and the immiseration of the mass-cultural Russian nation.¹⁵ There was also an East-West geopolitical pull at work here. An enervated Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, representative of ‘the West’, loses its borderlands to Russia, a strong absolutist state. But waiting in the western wings are other strong absolutists – Prussia and Austria – which along with Russia swallow up Poland in the late eighteenth century. Ukraine would continue to be caught in the East-West pull carried on by the descendants of these empires.

Navigating what has been written about the technical provisions of the Treaty of Pereyaslav is an immensely complex undertaking, and beyond the scope of the present study.¹⁶ In short, “Khmelnysky... recognized the suzerainty of the Muscovite tsar [Alexei Mikhailovich]. In return, the tsar promised to assure the continuance of Ukrainian autonomy and proposed a military alliance against Poland.”¹⁷ What is important for our purposes, and what is not in dispute in the scholarly literature, is that each side interpreted the Treaty in an utterly different fashion. For Khmelnysky, proceeding from the Commonwealth gentry tradition of bilateral negotiation, Pereyaslav was a “conditional” military alliance.¹⁸ Muscovy, “representing a very different tradition, could not comprehend any contractual relationship between the tsar and his subjects. Muscovy knew only a unilateral submission to the tsar, and Khmelnysky could not conceive of such a relationship.”¹⁹ Moreover, Muscovy was motivated by a strategic logic which saw “the treaty [as] simply the first step toward the military occupation of the Ukrainian Cossack State. Conflict was inevitable.”²⁰

¹⁴ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801-1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 8; also see Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 229: the Cossacks were “a quintessentially frontier society... fundamentally different from autocratic and serf-owning Russia.”

¹⁵ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), xix-xxviii.

¹⁶ For historiographic analyses of the Treaty of Pereyaslav, see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 135; and Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” 239-240. For the Treaty’s implications for the *Sich* specifically, see March, *Brotherhood*, 86-89.

¹⁷ Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 27-28.

¹⁸ Quotation in Plokhy, *Slavic Nations*, 249; also see, for example, Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 134-135; and Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” 236-246.

¹⁹ Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” 239-240.

²⁰ Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” 242. Subtelny confirms this military logic in *Ukraine*, 134: “...The Muscovites also expected to regain some of the lands they had lost to Poland, to utilize Ukraine as a buffer zone against the Ottomans, and, in general, to expand their influence.”

III. The Imperatives of Eastern European Absolutism

In his comparative study of absolutism, neo-Marxist historian Perry Anderson analyses a particularly violent and militaristic variant of absolutism that was adopted by early modern Eastern European sovereigns. Here, rigid feudalism went hand-in-hand with a centralized state that mandated the military service of the propertied classes, which had to provide sufficient coercion to keep serfs bound to the land. Otherwise, the agricultural economy disintegrated. Geography and demographics were responsible; low population density and vast swaths of uninhabited and farmable frontier meant that escaped serfs were a perennial problem for landlords. The failure of the Commonwealth (1569-1795) to develop this rigid system of absolutism spelled its demise.²¹ Russia, on the other hand, developed the “most durable Absolutism in Europe... [which] outlived all its precursors and contemporaries, to become the only Absolutist State in the continent to survive intact into the twentieth century.”²²

Like Anderson, Orest Subtelny stresses the vulnerability of decentralized, noble-dominated polities like the Commonwealth and the even weaker Cossack Hetmanate. For Subtelny, these nobilities – including the Cossack *starshyna* (officer corps) - were “stateless societies” that spurned “strong standing armies” and their attendant bureaucracies. These “associations of nobles” defined Eastern European politics until the eighteenth century, but “while Vienna, Stockholm, Moscow, and Istanbul loomed around Eastern Europe like towering boulders of power, the region stretched out like a pebble-beach of petty, self-contained lordships.”²³

Subtelny and Seton-Watson nevertheless draw attention to the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the Hetmanate for the first half-century after Pereyaslav.²⁴ But at this point it is instructive to note that the Khmelnytsky Uprising was spurred not only by aggrieved serfs, peasants, and freebooters, but by the desire of elites to secure the privileges of nobility for themselves; and

...herein lay a paradox, for it was from among the leaders of the anti-noble revolt that soon thereafter there arose another elite which, although Ukrainian, none the less modelled itself closely and consciously on the deposed Polish nobility, to the point where later in the eighteenth century it even referred to itself as *szlachta* [the Polish noble class]...²⁵

²¹ Perry Anderson, *The Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1974), 195-220, 328-344.

²² *Ibid.*, 328.

²³ Subtelny, *Domination*, 49-52, quotations on 51-52.

²⁴ Seton-Watson, *Russian Empire*, 7-8; and Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 139.

²⁵ Subtelny, *Domination*, 42.

After 1654, the Cossack *starshyna* transformed into a more typically entrenched and exploitative noble elite; their electoral traditions gave way to hereditary transfers of power, and these new hereditary elites expanded their land holdings.²⁶ The peasants and rank-and-file Cossacks who fell under their jurisdiction became “the victims of the operation,” gradually sinking once more into poverty, immobility, and serfdom.²⁷

Meanwhile, the manner of Muscovy’s domination did not lay lightly on the new elite. What John Morrison refers to as Ukraine’s “Pereyaslav complex” – a state of perennial mistrust vis-à-vis Russia’s historical heavy-handedness and treachery – developed quickly and lives on in contemporary Ukraine.²⁸ Short of a military force that could dislodge Muscovy’s new possession, the provisions of Pereyaslav and the Ukrainians’ treatment rested on the whims of Muscovy’s military prerogatives. At the 1667 Treaty of Andrusovo, for instance, Left-Bank Ukraine – i.e. the Ukrainian territory east of the Dnieper River – was given to Russia, and Right-Bank Ukraine was given to the Commonwealth. This arrangement was made without the Cossacks’ participation, and as a result, an anarchic state of upheaval, shifting loyalties, and war continued to rend Ukraine.²⁹

The culmination of Cossack efforts to break free of Pereyaslav came during the Great Northern War (1700-1721). As Sweden and Poland combined against Russia, the Hetman Ivan Mazepa’s (r. 1687-1708) Ukraine was abandoned by Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725), who claimed that he could not “even spare ten men.”³⁰ Russia’s collapse loomed, and Mazepa hesitated, but ultimately sided with Poland and Sweden. Censuring the tsar’s obvious abrogation of Pereyaslav, he denounced Peter, but his followers hesitated while Peter, summoning all his wrath in a hunt for suspected ‘Mazepists’, employed terror in every corner of the Hetmanate.

A propaganda “war of manifestoes” between the Swedes/Mazepists and the Russians flooded the Hetmanate; “never before had such a fierce struggle been waged for the hearts and minds of the Ukrainian people.”³¹ The Orthodox faith and the lingering memory of subjugation under Polish lords gave Peter the edge. Moreover, Mazepa embodied the new Ukrainian gentry class, which had abandoned the lower Cossacks and the peasants to become a *szlachta* of its own. Peter exploited these divisions skillfully, so that most Ukrainians were compelled by a mix of terror and largesse to get behind him. Peter triumphed over Charles XII and Mazepa at the epochal battle of Poltava in 1709, and emerged victorious from the Great Northern war in 1721. Mazepa’s defeat sounded the death-knell for Cossack autonomy. The fortress at the *Sich*, the

²⁶ Ibid., 41-47.

²⁷ Anderson, *Lineages*, 210.

²⁸ John Morrison, “Pereyaslav and after: The Russian-Ukrainian Relationship,” *International Affairs* 69, no. 4 (Oct. 1993): 677-703, quotation on 684.

²⁹ Subtelny, *Domination*, 44, 106.

³⁰ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 163-164; “ten men” quotation is Peter’s, on 164.

³¹ Subtelny, *Domination*, 133.

perennial refuge of aggrieved Ukrainians and thorn in Peter's side – which had backed Mazepa – was also decimated.³² Anderson assesses the nature of this victory:

... the menace of the free-booting [*Sich*] of the Zaporozhe Cossacks, who had always hindered any permanent settlement of the Ukrainian hinterland, was brought to an end with the suppression of [Mazepa's] rebellion. Russian Absolutism emerged from the twenty-year struggle of the Great Northern War a looming force over Eastern Europe...³³

Peter also saw the Mazepa debacle as an attempt by Sweden and Poland to “separate the Little Russian people from Russia and create a separate principality under Mazepa's rule.”³⁴ This denial of Ukrainian agency marks an early precedent in Russia's history of continuously explaining episodes of Ukrainian self-awareness in terms of Western conspiracy. Also, Russia's facile condemnation of refractory Ukrainian elements – ‘Mazepists’ was the term later employed – at this time was a harbinger of later Soviet denunciations of suspected Ukrainian nationalists as ‘Petliurites’ after WWI and ‘Banderites’ after WWII.³⁵ It marks the beginning of an obsessive tradition of defamation through the employment of ‘isms’ to evade actual engagement with alternative policies.

The new and expanding empire of Peter and his successors equated territory with wealth and power in a feudal, pre-capitalist fashion. Moreover, it considered its “stability and security... [to be] never complete in the direction of Europe.”³⁶ In 1864, Alexander II's foreign minister, Prince Gorchakov, put Russia's imperial imperative in comparative perspective:

The State is thus forced to choose between two alternatives – either to give up this endless labor, and to abandon its frontier to perpetual disturbance, or to plunge deeper and deeper into barbarous countries... Such has been the fate of every country which has found itself in a similar position. The United States in America, France in Algeria, Holland in her Colonies, England in India; all have been forced by imperious necessity into this onward march, where the greatest difficulty is to know where to stop.³⁷

³² Subtelny, *Domination*, 130-137; and, on the destruction of the *Sich*, also see March, *Brotherhood*, 167-170.

³³ Anderson, *Lineages*, 341-342.

³⁴ Peter the Great quoted in Subtelny, *Domination*, 130.

³⁵ On ‘Mazepism’ see Orest Subtelny, *The Mazepists: Ukrainian Separatism in the Early Eighteenth Century*, East European Monographs, No. LXXXVII (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), especially 1-2, which discusses the Orthodox Church's anathematization of Mazepa's name by Ivan Skoropadsky, who was elected as an “anti-Hetman” (see Subtelny, *Domination*, 132) to replace Mazepa. Mazepa's name was de-anathematized during the 1918 Hetmanate, by Skoropadsky's descendant Pavlo Skoropadsky. On the facile defamation of Mazepa's followers, also see March, *Brotherhood*, 169. On the ‘Banderite’ idea after WWII, see William Jay Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 68-69. Also, the uncovering of ‘Petliurite’ conspiracies is ubiquitous in accounts of the Soviet 1920s and 1930s.

³⁶ Hosking, *People and Empire*, 39-41.

³⁷ Alexander M. Gorchakov, “The Gorchakov Circular on Russia's Mission in Central Asia, 1864,” in *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*, ed. James Cracraft (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 410-411.

An earlier manifestation of this impulse had brought Ukraine into Russia's orbit. Now, by the time of Gorchakov's writing, Ukraine was an integral part of Russia, and, as Lieven reminds us, "without Ukraine, Russia's survival as an empire and great power would have been unlikely at any time [in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries]."³⁸ Ukraine has ever since been a hostage to Russia's strategic insecurity.

IV. "Looking Like Wolves to the Forest": Catherine the Great's Unitary State

However, Zenon Kohut, in his study of the Hetmanate's final dissolution from the 1760s to the 1830s, reveals that even into the 1760s, the society and administration of the Hetmanate remained highly distinct from that of Russia. Although more and more lower-ranking Cossacks and the free peasants of the Hetmanate had been forced into poverty until this point, neither group had yet been completely and legally immobilized or enserfed.³⁹ It was Catherine the Great (1762-1796) who took the imperatives of absolutism to their most efficient – or 'enlightened' – extreme. She built a "unitary state," in which regional and national differences – for her, symptoms of underdevelopment – withered under a standardized, centralized, and Russified administration.⁴⁰ In a 1764 instruction to an administrator, she elucidated this program:

Little Russia, Livonia, and Finland [Karelia] are provinces which are governed by confirmed privileges and it would be improper to violate them by abolishing them all at once. However, to call them foreign and to deal with them on that basis is more than a mistake; it would be sheer stupidity. These provinces as well as Smolensk should be Russified in the easiest way possible, so that they should cease looking like wolves to the forest... When the hetmans are gone from Little Russia every effort should be made to eradicate from memory the period and the hetmans...⁴¹

By the 1830s, Catherine and her successors had silenced the wolves. The rift between the Cossack gentry and their subordinates had been exploited gradually, but had reached its fullest logical extent: a class of Russified imperial elites had been molded from Khmelnytsky's heirs. And the divide separating Russified elites and cosmopolitan urban milieus from the Ukrainian peasantry sharpened as a result of this process, to the point where "being Ukrainian was virtually synonymous with being a peasant."⁴² According to Hosking, "Ukraine's loss of its distinct identity was more complete than that of any other region in the empire."⁴³

³⁸ Lieven, *Empire*, 260.

³⁹ Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 24-64.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 75-81, "unitary state" quotation on 81.

⁴¹ Catherine the Great quoted in Ibid., 104. Kohut explains that "this is a partial paraphrase of the Russian proverb 'No matter how much you feed a [captured] wolf he still looks to the forest [to escape]'. "

⁴² Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 299-301; "peasant" quotation on 303.

⁴³ Hosking, *People and Empire*, 26-27.

Russia also completely absorbed right-bank Ukraine after the final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, and proceeded to deal with it as it had with the left-bank Hetmanate. Here, in the nineteenth century, a “tiny group” of Polish landlords were propped up by the Russian military, and co-opted to Russian absolutist imperatives, at the expense of impoverished petty Polish nobles and the territory’s mass of Ukrainian peasants.⁴⁴

V. “Gravehills in the Steppes”: Shevchenko and the Nineteenth Century *Intelligentsia*

Yet the “incomplete” Ukrainian nation, in the form of Cossackdom, constituted the bedrock of Ukraine’s modern national revival. The co-optation of Ukraine’s elites altered the trajectory of nation-building, but did not rend it completely.⁴⁵ The first steps towards modern nationalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were in fact taken by amateur historians of the Cossack-descended gentry class. The hallmark of this early nostalgia was the clandestine circulation of the anonymously-written *Istoriia Rusov* (History of the Rus’ People), a kind of *Don Quixote* that romanticized the exploits of rebellious Hetmans. These themes jibed with the co-opted heirs of the Cossack Hetmanate, but these heirs lacked the impetus to politicize or openly articulate their mood.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, they embodied a link to the Cossack past from which a new *intelligentsia* could emerge. Nostalgia and romanticism picked up steam during the “Kharkiv revival” of the 1820s and 1830s, a Herder-inspired wavelet of folk exploration by amateur historians, antiquarians, ethnographers, and early experimenters in Ukrainian as ‘high’ literature. Still, this was Ukraine behaving as an “exotic” cultural province of Russia; its elites remained loyal to the empire, and the Russian *intelligentsia* responded to this new folksiness with avuncular encouragement.⁴⁷

Yet they could not so easily brook the sentiments of the poet Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), who eulogized the Cossacks’ past as “gravehills in the steppes,” and dwelt constantly on Pereiaslav and the themes of elite betrayal of Ukrainian nationhood.⁴⁸ Shevchenko’s talent as a painter bought him his freedom in 1838, and his 1840 poetry collection *Kobzar* (‘The Minstrel’), brought Ukrainian language into the realm of literary high culture, a crucial step in any nation’s

⁴⁴ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 119-122, quotation on 120.

⁴⁵ Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” “incomplete” quotation on 227; Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 304-305.

⁴⁶ Kohut, *Russian Centralism*, 269-273 discusses *Istoriia Rusov*; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 225-227 for early amateur historians; and Pritsak and Reshetar, “Dialectics,” 249-253, which outlines five stages of the Ukrainian national movement, which include *Istoriia Rusov*, the ‘Kharkiv Revival’, Shevchenko’s rise, and in the late nineteenth century, the rise of political nationalism first in Geneva, and then in Austrian Galicia, where it found its permanent home.

⁴⁷ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 227-233, “exotic” quotation on 232; Snyder, *Reconstruction*, “Kharkiv revival” quotation on 121.

⁴⁸ Pavlo Zaitsev, *Taras Shevchenko: A Life*, edited, abridged, and translated by George S.N. Luckyj (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), “Gravehills” quotation is Shevchenko’s, on 260, and examples of Shevchenko’s ruminations on elite betrayal are given throughout, but see especially 84-87 and 118; for a summary of Shevchenko’s influence, see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 232-235.

development.⁴⁹ His lyricism flowed from those Ukrainian folksongs which had outlived Cossackdom and were “now highly regarded and valued by scholars and poets as true poetry,” and seen by romantics as “the most effective sign of the right of a people to cultural self-determination.”⁵⁰ The published *Kobzar* – purged by the Imperial censor of obvious slights to Russian domination – initially faced panicky critics who scorned the use of the “artificial” Ukrainian language. Yet even most of these critics still discerned the depth of Shevchenko’s talent and the momentousness of the occasion. In the nineteenth century, Ukrainian was still widely regarded as a peasant dialect, but Shevchenko enshrined Ukrainian’s distinctiveness, “rejecting the [popular] theory... of a ‘common Russian’ (*obshcherussky*) language,” merging and transcending local dialects, and “creating a literary a language that was understandable throughout [Ukraine].”⁵¹

In 1846 Shevchenko became a hero to, and occasional participant in the secret, Kiev-based ‘Brotherhood of Sts. Cyril and Methodius’, a group of artists, scholars and students which set in motion the modern politicization of Ukraine’s national distinctiveness. Shevchenko and the Brotherhood espoused variants of pan-Slavism that were anti-tsarist, democratic, federative, egalitarian, serfdom-abolitionist, and Christian-based. These values were central to the Brotherhood leader Mykola Kostomarov’s 1846 polemic *The Book of Genesis of the Ukrainian People*, which slotted Ukraine – historically “the most oppressed and the most egalitarian of all Slavic societies” – in the role of “cornerstone” of a future pan-Slavic federation.⁵²

In the context of the mid-nineteenth century Russian Empire, such underground polemics seem utopian, but their long-term prescience is remarkable. The fight for liberation from the Soviet Union was often viewed as cooperative, pan-Slavic struggle by dissidents in Russia, Ukraine, and other Eastern European nations.⁵³ During the cataclysms of the twentieth century – the Ukrainian Revolution, Stalinism, WWII, Gorbachev’s reforms – Ukraine bore the brunt of the oppression laid on the Slavic world.⁵⁴ And independent Ukraine continues to be seen as a “keystone” of Eastern European security, and a “bridge between Europe and Russia.”⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 229-235; Seton-Watson, *Russian Empire*, 271.

⁵⁰ Zaitsev, *Shevchenko*, “true poetry” quotation on 48; “self-determination” quotation on 72.

⁵¹ Ibid., 57-64, 69, 84, “artificial” quotation on 58, “common Russian” quotation on 69, “understandable” quotation on 84.

⁵² Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 235-237, “most oppressed” quotation on 236, and “cornerstone” quotation, which is Kostomarov’s, on 236; and on Shevchenko and the Brotherhood, see Zaitsev, *Shevchenko*, 121-125, 132.

⁵³ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, Part III focuses on communist and post-communist Poland as a bellwether of this viewpoint; also see Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “To the Conference on Russian-Ukrainian Relations in Toronto, 1981,” in *Ukraine and Russia in Their Historical Encounter*, ed. Peter J. Potichnyj et al. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), 332-335 for an excellent articulation of this view.

⁵⁴ See Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 377 for Ukraine’s post-WWI struggle; see Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 19-20 for the domination of Ukraine from 1933-1945; and see Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 128 for western Ukraine on the eve of independence.

⁵⁵ See Sherman W. Garnett, *Keystone in the Arch: Ukraine in the Emerging Security Environment of Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997); on how Ukrainian

In 1847, the Imperial police discovered and dissolved the Brotherhood; its members were arrested, and Shevchenko was exiled to Siberia where he was “forbidden to write or sketch.” Subtelny marks this as the beginning of Russia’s modern anti-Ukrainian policy.⁵⁶ The 1863 Polish uprising was the struggle of non-Ukrainian parts of the Empire, but it sharpened Imperial scrutiny of the many Kievan Poles who by this time were afflicted by “Romantic guilt” and preaching popular Ukrainian consciousness.⁵⁷ The Russian Interior Minister Count Valuev’s 1863 Decree responded by warning the office of censorship that materials circulated in “the South Russian dialect” for a mass audience were the seditious work of Polish activists undermining “the common Russian [*obshchesusskii*] language.” Valuev reiterated that “a Little Russian language has not, does not, and cannot exist, and that its dialects as spoken by the masses are the same as the Russian language, with the exception of some corruptions from Poland.”⁵⁸

This Imperial coda to Shevchenko’s accomplishment, along with the 1876 Ems Decree – “which banned the publication and import of all Ukrainian works,” was indicative of Russia’s refusal to countenance civil society or national distinctions, even while other nineteenth century European monarchies were reluctantly beginning to recognize modern nationalism as a “new source of legitimization,” and taking the necessary steps to co-opt its energies into official channels.⁵⁹ The Ukrainian *intelligentsia* and their national cause thus remained marginal under Imperial Russia, while the legacy of Shevchenko made its way to a more tolerant home in the ethnically Ukrainian territory of east Galicia, which since the 1772 partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had belonged to the Habsburg Empire. There, it was politically reinvigorated, and to this history we shall return.⁶⁰

Presidents Kuchma and Yanukovych have viewed Ukraine as a “bridge” see Taras Kuzio, “Twenty years as an independent state: Ukraine’s ten logical inconsistencies,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, no. 3-4 (Sept.-Dec. 2012), 435.

⁵⁶ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 235-237; “forbidden to write or sketch” on 237, was Nicolas I’s order.

⁵⁷ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 120-122, “Romantic guilt” quotation on 121.

⁵⁸ Count Petr Valuev, “The Valuev Decree, 1863,” in Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, 2nd revised and expanded ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 393-394.

⁵⁹ Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Olga Poato (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 4-5 “legitimization” quotation on 4; also see Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 121-122, “banned the publication” quotation on 122.

⁶⁰ See Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 122, on how Shevchenko’s legacy made its way to Galicia in the late nineteenth century.

VI. “Like a Breath Held for Too Long”: Revolutionary Ukraine, 1917-1921

“The war did half of it, the rest was completed by the revolution. The war was an artificial interruption of life, as if existence could be postponed for a time (how absurd!). The revolution broke out involuntarily, like a breath held for too long. Everyone revived, was reborn, in everyone there are transformations, upheavals. You might say that everyone went through two revolutions, one his own, personal, the other general. It seems to me that socialism is a sea into which all these personal, separate revolutions should flow, the sea of life, the sea of originality.”
-Yuri Zhivago⁶¹

In *Dr. Zhivago*, Boris Pasternak’s alter-ego Yuri embodies the optimism that infused the Russian *intelligentsia* following the 1917 Revolutions. This same optimism kindled the far more marginal Ukrainian *intelligentsia*, whose quixotic hopes, like Yuri’s, were quickly dashed. In 1917, as a result of imperial collapse - rather than the viability of any grassroots political movement – independence simply fell into Ukraine’s hands, and its elites scrambled to stay afloat. Here, Ukraine’s weak nationhood found itself competing with an imbroglio of other agendas, the most prominent among them the universalist claims of Soviet socialism. As this window of opportunity – brought about by a momentary “power vacuum”⁶² – slammed shut, Ukraine’s elites were once again pulled into the current of Russian history. This period is haunted by one crucial question:

At a time when empires collapsed and almost all the peoples of Eastern Europe... gained their independence, why was it that the 30 million Ukrainians did not? The question is all the more pertinent because the Ukrainians probably fought longer for independence and paid a higher price in lives than any other East European nation.⁶³

The Central Rada (‘council’) – the “first Ukrainian government in modern times” – had an unelected yet self-declaredly representative congress, and spent a great deal of its short life (March 1917 – April 1918) quarrelling with the Provisional Government in Petrograd (March 1917 – November 1917) over the legal nature of Ukrainian autonomy.⁶⁴ The Rada sought political and cultural autonomy as well as the socialist land and labor reforms that were typical of the era. But in the “ebullient optimism” that characterized the months following the March Revolution, the Rada still desired a federative relationship with Russia.⁶⁵ The leader of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, Volodimir Vinnichenko, articulated this mood:

⁶¹ Boris Pasternak, *Dr. Zhivago*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 2011), 170.

⁶² Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 4.

⁶³ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 377.

⁶⁴ John S. Reshetar Jr., *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920: A Study in Nationalism*. (1972 Arno Press Reprint ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 47-82, “modern times” quotation on 47.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 53-55, “optimism” quotation on 55.

Ukrainian separatism died with its *raison d'être* [tsarism]. Ukrainism oriented itself solely on the all-Russian Revolution, on the triumph of justice... All separatism, all self-exclusion from revolutionary Russia appeared to be laughable, absurd and foolish... Where in the world was there such a broad, democratic, all-embracing order?⁶⁶

But after the November Revolution, the Bolsheviks – as the Revolution's self-declared sole vanguard – were unwilling to countenance any compromise with the Rada, despite their avowed respect for self-determination.⁶⁷ Thus, the perennial dynamic between Soviet socialist centralism and Ukrainian autonomy was established already in these early days of Bolshevik power. Joseph Stalin, who in 1917 was the Party's Commissar for Nationalities, stated that “there is not and cannot be any conflict between the Ukrainian and Russian peoples. The Ukrainian and Russian peoples, like all the other peoples of Russia, are composed of workers and peasants, of soldiers and sailors.”⁶⁸ This denial of Ukrainian distinctiveness matched the spirit of the Valuev Decree – which had stressed that the “Little Russian language has not, does not, and cannot exist.”⁶⁹

Facing a Bolshevik invasion, the Rada declared independence on January 22, 1918. It had already sent a delegation to the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk, because, like Khmelnytsky on the anarchic steppe, it “could not hope to survive unless it relied upon some greater power for support.”⁷⁰ The only hope came from the Central Powers, whose dire food and resource shortages brought them to the negotiating table with Ukraine. They accorded legal recognition to Ukraine, and made the Bolsheviks call off their invasion; as a result, “Ukraine [became] a German satellite.”⁷¹ Alexander Watson, in his study of WWI from the Central Powers' point of view, notes that

There is no more telling a mark of how far the Habsburg Empire had fallen than [Austria-Hungary's foreign minister] Czernin's readiness to appease the Ukrainians. The Ukrainian People's Council were upstarts, ‘boys, scarcely more than twenty years old, people without any experience, without property, without reputation, driven by adventure, perhaps megalomania.’ They were members of the country's tiny intelligentsia possessing no sway with the still mostly nationally indifferent peasantry in the countryside.⁷²

⁶⁶ Vinnichenko quoted in *Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 82-111.

⁶⁸ Stalin quoted *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁹ Valuev, “The Valuev Decree,” 393.

⁷⁰ Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 97.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 97-119, “greater power” quotation on 97, “German satellite” quotation on 116.

⁷² Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 496, and see Chapter 12, “The Bread Peace,” 492-513, for these negotiations from the point of view of the Central Powers; also see Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 115-116, 133-142, especially 136, which confirms the Rada's amateurishness and “Czernin's desperation.”

The “upstarts” were intent on trying to convince themselves of Germany’s beneficence. Reshetar is keen to stress the Rada’s incredible “naïveté” and “self-delusion” in trying to prevent Germany from “[intervening] in Ukrainian internal affairs.”⁷³ Germany, for its part, quickly realized that the Rada’s administrative incompetence and thin basis of authority imperilled the grain deliveries it depended on. Berlin soon found a more reliable ally in the conservative landowner Lieutenant General Paul Skoropadsky, and approved of his easily-accomplished coup on April 30th, 1917.⁷⁴

In his exhaustive study of the Ukrainian Revolution (1917-1920), Reshetar outlines the reasons – besides German disapproval – for the Rada’s downfall. Amidst general anarchy, the Rada’s actual administrative authority extended only sparsely beyond Kiev, and lacked the support of Russified urbanites, Russian troops, municipal councils, and the country’s small bourgeois class. And the inept Rada failed to accomplish the one overwhelming goal of the peasantry, which was to “obtain land from the landowner without payment.” Above all, Reshetar stresses the dismal condition of Ukrainian nationhood – a legacy of the Tsarist-era – which was incompatible with a government as self-consciously nationalist as the Rada.⁷⁵

Skoropadsky called his new state a Hetmanate, and declared himself Hetman on the basis of his Cossack ancestry. He was backed – or “elected” – by the “League of Landowners,” and his government was a *de facto* dictatorship based on the preservation of private property and the rollback of revolutionary anarchy. The most glaring fact of Skoropadsky’s short reign (April-December 1918) is that it was utterly dependent on German support. Germany’s withdrawal from Ukraine in December 1918 precipitated the Hetmanate’s immediate collapse and renewed anarchy. Skoropadsky did pursue moderate educational and cultural Ukrainization, and a few nationalist figures also joined his administration, although administrative competency was privileged first and foremost. But against the backdrop of the revolution, Skoropadsky’s anti-socialist land policies were indeed reactionary, and received no popular support.⁷⁶

Despite its transience and peculiar form, however, the Hetmanate’s failure sheds much light on the problems facing Ukraine in its long-term struggle for statehood. Viacheslav Lypynsky, one of Ukraine’s pre-eminent historians and political theorists, was a conservative who backed Skoropadsky during and after 1918.⁷⁷ He asserted that a revolutionary *intelligentsia*,

⁷³ Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 117-119, “naïveté” quotation on 117, “internal affairs” quotation on 118, “self-delusion” quotation on 119.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 120-133; also see Watson, *Ring of Steel*, 497-498.

⁷⁵ Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 133-142, “obtain land” quotation on 141; also see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 377-379, for a historiographic examination of Ukraine’s post-revolutionary failures to maintain independence, in which Subtelny corroborates Reshetar; Ukraine’s failures were a result of geopolitical forces, weak nationhood, ideological factionalism, and the transitory nature of political support from politically inexperienced peasants.

⁷⁶ Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 130-133, 145-207, see 130 for the “election” by the “League of Landowners.”

⁷⁷ See Rudnytsky’s, “Lypynsky’s Political Ideas from the Perspective of Our Time (1982),” 447-461, and “Viacheslav Lypynsky: Statesman, Historian, and Political Thinker (1982),” 437-446, in *Essays in Modern Ukrainian History*; also see Alexander J. Motyl, *The Turn to the Right: The Ideological Origins and Development of*

such as the one that formed the Rada, could not bring about independence by itself. Only pluralism could push the process forward; an active conservative movement was needed to counterbalance the pressures of narrowly peasant-based socialist-populists.⁷⁸ Old elite and noble classes also had to be included in the process; Lypynsky pointed to revolutions brought about by “a dissident segment of the old elite,” including those effected by Khmelnytsky and the ‘noble-blooded’ Vladimir Lenin.⁷⁹ Economically, independence depended on classes with “a stake in the country.” Lypynsky here particularly emphasized the role of Ukraine’s ‘kulaks’; relatively prosperous peasants.⁸⁰

Under Russian absolutism, however, the tsars’ stranglehold on towns and trade had precluded the development of a politically-conscious, independent-minded bourgeois class.⁸¹ For the most part, only a tiny *intelligentsia* had lain between the peasant masses and the Russified ruling elite. But although Lypynsky’s ideas had no chance for realization in revolutionary Ukraine, he discerned the essence of earlier Cossack successes, and as a new Soviet Ukrainian elite formed in the ensuing decades, his appraisal of the potential of self-interested elites began to seem – to historian Ivan Rudnytsky, for instance, who looked forward from the Cold War to Ukraine’s eventual independence – increasingly viable.⁸² Lypynsky’s ideas, articulated so clearly in the 1920s, belonged to 1654 and 1991. For now, the Russian Empire’s shadow hung over the *intelligentsia*-oriented Rada and the bourgeois-backed Hetmanate, which both represented severely underdeveloped currents of Ukrainian history.

The form of government that accompanied Ukraine’s last gasp for independence should not perhaps be surprising then. Skoropadsky’s downfall was followed by the establishment a *de facto* military dictatorship – led by the ‘Directory’ of the socialist and Ukrainian nationalist Simon Petliura – which spent its short life (December 1919 – November 1920) floundering in the anarchy of Ukraine and trying to secure military aid from the West. Petliura had to contend with Leon Trotsky’s Red Army, Ivan Denikin’s counter-revolutionary White Army, Józef Piłsudski’s Polish Army, and many independent military entities. Reshetar notes that the political success in Ukraine of the “pure” anarchist Nestor Makhno attests to the deterioration of the political scene in 1919, which teetered upon the ability to mix military force, revolutionary charisma, and concessions to the peasantry.⁸³

Ukrainian Nationalism, 1919-1929, East European Monograph Series, No. LXV (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 23-32.

⁷⁸ Rudnytsky, “Lypynsky’s Political Ideas,” 448-450, 453-454.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 450-453, “dissident” quotation on 452.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 448-450.

⁸¹ Anderson, *Lineages*, 218; and Seton-Watson, *Russian Empire*, 28-29.

⁸² Rudnytsky, “Lypynsky’s Political Ideas,” 447, 452-453. In this 1982 essay, Rudnytsky presciently relates Lypynsky’s ideas about self-interested national elites to the potentially revolutionary capacity of Soviet Ukraine’s Communist elites to bring about Ukraine’s independence.

⁸³ Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 211-316, and see 249-252, for Makhno and the proliferation of independent military commanders in general.

Once again the curtain was closing on a brief window of Ukrainian autonomy and last-ditch attempts to secure aid on beneficial terms were floundering. At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, self-determination was championed by Woodrow Wilson, but Ukraine's foreign envoys met with little success in their efforts to gain international recognition. In the end, "Ukraine was not officially represented at Paris, although delegates from Guatemala, Hedjaz, and Siam were accorded recognition."⁸⁴ In the eyes of western statesmen, Ukrainian nationalism was an obscure and unreliable force. British and U.S. delegates in Paris occasionally made mild gestures of support for Ukrainian self-determination, but were preoccupied with defeating Bolshevism, and the diplomatic scene was fraught with confusion and Polish-supplied misinformation about who could accomplish this. France decisively backed the efforts of newly-independent Poland – which was then encroaching on Ukraine from the West – as a source of pressure against both Germany and the Bolsheviks.⁸⁵ The end of this period was marked by Petliura's go-for-broke attempt to stave off the Red Army by signing the protection of his country over to Poland on virtually unconditional terms in April 1920. His was a muted voice by the time Poland signed the March, 1921 Treaty of Riga with the Bolsheviks, which reaffirmed Poland's control over the ethnically Ukrainian territory of east Galicia, and at which it gained the ethnically Ukrainian territory of western Volhynia.⁸⁶

Part II: Soviet Ukraine, 1922-1985

I. The Birth and Death of the Fictional Federation

After the establishment of the USSR in December 1922, Ukrainian elites could only manoeuvre within the USSR's officially but substantively fictional 'federal' structure, in which genuine self-determination was out of the question.⁸⁷ Yet, as Subtelny notes, this structure – which gave Ukrainians "a territorial-administrative framework [i.e. the Ukrainian SSR] that reflected their national identity" – was still an epochal step forward from amorphous Imperial Russian ideas of Ukraine "as 'the Southwest' or 'Little Russia'," or a descriptor of only the left-bank.⁸⁸ Today, we can see the USSR's foundational structure – fifteen constituent republics – through the lens of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who in his essay on the role of ethnicity in twentieth century politics, describes how this embedding of ethnic aspirations into the USSR was largely underestimated by twentieth century scholars, only to resurface with a force that

⁸⁴ Ibid., 271

⁸⁵ Ibid., 271-307.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 307-316; also see Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 140.

⁸⁷ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 13-14; and Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 385-386.

⁸⁸ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 386-387; and for 'Ukraine' as a descriptor of only the left-bank in the nineteenth century, see Snyder 120-121.

bewildered in the 1990s.⁸⁹ Like Moynihan, political analyst Anatol Lieven sees the “theoretical” possibility of autonomy, granted to Ukraine in 1922, in light of Ukraine’s 1991 independence.⁹⁰

The Bolsheviks’ advocacy of self-determination, as we have seen, did nothing to preclude their takeover of Ukraine. But Robert Conquest asserts that witness of Ukraine’s post-revolutionary strivings taught “Lenin and the Bolsheviks... that without serious, or serious-looking concessions to Ukrainian national feeling, their rule would remain rootless and precarious.”⁹¹ The Soviet nationalities policy of the 1920s was influenced by the *Borotbisty* Party, which had split from the left wing of Ukrainian Party of Socialist Revolutionaries and, in 1920, joined the Bolsheviks. Lenin took the ideas of these “potentially dangerous rivals” and formulated a new nationalities policy, creating what Terry Martin calls the *Affirmative Action Empire*.⁹² The absorption of the small *Borotbisty* party – the members of which, like so many throughout Ukraine’s history, “saw absolutely no reason why the toilers of Russia and Ukraine should be fighting each other” – was a crucial moment in Russian co-optation.⁹³ Snyder notes that such policy improvisations were thought to be needed in the “multicultural” Soviet context, wherein peasant nations like Ukraine “would have to somehow be induced to build socialism for a working class that was concentrated in Russian-speaking cities.”⁹⁴

Thus, the 1920s became a Soviet “golden age” of boldly progressive experimentation, designed to unravel the crude legacy of the Imperial unitary state, even while solidifying a new socialist unitary state.⁹⁵ Since the USSR’s industrialization required first the “mastery of both peasants and nations,” a temporary compromise was effected.⁹⁶ Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP: 1921-1928) quelled a Ukrainian peasantry with a tradition of individual landholding that was much more deeply rooted than in Russia.⁹⁷ Collectivization was put on hold, and the NEP let peasants sell their surplus, after “a moderate tax,” on the market. A marked increase in peasant

⁸⁹ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁹⁰ Anatol Lieven, *Ukraine & Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), 31-32.

⁹¹ Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), 42; also see James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute Monograph Series. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 87; and Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 2.

⁹² Mace, *National Liberation*, 53-62, “rivals” quotation on 60; see Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 15-20 for an overview of the “affirmative action” terminology.

⁹³ Mace, *National Liberation*, 54 for quotation.

⁹⁴ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 10.

⁹⁵ Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 6-10; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 380, notes that “...this period has come to be viewed by many as the golden age for Ukrainians under Soviet rule.”

⁹⁶ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 10-11, quotation on 11; Mace, *National Liberation*, 280.

⁹⁷ Many historians have drawn attention to this difference between Russian and Ukrainian peasants. For examples, see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 415-416; Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 28; Lieven, *Fraternal Rivalry*, 36.

productivity and satisfaction characterized these years.⁹⁸ But national energy also flourished in realms far beyond simple peasant economics.

In *The Affirmative Action Empire*, Terry Martin definitively analyzes the theory and practice of the Soviet nationalities policy, which was “worked out largely by Lenin and Stalin.”⁹⁹ The theory held that since modernizing societies inevitably pass through a capitalist *and* a nationalist phase, the Bolshevik vanguard should guide both, thereby redirecting the poisonous inclinations of ‘bourgeois nationalists’ towards support for a unitary socialist state. Going far beyond simple self-determination, affirmative action policies would enable nations to quickly “exhaust” the nationalist phase on their way to a proletarian internationalist consciousness. As part of Soviet-led decolonization, the members of historically marginalized nationalities would benefit at the expense of Russians. In territory, language, culture, and the promotion of elites, the Soviet system would be “indigenized” to suit the context of even the most obscure nationalities, so as not to appear as a typically heavy-handed “Russian imperial imposition.”¹⁰⁰

Although many party members – understanding national consciousness as false consciousness in the classic Marxist sense – were insensitive and even hostile to the policy, it nevertheless raised Ukrainians, “in their national capacity, [to] a far better position than at any time since the extinction of the remnants of the old Ukrainian [Cossack] state a century and a half before.”¹⁰¹ Subtelny describes how education in Ukrainian spread literacy throughout the peasantry to a significant extent, and how the Ukrainian language flourished in officialdom, the church, newspapers, literature, and academic scholarship. In “relative freedom,” Ukrainians wrote major works of social criticism and satire. Ukraine was for the first time experiencing meaningful, nationality-based institutional and socioeconomic modernization.¹⁰²

The theretofore marginal Ukrainian national movement was thus, for a short period, not only co-opted but genuinely invigorated by the Soviet state. James Mace captures the intellectual optimism of the era, describing, for example, how mass literary organizations inspired a new generation of peasant poets, and government subsidies allowed even “poetasters” to be published as easily as would-be Shevchenkos. Lectures on lofty subjects were given in the “peasant tongue,” and the economist and high Ukrainian Party functionary Mykhailo Volobuiev could

⁹⁸ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 380-383; Conquest, *Sorrow*, 13.

⁹⁹ Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 1-27, “imperial imposition” quotation on 12, “indigenization” (*korenizatsiia*) terminology is discussed on 10-12, “exhaust” quotation is Stalin’s: “We are undertaking the maximum development of national culture, so that it will exhaust itself completely and thereby create the base for the organization of international socialist culture.” (5)

¹⁰¹ Conquest, *Sorrow*, 13 for quotation; see Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 4-5, 20-21, for the Marxism/nationalism conflict.

¹⁰² Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 387-402, “relative freedom” on 398.

keenly argue “that Soviet Ukraine was being exploited by the Soviet Union no less than it had been by its imperial predecessor.”¹⁰³

Yet during the 1920s, the true beliefs of the old Bolsheviks also started to melt into the levers of bureaucracy, and the institutions and ideologies of the Ukrainian SSR increasingly served as the springboards of careerists. The policies of the 1920s – the NEP and *Ukrainization* – had always been “soft-line”, subjugated to the eventual realization of “the economic revolution still to come” in the form of the “hard-line” policies of collectivization and industrialization.¹⁰⁴ The tenor of the post-Lenin power struggle prefigured the disasters of Stalinism and the 1930s. After Lenin’s death in 1924, the factions of Stalin and Trotsky jockeyed for power by playing off their ideological formulations against one another. But they “all took for granted that the Soviet countryside would soon have to finance its own destruction.”¹⁰⁵

This “golden age” was abruptly shattered by Stalin’s first Five Year Plan (FYP), which industrialized the Soviet economy and fed the working class by draining collective farms. Collectivization of agriculture during the first FYP was “extractive, not productive.” Grain was requisitioned at an especially unrealistic rate in Ukraine, and was exported so that manufacturing equipment could be imported.¹⁰⁶ The Plan also entailed a sweeping rollback of the economic and cultural gains of the 1920s. Imperial hallmarks resurfaced, including serfdom – now, on collective farms during the first FYP, more akin to slavery than ever – and internal passports. National and civil society autonomy were completely quashed. Moreover, the coercive and centralizing pressures of Stalinism vastly exceeded those of the Russian Empire. 3.3 million of Soviet Ukraine’s inhabitants, three million of them ethnic Ukrainians, were deliberately made to perish during the famine of 1932-1933.¹⁰⁷ Piers Brendon notes how “communists had always denounced [internal passports] as a prime instance of tsarist tyranny,” but under Stalin used them to “hide” famine.¹⁰⁸ Conquest adds that “in tsarist times, when lesser famines raged, every effort had been made to help.”¹⁰⁹ The first FYP marked the end of the historically unique and unprecedented *Affirmative Action Empire* and the beginning of the “Soviet Russian Empire.”

¹⁰³ Mace, *National Liberation*, 120-130 for a discussion of literature, 161, 189-190 for a discussion of Volobuiev, “poetasters” quotation on 127, “peasant tongue” quotation on 128, “exploited” quotation on 161.

¹⁰⁴ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, “revolution still to come” quotation on 11; Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 21-23, for “hard-line” vs. “soft-line” policies.

¹⁰⁵ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 11-14, quotation on 13.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 13, 23-25; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 409; Mace, *National Liberation*, 287 for “extractive” quotation.

¹⁰⁷ Mace, *National Liberation*, 266-267, discusses the “imperial” vs. the “unprecedented” elements of Stalinism; also see Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 25 for how Stalin “transformed... farmers into slaves,” and 53 for famine numbers; and on ‘slavery’, also see Stanislav Kul’chyts’kyi, Marta D. Olynyk and Andriy Wynnyckyj, “The Holodomor and Its Consequences in the Ukrainian Countryside,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 30, no. 1/4 (2008), 6: “unrestricted food requisitioning [during the first FYP] had doomed peasants to slave labor on the forcibly created collective farms.”

¹⁰⁸ Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 249.

¹⁰⁹ Conquest, *Sorrow*, 235.

National republics were reconceived of as “little brother” nations and subsumed by Russian nationalism.¹¹⁰

The first FYP applied to the entire USSR, but now the Ukrainian nation occupied a distinct place in the Union. Because of its size, economic potential, and strategic position on the Polish border, Ukraine “occupied the central role in the evolution of the Soviet nationalities policy throughout the Stalinist period.”¹¹¹ Up to this point:

...the Ukrainization policy had gone farther and deeper than [indigenization policies] elsewhere; consequently, the destruction of society necessary to obliterate what was euphemistically referred to as ‘bourgeois nationalism’, had to go much further, to the point of an undeclared but nevertheless real war against the Ukrainian nation as such.¹¹²

Mace explains the first FYP as an assault on the peasantry and the national *intelligentsia*, the two historic and recently invigorated pillars of the Ukrainian nation. But the *intelligentsia*’s decisive demise only came when collectivization pressures reached their peak during the famine of 1932-1933.¹¹³ For the Soviet Union as a whole, the 1930s were defined by collectivization, industrialization, and the ‘Great Purges’ of 1937-1938. The Great Purges disproportionately affected Ukraine – although in general they targeted a variety of different ethnic groups and party factions – “but as [Party activist turned dissident] Lev Kopalev noted, ‘in Ukraine 1937 began in 1933.’”¹¹⁴

True believers in the possibilities of national liberation under the Soviets were seen as “national deviationists,” “Skrypnykites,” and so forth, as an imperative of Stalin’s first Five Year Plan (1928-1933).¹¹⁵ One of the most tragic figures in this process was Ukraine’s Commissar of Education from 1927-1933, Mykola Skrypnyk, who beyond just education, maximized cultural *Ukrainization* wherever possible, while remaining an Old Bolshevik true believer and striving to minimize tensions with Moscow.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, since

Skrypnyk’s Ukraine... was that part of the whole which was most conscious of its distinctiveness, assertive of its prerogatives, and least willing to follow blindly after Moscow in arranging its internal affairs... it became increasingly evident that Ukraine would always be the main factor preventing the homogenization and centralization

¹¹⁰ Martin, *Affirmative Action*, notes that “The Soviet Union was the first country in world history to establish Affirmative Action programs for national minorities, and no country has yet approached the vast scale of Soviet Affirmative Action.” (17-18); Mace, *National Liberation*, “Soviet Russian Empire” and “little brother” quotations on 265.

¹¹¹ Martin, *Affirmative Action*, 24.

¹¹² Mace, *National Liberation*, 265.

¹¹³ Ibid., 280-301.

¹¹⁴ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 416-421, Kopalev quotation on 418.

¹¹⁵ Mace, *National Liberation*, 264-280, 296-301, “deviationists” quotation on 265 and throughout, “Skrypnykites” quotation on 298.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 192-193, on the success of *Ukrainization* under Skrypnyk’s leadership, see 230-231.

essential to the consolidation of a personal despotism like the one that Stalin had to build.¹¹⁷

During the collectivization process, Skrypnyk stood up for Ukraine in cultural and economic matters, and fought against excessive grain quotas. The downfall of the Ukrainian *intelligentsia* and the peasantry were therefore intertwined; those who had advocated Ukrainian autonomy were *ipso facto* seen as guilty of abetting peasants who resisted collectivization. Skrypnyk's program of Ukrainian 'linguistic purism' was now seen as a devious plot; a way of "isolating the Ukrainian language from the Russian and bringing it closer to Polish."¹¹⁸ The spirit of Count Valuev, Imperial arbiter of languages, had been resurrected. Denounced as a counterrevolutionary, Skrypnyk committed suicide in 1933, and true believers of his kind were finished off by the Great Purges of 1937-38 – which turned "Soviet Ukraine... [into] a virtual fief of the NKVD." After this, upwardly-mobile urbanites and Russified elites were again synonymous, as in the old empire.¹¹⁹

Most importantly, collectivization entailed the "liquidation of the kulaks," who the regime saw as prosperous peasants, and who were often recent beneficiaries of the NEP, as well as the countryside's "natural leaders" and "best farmers." During the first FYP, officials also employed the rhetoric of 'dekulakization', to remove any person or thing standing in the way of collectivization, including local churches and schoolteachers.¹²⁰ Beginning in the 1930s, Ukraine was slated for especially rapid collectivization, wherein peasants were forced to relinquish all of their property to the control of collective farm leaders. Three hundred thousand Ukrainian resisters were deported to what became the USSR's Gulag system of *slave labour* camps.¹²¹ In 1930, thousands of workers, many of them Russians, were sent to the Ukrainian countryside to deal with this resistance.¹²² It must be noted that whereas Russian peasants were historically accustomed to communal farming, Ukrainian peasants had a much stronger tradition of individual landholding, of which they were extremely protective.¹²³ The conservative historian Lypynsky had emphasized the kulaks as a key to Ukraine's independence, while the Stalinist regime saw the problem of nationalistic and anti-collectivist kulaks as especially acute in

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 264.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 276-280 and 296-297 for the attack on 'linguistic purism', the "bringing it closer to Polish" charge, on 279, was made by Party member Andrii Khvyliia.

¹¹⁹ Mace, *National Liberation*, 264-301, "virtual fief" quotation on 300; Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 43-44; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 416-421.

¹²⁰ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 24-35, "natural leaders" quotation on 29, "best farmers" quotation on 33; Mace, *National Liberation*, 282-285, Stalin's December 1929 statement on "liquidation" on 283, "best farmers" quotation on 285, teachers and churches discussed on 285; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 409-411, NEP beneficiaries discussed on 410, and Subtelny too notes that "Ukraine's most industrious and efficient farmers ceased to exist"(410) as a result of 'dekulakization'.

¹²¹ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 27-28, gulag discussed on 27; Mace, *National Liberation*, 283-285.

¹²² Mace, *National Liberation*, 287; Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 410-411.

¹²³ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 415-416; Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 28; Lieven, *Fraternal Rivalry*, 36.

Ukraine.¹²⁴ Ukrainian history's urban-rural/Russian-Ukrainian dissonance thus reached its apex when Russians flocked to the countryside to teach Ukrainians how to farm.

In *Bloodlands*, Snyder gives one of the most definitive, meticulous, and up-to-date accounts of how the Soviet regime created the 1932-1933 famine in Ukraine, examining Stalin's shifting views on collectivization and resistance during the first FYP. Initially, Stalin saw the resistance of 1930 as weakness on a border that was vulnerable to Polish designs.¹²⁵ It was Stalin's fear of "capitalist encirclement" and the USSR's lack of war readiness that had spurred the ruthless pace of the first FYP in the first place.¹²⁶ Fear of encirclement and unstable borders is a perpetual theme in Russian history, but Stalin now commanded a state machinery capable of mass murder, mass deportation, and the total transformation of border societies.

The Soviet regime used Ukraine's above-average 1930 harvest – which had benefited from good weather and was planted before intensive collectivization began – to set the bar for future quotas. It then explained the dismal 1931 harvest – which suffered from bad weather and the inefficiency of collectivization – as the result of sabotage. Stalin's adherence to unrealistic quotas remained unshakable during the lower-than-average 1932 harvest.¹²⁷ He looked for any reason to conceive of the growing famine as resistance and sabotage, whether this meant blaming Polish conspirators or Ukrainian peasants, nationalists, and party members for the mass starvation.¹²⁸ In reality, the famine was caused by the regime's adherence to impossible quotas in conjunction with deliberately famine-inducing policies; Soviet grain exports continued, Stalin refused to allow foreign aid, "all agricultural property [i.e. food] was declared to be state property," and was guarded and confiscated with the help of watchtowers and ruthless brigades, seed grain and even livestock were confiscated, and access to quota-deficient villages was restricted, as was access to Ukraine's cities and the republic as a whole. Snyder asserts that "a simple respite from requisitions for three months would not have harmed the Soviet economy, and would have saved most of those three million [famine victims in Ukraine].¹²⁹ Instead, "facing no external security threat and no challenge from within, with no conceivable justification except to prove the inevitability of his rule, Stalin chose to kill millions of people in Soviet Ukraine..."¹³⁰

¹²⁴ For the regime's view of Kulaks, see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 404, 415-416; and Mace, *National Liberation*, 282; for Lypynsky's view of Kulaks, see Rudnytsky, "Lypynsky's Political Ideas," 449.

¹²⁵ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 30-32; also see Mace, *National Liberation*, 288-290, which discusses these quotas.

¹²⁶ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, "capitalist encirclement" quotation on 30, unpreparedness for war also on 159; also see Kul'chyts'kyi, "Holodomor and its consequences," 2; and Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 405.

¹²⁷ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 33-35.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 35-45.

¹²⁹ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, see 34-46 for detailed evidence of deliberate, famine-inducing policies, "state property" quotation on 38, "simple respite" quotation on 44-45; also see John M. Thompson, *A Vision Unfulfilled: Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996), 266 for foreign aid and export policy.

¹³⁰ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 42.

The horror of the famine – the atrocities committed by officials and the suffering of peasants – is described in detail by Conquest in *The Harvest of Sorrow*, and Snyder in *Bloodlands*. The *Holodomor* (‘hunger-extinction’) was the Ukrainian nation’s Holocaust.¹³¹ During the famine, the locked and guarded “fortress” of Ukraine was transformed into, to borrow the title of one account, *The Ninth Circle*.¹³² Parsing “the estimates of respectable scholars,” Snyder concludes that there were “approximately 3.3 million deaths by starvation and hunger-related disease in Soviet Ukraine in 1932-1933. Of these people some three million would have been Ukrainians, and the rest Russians, Poles, Germans, Jews, and others.”¹³³

Overall, these policies indicate that the Stalinist Soviet state was highly conscious of a separate Ukraine identity and was determined to destroy it. Near-total collectivization by 1940 marked the end of traditional Ukrainian rural and family life.¹³⁴ The trauma of the early 1930s rent the psyche of the Ukrainian nation; survivors were cowed, bound to the system, and alienated from their neighbours and their own labor.¹³⁵ On the psychological fate of Party members, Nikolai Bukharin – the Bolshevik theorist, true believer, and in 1938, famous victim of Stalin’s purges – decried the normalization of terror and “dehumanization” that collectivization had wrought.¹³⁶

II. Totalitarianism’s Colony: WWII

The quality of foreign incursion on Ukraine in the twentieth century, like the intensity of internal coercion, changed radically from the experience of the preceding centuries. To the old absolutist logic, Ukraine was a weak frontier polity that necessitated absorption and feudal subjugation. But from the Revolution through the first FYP and WWII, Ukrainians went from their traditional role as only partial agents in their own history to a new role as the objects of Hitler and Stalin’s totalitarian designs. Stalin’s USSR was incidentally murderous, while Hitler’s Third Reich was fundamentally murderous; whereas Stalinism turned to mass murder as a result of the brutal application of Soviet policy, the Third Reich’s manifestation of *Ostpolitik* was inherently racist in its policies towards both Slavs and Jews, and genocidal as a matter of policy towards Jews.

¹³¹ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 413.

¹³² Ibid. lists in its bibliography, on 672, this apparently obscure source, which I could not locate: Woropay, O. *The Ninth Circle*. Cambridge, MA, 1983. In any case, it is the most apt title for an account of the famine. Also see Snyder, *Bloodlands*, for “fortress” quotation on 45.

¹³³ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 53.

¹³⁴ For the end of traditional rural life, see Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 54-55; on the extent of collectivization by 1940, see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 412.

¹³⁵ Sergei Madsudov and Marta D. Olynyk, “The Change in the Moral and Ethical Consciousness of Soviet Citizens as a Result of Collectivization and Famine.” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 30, no. 1/4 (2008), 1; also Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 46 notes how “the political philosopher Hannah Arendt would present this famine in Ukraine as the crucial event in the creation of a modern ‘atomized’ society, the alienation of all from all.”

¹³⁶ Bukharin quoted in Conquest, *Sorrow*, 234, 343.

There was continuity in German designs on Ukraine from WWI to WWII; when Lenin ceded Ukraine in the 1918 Brest-Litovsk Treaty, Germany was given “a brief taste of [the] eastern empire” on which the Nazis were later fixated.¹³⁷ With the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Stalin effected a compromise with the spectre of western aggression at the expense of Poland, which was divided between Germany and the USSR. Snyder explains that Stalin had industrialized the Soviet Union to make it a bulwark *against* imperialism, although Ukraine became an internal colony in the process. But Stalin was “delusionally” content with the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, seeing “Japan and Poland, or a Japanese-Polish-German encirclement,” but not Germany alone, as the most pressing threat.¹³⁸

Hitler, meanwhile, anticipated the Pact’s rapid demise. Snyder further explains how Stalin’s past exploitation of Ukraine influenced Hitler’s plan – the ‘Generalplan Ost’ – for eastern empire, in which the output of Ukraine’s collective farms was to be funnelled to the Reich’s territories in Western Europe. As in WWI, Ukraine was to be the answer to Germany’s food supply problems, although now as totalitarianism’s colony, rather than imperialism’s satellite. The planners, led by Hermann Göring, outlined an empire in which “about thirty million people would starve to death in the winter of 1941-1942,” or would otherwise have to flee beyond the Urals, which would be the limit of the Reich’s new frontier. Snyder notes that this was a reversal of Stalin’s first FYP; as cities were starved and abandoned, the USSR would revert to a pre-industrial agrarian frontier occupied by German settlers. Ukraine’s agricultural potential, as the foundation of “imperial autarky,” was thus vital to both Nazi and Soviet schemes.¹³⁹

The Nazis’ ‘Generalplan Ost’, like their plans for rapid victory over the Soviet Union, proved delusionally ambitious; it was impossible for the invading Wehrmacht to so quickly emulate the kind of homegrown coercive organizational structure which Stalin had used to requisition grain during the famine.¹⁴⁰ But Ukraine still “probably suffered more than any other part of the Soviet Union” during WWII.¹⁴¹ In fact from 1933-1945, “during the years that both Stalin and Hitler were in power, more people were killed in Ukraine than anywhere else... in Europe, or in the world.”¹⁴² The Holocaust in Ukraine resulted in the murder of 850,000-900,000 Ukrainian Jews.¹⁴³ The Germans also murdered or starved approximately 3.1 million Soviet POWs during WWII, hundreds of thousands of them Ukrainians, many of which had lived through the *Holodomor*.¹⁴⁴ And although colonization plans were abandoned, the invading

¹³⁷ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 4, 15.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 156-159, 165-166, “Japan and Poland” quotation on 157; also see Thompson, *Vision Unfulfilled*, 325-331, in which Thompson refers to this misjudgement as “Stalin’s Grand Delusion.”

¹³⁹ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 19-20, 158-163, “imperial autarky” quotation on 158, “thirty million” quotation on 163.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 165-172.

¹⁴¹ Chris Bellamy, *Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 11.

¹⁴² Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 20.

¹⁴³ Magocsi, *Ukraine*, 678.

¹⁴⁴ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 181, 184.

Germans still requisitioned food, and Soviet city-dwellers were still starved; one million died during the 1941-1944 siege of Leningrad in Russia; in Ukraine, approximately fifty thousand died in Kiev and twenty thousand in Kharkiv, Ukraine's two historic capitals.¹⁴⁵

WWII, however, also proved to be a long-term milestone for Ukrainian statehood, as it resulted in the permanent incorporation into the Ukrainian SSR, in 1944, of the ethnically Ukrainian territories of Volhynia and east Galicia. Galicia had been part of the Habsburg Empire since the late eighteenth-century partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and had been the incubator of the most uncompromising Ukrainian nationalist ideas since the late nineteenth century. If turning Poland into a communist satellite was, as Stalin famously said, 'like putting a saddle on a cow', then annexing these western Ukrainian territories – especially east Galicia – was like swallowing a razorblade.

Compared to Ukraine under the Russian Empire, Habsburg Galicia hosted a comparatively liberal political arena that at least tolerated Ukrainian civil society and political participation after 1848. After Russia's 1876 Ems Decree, it became an oasis for major Ukrainian *intelligents*, who brought Shevchenko's legacy to Galicia and there furthered its politicization. The Polish minority dominated high culture and politics in Galicia, and claimed the territory on this basis. But the Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866-1934), who emigrated to the Galician capital of Lviv in 1894, expounded on the history of the Ukrainian *people*, thus influencing Galician Ukrainian activists who sought the eventual "establishment of a Ukrainian state with 'ethnic' borders." Out of this concept grew Galicia's own versions of Ukrainian nationalism and socialism, which lay further from the pull of ideas about brotherhood or federation with Russia.¹⁴⁶

After WWI, independence for Galician Ukrainians, in the form of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR), lasted from October 1918 – July 1919; like its counterparts to the east, this project was doomed without international backing and in the face of superior military force.¹⁴⁷ Still, unlike the independent Ukrainian governments described earlier, the ZUNR ruled its territory with a relatively high degree of administrative competence and popular support; after all, Galician Ukrainians had, as Rudnytsky puts it, "gone through the school of Austrian constitutionalism."¹⁴⁸ After the 1921 Treaty of Riga, the Republic of Poland ran its ethnically Ukrainian territory – east Galicia and the previously Russian-held territory of Volhynia – as an internal colony, in which Poles dominated administration and commerce at the expense of the Ukrainian majority. In 1929, "frustrated veterans" of the 1919-1920 West Ukrainian-Polish War created the fascist/integral-nationalist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the goal of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 169-173, statistics on 172-173.

¹⁴⁶ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 122-132, quotation on 129.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 138.

¹⁴⁸ Rudnytsky, "Lypynsky's Political Ideas," 458-459, quotation on 459; also see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 367-369

which was “an independent Ukraine to include all Ukrainian territories (widely understood) but only Ukrainian people (narrowly understood).”¹⁴⁹

Snyder explains that on the eve of WWII, the OUN was an ultra-extremist fringe group, with ideas that were unfathomable to the majority of the western Ukrainian people, who were still mostly nationally-indifferent peasants. Snyder further asserts that it was the pandemonium of WWII and the ethnic policies of the Nazis and the Soviets that allowed the OUN to act on their plans for ethnic cleansing. After dividing the Polish state in 1939, the Nazis and Soviets both categorized, ruled, and suppressed their subjects on the basis of ethnicity. After the Nazis took over western Ukraine in 1941, future members of the OUN’s Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) joined the police battalions that, as part of the ‘Final Solution’, carried out mass shootings of Jews. In this way, they were shown how they could carry out their own ethnic cleansing of western Ukraine’s Poles. The OUN-UPA began its mass murder of tens of thousands¹⁵⁰ of Polish civilians in Volhynia in 1943, and moved these operations into east Galicia in 1944. These actions provoked similarly brutal reprisals by Poles against Ukrainian civilians, and thus a Polish-Ukrainian civil war was underway when the Soviets retook the region in 1944.¹⁵¹

In 1944, the Soviets “institutionalized” the ethnic cleansing which the OUN had begun. Stalin oversaw his own massive ethnic cleansing – which took the form of forced population transfers – in order to decisively restore ethnic order on what had proven to be a nightmarishly volatile border.¹⁵² And, as Serhii Plokhy explains, this strategy also meant that “the Soviets came back in 1944 as champions of liberation and reunification of ancient Ukrainian lands.”¹⁵³ Between 1944-1946, the Soviet Union resettled to Poland 780,000 Poles and Jews from its newly-acquired western Ukrainian territories; this transfer affected only those Poles in this volatile border zone and not those within the rest of the Ukrainian SSR. At the same time, “482,661 people classified as Ukrainians” were expelled from Poland to the Ukrainian SSR.¹⁵⁴

Until this point, Polish rule had been the most pressing problem for western Ukrainian nationalists. Western Ukraine’s incorporation into the Ukrainian SSR and the ethnic cleansing of its border permanently ended serious Polish-Ukrainian territorial competition.¹⁵⁵ This meant that

¹⁴⁹ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 137-153, “veterans” quotation on 138, “independent Ukraine” quotation on 143; on inter-war Poland, also see Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 425-152.

¹⁵⁰ For statistics on Polish civilian deaths, see Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 170: “All in all, the UPA killed forty to sixty thousand Polish civilians in Volhynia in 1943,” and 176 for a death toll of “about twenty-five thousand [Polish civilians] in Galicia.”

¹⁵¹ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 150-178.

¹⁵² Ibid., 178-195, “institutionalized” quotation on 178.

¹⁵³ Plokhy, *Yalta: The Price of Peace* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 169.

¹⁵⁴ Snyder, *Reconstruction*, 178-195, 187 for 780,000, 194 for 482,661 statistic.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 202-214, also, Snyder discusses Polish rule as the most pressing problem throughout Part II, and in Part III deals with the long-term stabilizing legacy of this ethnic cleansing, thanks in large part to Poland’s formulation, in the decades that followed, of a foreign policy that promoted the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania.

Ukrainian nationalism in general, which had always been fed by a sense of oppression and grievance, now bundled all the animosity it once split between Poland and Russia against Russia alone.

Anatol Lieven, noting Galicia's Austrian and Polish political education and distinct Greek Catholic (i.e. Uniate) religious affiliation, asserts that the annexation of western Ukraine was, "in the long run... a fatal move from the Soviet point of view."¹⁵⁶ Galician Ukrainian nationalism (broadly defined) never disappeared, although it was vigorously suppressed during the Soviet period. In Lviv, in the late-1980s, western Ukrainians began to invoke and re-explore their Central European heritage. On this basis, they formed mass national movements that snowballed into the broader Ukrainian independence movement, which started in Lviv and then spread to Kiev.¹⁵⁷ Western Ukraine remains the most nationalistic and ethnically homogeneous region in Ukraine today. However, the OUN-UPA's espousal of integral nationalism and participation in the Holocaust became a tool for Soviet and then Russian propagandists – including Russian President Vladimir Putin – who use the fear of 'Banderites' (i.e. followers of OUN leader Stepan Bandera), to denounce Ukrainian nationalists of *all* stripes.¹⁵⁸

III. "Some Generous Impulse, but Nothing Finished": The Fate of Soviet Reforms, 1953-1985

Although Ukraine remained an object of post-Stalinist Soviet policy determined by Moscow, during the periods that Nikita Khrushchev (1956-1964) and Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) led the Soviet Union, its elites returned to a more familiar role, acting as partially autonomous agents within a highly restrictive set of political circumstances. Stalin had armed and industrialized the Soviet Union as a whole, destroying national distinctions as he went along. The Ukrainian Communist Party elites of the post-Stalin era navigated an entrenched labyrinth of bureaucracy, but without the total chaos and terror of Stalinism, and Ukrainian national culture was again sometimes meaningfully advanced along the way.

It was in Ukraine that Khrushchev had distinguished himself as a Party functionary. During WWII, Khrushchev led much of the Soviet effort in Ukraine and was so powerful there that he was referred to by his rivals as the "Viceroy of Ukraine."¹⁵⁹ Khrushchev was also in Kiev during the early stages of the German invasion in 1941, and recommended the city's evacuation

¹⁵⁶ Lieven, *Fraternal Rivalry*, 33.

¹⁵⁷ Kenney, *Carnival of Revolution*, 123-130; and Kenney, "Lviv's Central European Renaissance, 1987-1990," in *Lviv: A City in the Crosscurrents of Culture*, ed. John Czaplicka (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 303-312; also see Risch, *Ukrainian West*, for a complete post-WWI history of Lviv.

¹⁵⁸ For the Soviet era, see Risch, *Ukrainian West*, 68-69; for Putin, see Kuzio, "Twenty Years," 436: "Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov [in 2011 said] that Putin 'believes that all Ukrainians are Banderites'."

¹⁵⁹ Bellamy, *Absolute War*, 153, "Viceroy" quotation on 214.

to Stalin as it was about to fall.¹⁶⁰ As he jockeyed for power after Stalin's death, Khrushchev was mainly supported by Ukrainian Party members; in turn, he ushered many ethnic Ukrainians into key positions at the republic and all-union levels. But, as Subtelny is careful to note, the upward mobility of Ukrainian Party members at this time was primarily a function of patron-client relations, not ethnic affiliation.¹⁶¹

Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization heralded a "thaw" in cultural life" throughout the Soviet Union. His reign was marked by calls for the rehabilitation of prominent Ukrainian historical figures, the release of many Ukrainian prisoners from the Gulag, and advances in Ukrainian scholarship. In the 1960s, Ukrainian literati embraced new opportunities for artistic and cultural autonomy, although some expressions of nationalism prompted renewed official scrutiny and warnings against ideological deviation. Khrushchev is famous for the zeal with which he announced and abandoned one reform after another. Overall, his economic reforms failed to remedy Soviet agriculture's underperformance, and in general the centralized Soviet economy remained a lumbering relic of inefficiency. Nevertheless, his policies brought economic growth and consumer benefits to Ukraine.¹⁶²

Khrushchev left in place the Soviet Union's unwieldy bureaucracy, which he himself navigated shrewdly. Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) first secretaries Petro Shelest (1963-1972) and Volodymyr Shcherbytsky (1972-1989) operated within this bureaucratic framework. Shelest promoted Ukrainian national autonomy and Shcherbytsky's suppressed it, but both of these positions were largely influenced by bureaucratic power straggles, rather than genuine feeling for the national cause.¹⁶³ For these leaders, the institutions of the Ukrainian state were first and foremost used as tools to advance political careers.

Yet Khrushchev's legacy is mixed: he also ended Stalinist terror, and his policies, although often ill-conceived, still seemed to emanate from the heart of a true believer. The Khrushchev moment thus recalls a line of the great Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, who came of age during the 'thaw', and who, like Khrushchev, was often criticized for pursuing his ostensibly benevolent projects within the corrupt confines of the Soviet system.¹⁶⁴ In the poem *Zima Junction*, Yevtushenko reflected on his youth as being marked by "some generous impulse, but nothing finished / Yet always here the means for a new design..."¹⁶⁵ In fact, this line reflects

¹⁶⁰ David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 76-77.

¹⁶¹ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 496-499.

¹⁶² Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 500-509, "thaw" quotation on 500.

¹⁶³ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 159-163.

¹⁶⁴ Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), discusses Yevtushenko's generation – the *intelligentsia* of the 'thaw' – with which Gorbachev shared many sympathies.

¹⁶⁵ Yevgeny Yevtushenko, "Zima Junction," in *Yevtushenko: Selected Poems*, trans. Robin Milner-Gulland and Peter Levi (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962), 19.

the larger history of modern Ukrainian nationalism, from Shevchenko to Skrypnyk; a litany of “generous impulses” snuffed out and left unfinished. Beginning in 1985, Gorbachev, another product of Khrushchev’s ‘thaw’ and member of Yevtushenko’s optimistic generation, set in motion a chain of events that would let breathe the entire backlogged sum of Ukraine’s grievances, impulses, and aspirations. Thus, the impetus for a paradigm shift in Ukraine’s prospects for statehood came once again from Moscow.

Part III: The Soviet Collapse and Ukrainian Independence, 1985 -

I. Gorbachev’s “Common European Home”

Like Khmelnytsky,¹⁶⁶ Gorbachev’s ability to alter the grand currents of history was largely a testament to his own individual agency. Yet both of these prime movers set processes in motion that ultimately ran contrary to their intentions. Neither Cossackdom nor the Soviet Union was saved; Khmelnytsky linked the Hetmanate to the Russian Empire, by which it was crushed, while Gorbachev integrated the Soviet Union into the post-WWII liberal international order, causing it to crumble from within. The USSR’s collapse, in turn, opened up the space for Ukraine’s 1991 declaration of independence.

Gorbachev was revolutionary in abandoning the foreign policy of his Soviet predecessors; the “socialist alternative,” which had pitted the Soviet Bloc and its third world beneficiaries against the West in a class struggle.¹⁶⁷ According to Condoleezza Rice and Philip Zelikow, who witnessed the end of the Cold War as members of George H.W. Bush’s National Security Council, Gorbachev thought he could break with his predecessors while still preserving and reforming socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Gorbachev went so far as to promote the integration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact states with Western Europe in a “common Europe home,” in which they would all cooperate on security and human rights issues. He also wanted to free the Soviet Union from its extraordinarily costly military commitments in order to free up resources for domestic reforms. While these domestic reforms are generally considered to have been poorly-conceived and implemented, Gorbachev, according to Rice and Zelikow, acted decisively in the realm of foreign policy, without realizing that his goals in this area would ultimately contribute to the collapse of Soviet socialism itself.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ See Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 125: “Rarely do individuals dominate epochal developments as completely as Bohdan Khmelnytsky did the great Ukrainian uprising of 1648. Because of his great personal impact on events that changed the course of East European history, scholars consider him to be Ukraine’s greatest military and political leader.”

¹⁶⁷ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study In Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 37-38, “socialist alternative” quotation on 38; for internal Soviet debate over the abandonment of the class struggle, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1994), 362-363.

¹⁶⁸ Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 4-38, “common European home” quotation on 5.

In 1975, the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies, in addition to the U.S., Canada, and most European states, signed the Helsinki Final Act, a nonbinding “statement of principles” in which the territorial integrity of all the signatories – as members of the Conference for Co-operation and Security in Europe (CSCE, which became the Organization for Co-operation and Security (OSCE) in 1994) – was recognized. The signatories at Helsinki, in addition to security cooperation and trade liberalization, also agreed to a third ‘basket’ of terms which called for the recognition of individual human rights. This marked “the first time [that] the Soviet Union signed an accord that specifically incorporated the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”¹⁶⁹ After 1975, small groups of dissidents throughout the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc began to invoke the Helsinki Accords in response to their governments’ contravention of human rights.¹⁷⁰ Unlike his predecessors, Gorbachev took Helsinki’s provisions seriously, and gradually brought Soviet practices in line with Helsinki’s security and human rights norms.

Gorbachev sought to transform Moscow’s international circumstance by ending its strategic nuclear confrontation with the United States. He repeatedly took the initiative in prodding U.S.-Soviet negotiations on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INFs) forward, despite Ronald Reagan’s resistance to making concessions on issues such as the U.S.’s pursuance of space weapons and the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).¹⁷¹ The INF Treaty, signed on December 8, 1987, was “historic... [in its] complete elimination of an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear arms [intermediate- and shorter-range land-based missiles and their launchers],” and also in “its remarkably extensive and intrusive verification inspection and monitoring arrangements.”¹⁷² It was also a testament to the personal agency of Gorbachev, who was the main driver of U.S.-Soviet relations in the second half of the 1980s.¹⁷³

Over the next three years, Gorbachev pushed forward U.S.-Soviet negotiations on reductions of conventional forces with the same initiative and willingness to break with his predecessors that he had displayed during the INF negotiations.¹⁷⁴ The states comprising NATO and the Warsaw Pact signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (the CFE Treaty) on November 19, 1990. The Treaty entered into force in 1992, by which time Ukraine and Russia, among other post-Soviet states, acceded to its terms as independent states. CFE negotiations were conducted “within the framework,” and “guided by the objectives and the

¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *American Umpire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 314-320, “statement of principles” quotation on 317, “Declaration of Human Rights” quotation on 316.

¹⁷⁰ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 517-519.

¹⁷¹ Garthoff, *Great Transition*, Chapter 7.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 326-27.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, on 3, Garthoff notes that “During the first half of the 1980s, Reagan’s political stance was the dominating factor in the relationship between the two countries. In most of the second half of the decade, Gorbachev’s initiatives were of primary importance. By the early 1990s, however, events, rather than choices of the leaders, had come to control the relationship.”

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Chapters 7-10, see 329-330, 354, 366-367, 379 for examples of moves on conventional forces, and see 434 for the signing of the CFE Treaty.

purposes of the [CSCE],” and were therefore another major testament to Gorbachev’s alignment with Helsinki ideals.¹⁷⁵ In broad terms, the Treaty was

committed to the objectives of establishing a secure and stable balance of conventional armed forces in Europe at lower levels than heretofore, of eliminating disparities prejudicial to stability and security and of eliminating, as a matter of high priority, the capability for launching surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive actions in Europe.¹⁷⁶

These objectives met with enormous success over the next decade; the CFE Treaty was “the most ambitious, and in many respects the most successful, project in arms control and disarmament ever attempted.”¹⁷⁷

The Treaty also reaffirmed its signatories’ “obligation to refrain in their mutual relations, as well as in their international relations in general, from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State...”¹⁷⁸ After 1991, Ukraine assumed the Helsinki Accords’ and CFE Treaty’s promises of territorial integrity as an independent state. These promises, although only as good as their signatories’ willingness to enforce them, represented a framework that was unprecedented in Ukraine’s history. When Ukraine declared independence in 1991, it was within an entirely new set of assumptions based on the norms of the U.S.-led liberal international order. The INF and CFE treaties were manifestations of Gorbachev’s willingness to integrate the Soviet world into this order, although he did not realize that this would mean the end of the Soviet Union itself. During the 1990s, reference to the precedents set by the foregoing negotiations provided a vehicle for the integration of Ukraine into a “common European home.”

II. Ukrainian Independence and the Legacy of the Last Empire

Serhii Yekelchuk describes how Ukraine’s August 24, 1991 declaration of independence was, as during the Civil War, primarily the result of imperial collapse. By 1990, the Ukrainian Communist Party’s savvy elites began to realize that advocating independence and distancing themselves from the increasingly unpopular all-Union Communist Party would be the best way to remain in power. Leonid Kravchuk, who became independent Ukraine’s first prime minister (1991-1994), led Ukraine’s ‘national communists’, who broke with unpopular Soviet hard-liners and took advantage of general anti-Soviet sentiment, as well as the agitation of Ukrainian

¹⁷⁵ Quotations from “Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe,” November 19, 1990, <http://www.osce.org/library/14087?download=true>, 1.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷⁷ Carl Cavanagh Hodge, “Conventional Arms in Europe: NATO, European Security and the Future of the CFE Treaty,” A Research Report For the International Security Outreach Programme of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Okanagan University College, March 2003, 1-13, especially 2 and 6.

¹⁷⁸ “Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe,” 1.

nationalists, to secure Ukraine's independence as the Soviet Union collapsed.¹⁷⁹ Yekelchuk asserts that Ukraine's democratic and moderate nationalist opposition, although playing an important role in this process, lacked the

electoral strength to govern on its own... [and] did not topple the old regime in the republic but made an implicit deal with its more flexible representatives, led by [Kravchuk]. Both sides wanted an independent Ukraine, the opposition for ideological reasons and the renegade elites for a fiefdom for them to rule without taking orders from the Kremlin. The pact left in power the old political elites – purged of the most odious party hacks, who did not change colors well – to govern as custodians of a new state.¹⁸⁰

Ukraine's independence is therefore mostly attributable to the communist elites who acted to secure their own political positions, possibly within a reformed Soviet state but plausibly within an independent Ukrainian state. Kravchuk and his ilk took advantage of the same Ukrainian institutions that the late-communist careerists Shelest and Shcherbytsky had exploited so adroitly. They just happened to be working the old bureaucratic levers in the context of the general discontent brought about by Gorbachev's reforms.

In the 1920s, the conservative Ukrainian historian Lypynsky had stressed the revolutionary potential of "dissident" elites.¹⁸¹ But in the revolutionary period, Ukraine's inexperienced elites, in trying to build viable institutions, faced a hopeless task, especially in the face of overwhelming outside force. Reshetar asserts that the 1917-1918 Central Rada was "attempting the impossible: achievement within a single year of the transformation of a national group into a nation state... Nations are not created by proclamations but result from a slow process of growth."¹⁸² In 1982 the historian Rudnytsky, reflecting on Lypynsky's ideas, suggested that "a wise and statesmanlike policy on the part of [Ukrainian] nationalist émigrés would consist in fostering dissident tendencies in the ranks of the Soviet Ukrainian elite."¹⁸³

Since Catherine the Great, only tiny and repressed groups of Ukrainian nationalist and dissident elites had ever remained beyond the sway of Russian co-optation. In the early 1990s, for the first time since Catherine, a large segment of Ukraine's elites had a vested interest in resisting Russia's pull. And by 1991 the Soviet Union had turned Ukraine into a state within a state, complete with its own long-established institutions. The federal structure of the Soviet Union, as farcical it had often been, had given Ukraine a territorial-administrative framework that, as Yekelchuk points out, could be used by its elites to secure independence in the case of a central collapse, such as that brought about by Gorbachev.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Yekelchuk, *Modern Nation*, 175-193, 199, especially 177-178, and 192-193.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁸¹ Rudnytsky, "Lypynsky's Political Ideas," 452.

¹⁸² Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 141-142.

¹⁸³ Rudnytsky, "Lypynsky's Political Ideas," 453.

¹⁸⁴ Yekelchuk, *Modern Nation*, 175-178.

While they were now more free of Russia's pull than at any time since Pereyaslav, these elites remained mired in corrupt Soviet-era economic structures. Just as the Cossack nobility quickly began to resemble the Polish nobility it had cast off in 1654, Ukraine's elites had broken free from their overlords, but continued to lead a system that was hostile to the interests of the Ukrainian people.¹⁸⁵ After independence, Ukraine's old administrative apparatus did not undergo any significant reform, and economic reforms proceeded sluggishly in the face of endemic corruption and collusion between government elites and old communist industrial managers who now profited from government subsidies.¹⁸⁶ This corrupt, oligarchical system has remained entrenched.¹⁸⁷ And as vehicles for this system, Ukraine's political parties have remained ideologically weak, which in turn has increased the lure of unworkable populist policies.¹⁸⁸ Political leadership in Ukraine has thus been able to imagine sovereign independence, but not a political economy that would decisively shift the country out of the post-Soviet Russian sphere and towards Western European capitalism.

While the USSR had turned Ukraine into a state within a state, its institutions had suffered under antediluvian imperial structures. Recall how the Russian Empire was "the only Absolutist State in [Europe] to survive intact into the twentieth century," finally leaving in its wake a politically uninstructed and socioeconomically underdeveloped society.¹⁸⁹ Then Stalin launched the first Five Year Plan in 1928, "creat[ing] the first truly totalitarian dictatorship and recentraliz[ing] what... survived as the last empire."¹⁹⁰ Beginning with Stalin, Ukraine endured over two decades of totalitarian subjugation, and then endured a bureaucratic vanguard that propped up the stagnating remains of Stalin's structure for four more decades. Stalin's empire too left profoundly enervated political and economic structures in its wake.

Independent Ukraine's national identity also remained fractured as a result of its Soviet legacy. Explaining the downfall of the Central Rada in 1918, Reshetar, pointing to the legacy of urban Russification, describes how "whole families were divided internally on the question of acceptance of Ukrainian nationality or the retention of Russian."¹⁹¹ In the seventy years that followed, the Ukrainian SSR was both Ukrainized and Russified. As we have seen, the Soviet Union at times genuinely supported Ukrainian cultural nationalism, especially during the 1920s and the 'thaw' of the 1960s. At other times, Soviet policies, most notably those responsible for the *Holodomor*, contributed to grievance-based Ukrainian nationalism. The USSR also annexed the nationally restive territory of western Ukraine, which became a bastion of grievances and a bellwether of the independence movement, and remains Ukraine's most overtly nationalist

¹⁸⁵ See Subtelny, *Domination*, 42 for the Cossack nobility after 1654.

¹⁸⁶ Yekelchuk, *Modern Nation*, 194, 197-200.

¹⁸⁷ See Taras Kuzio, "Twenty Years," 429-438; and Serhiy Kudelia, "The sources of continuity and change of Ukraine's incomplete state," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, no. 3-4 (Sept.-Dec. 2012), 417-428.

¹⁸⁸ Kuzio, "Twenty Years," 433.

¹⁸⁹ See Anderson, *Linages*, 328 for quotation.

¹⁹⁰ Mace, *National Liberation*, 266.

¹⁹¹ Reshetar, *Ukrainian Revolution*, 137

region and a key factor in its current East-West ethnic divide. At the same time, linguistic, cultural, and demographic Russification proceeded throughout most of the Soviet period.¹⁹²

The legacy of Soviet cultural policy manifests itself in independent Ukraine's ethnic/political divisions. But while ethno-nationalism has been used as a tool to rally support both in the more ethnically Russian east and the more ethnically Ukrainian west, this has generally been an unsustainable and alienating policy, given the overall ambiguity of ethnic allegiances in Ukraine.¹⁹³ Sherman Garnett argued in 1997 that Ukraine's ethnic divisions, "in the absence of overwhelming economic or external pressures," constituted a potential stabilizing factor in their ability to motivate politicians to espouse broadly inclusive civic nationalism.¹⁹⁴

Crimea, however, has been an exception to this ethnic ambiguity. Khrushchev transferred Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 to honor the tercentenary of the Pereyaslav "reunion"; although the transfer also appeared to be economically rational, Crimea's population consisted mostly of ethnic Russians who opposed cultural Ukrainization.¹⁹⁵ Crimea also looms large in Russian mythology, as the site of Imperial Russia's stand against western incursion during the Crimean War (1853-1856), and the home of the Russian navy's Black Sea Fleet. After the fall of the Soviet union, Crimea's political status and Russia's lease on its naval base in Sevastopol remained perennial sources of contention between Russia and Ukraine.¹⁹⁶

Crimea aside, scholarship has shown that independent Ukraine's East-West ethnic divide is more ambiguous than it appears, and that between Russian and Ukrainian identities in the country, there are many cross-cutting allegiances. Overall, there has been no simple overlaps between linguistic preference, ethnic self-identification, and political allegiance.¹⁹⁷ In fact, Ukraine based its independence on a civic conception of nationalism that included all of the "people of Ukraine." Ninety percent of voters supported independence in Ukraine's 1991 referendum; support was overwhelming even among ethnic Russians, and even won a majority in

¹⁹² For post-WWII Russification, see Yekelchuk, *Modern Nation*, 153, 172-174.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 193-228; Kuzio, "Twenty Years," 429-438; Sherman W. Garnett, *Keystone in the Arch: Ukraine in the Emerging Security Environment of Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997), 11-26.

¹⁹⁴ Garnett, *Keystone*, 11-26, quotation on 18.

¹⁹⁵ Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 499-500; Yekelchuk, *Modern Nation*, 154-155.

¹⁹⁶ Serhii Plokhy, "The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 3 (July 2000), 369-383 for an overview of the Russian myth and Crimea's place in independent Ukraine; for the "Crimean War in Myth and Memory" see the epilogue to Figes, Orlando, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), 484-493; on Crimea as an ethnic exception and source of tension in independent Ukraine, see Garnett, *Keystone*, 11-26; Yekelchuk, *Modern Nation*, 195, 201-202; and Morrison, "Pereyaslav and After," 681-684, 693-696.

¹⁹⁷ Anna Fournier, "Mapping Identities: Russian Resistance to Linguistic Ukrainisation in Central and Eastern Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 3 (May 2002), 415-433; Oxana Shevel, "Nationality in Ukraine: Some Rules of Engagement," *East European Politics and Societies* 16, no. 2 (2002), 386-412; Timothy Garton Ash and Timothy Snyder, "Orange Revolution in Ukraine (written 2005)," in *Facts Are Subversive: Political Writing from a Decade Without a Name*, by Timothy Garton Ash (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), 38-39; Garnett, *Keystone*, 18-20.

Crimea. This support for independence in 1991, however, was also based on a general belief that Ukraine's economy would flourish without Russia, the exploitative imperial leader of the Soviet Union. In the absence of either reformed economic policies and/or access to foreign markets, however, this has not been the case. Ukraine's dismal post-Soviet economic performance therefore undermines the confidence with which many ethnic Russians had voted for Ukrainian independence.¹⁹⁸

III. Ukraine and the “Common European Home”: 1994, 2014

“Since 1918, Ukraine declared its independence six times and five times it failed. One of the fundamental reasons for this is that we had no external partners who would recognize our territorial integrity.”
-Viktor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine (2005-2010)¹⁹⁹

After Pereyaslav, the question of Ukraine's East-West geopolitical orientation remained undecided over the long-term, and an opportunity for independence came again after the 1917 Russian Revolution. From 1917-1920, four separate Ukrainian governments declared independence, while the Bolsheviks, the counterrevolutionary White Army, the Central Powers, and then Poland all pressed in on Ukraine. In 1918, Germany momentarily played the role of territorial guarantor, but only so that it could extract resources from Ukraine on easy terms. Finally, as a result of Gorbachev's negotiations, Ukraine declared independence within an unprecedented set of territorial guarantees, and in the 1990s continued to negotiate its integration into the liberal international order.

This integration meant that Ukraine had to relinquish its nuclear arsenal – the world's third largest – leftover from the Soviet era. Ukrainian leaders never seriously considered becoming a rogue nuclear state, but they did delay these negotiations for several years after the end of the Cold War, because they wanted to hold out for the best security guarantee and financial compensation from the U.S. and Russia that they could get.²⁰⁰ At the end of the 1994 ‘Trilateral Process’, during which Ukraine's non-nuclear status and accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was finalized, Ukraine, the U.S., Russia and Britain signed, in December 1994, what came to be known as the Budapest Memorandum.

The Joint Declaration attached to the Memorandum invokes the “CSCE commitments in the area of human rights, economics and security” that “represent the cornerstone of the common

¹⁹⁸ Yekelchik, 191-194, “people of Ukraine” quotation on 194; Morrison, “Pereyaslav and After,” 685-687.

¹⁹⁹ Yushchenko quoted in Kuzio, “Twenty Years,” 436. Note that Yushchenko appears to be referring to the four Ukrainian governments of the revolutionary period (one in Galician Ukraine and three in Russian Ukraine), and the 1991 declaration of independence, as well as the rather obscure and completely futile OUN-Bandera declaration of independence on June 30, 1941, during WWII, which is discussed in Subtelny, *Ukraine*, 463-465.

²⁰⁰ Mykola Riabchuk, “Ukraine's Nuclear Nostalgia,” *World Policy Journal* 26, no. 4 (Winter 2009/2010), 95-99; Morrison, “Pereyaslav and After,” 696-702.

European security space.” The Treaty’s signatories also noted that they were working within the “favourable conditions” for negotiating nuclear reductions that had been brought about by the end of the Cold War, and were building on past security precedents such as the CFE Treaty.²⁰¹ The Memorandum thus marked another step in Ukraine’s ongoing accession into a “common European home.”

In accordance with CSCE/Helsinki principles, the Budapest Memorandum also “reaffirmed their obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, and that none of their weapons will ever be used against Ukraine except in self-defence or otherwise in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.” They also, in accordance with CSCE principles, promised to “refrain from economic coercion” against Ukraine.²⁰²

On the one hand, this was undoubtedly, as Mykola Riabchuk asserts, a “somewhat vague and non-obligatory” agreement that contained no strong provisions to compel anyone to Ukraine’s defense.²⁰³ However, despite its vagueness, the agreement occupies a distinct place in this three hundred fifty-year history. It belongs to the general set of agreements – the U.N. Charter, the Helsinki Accords, and the CFE Treaty – through which an independent Ukraine was able to plausibly withdraw from Russia’s orbit for the first time since Pereyaslav. And of the foregoing agreements, it was the least multilateral, and therefore the most symbolically powerful. Yet just like in 1654, Ukraine had to settle for security on uncertain terms liable to sudden change according to the interpretation of neighbouring states east and west. In 1654, the Cossacks very quickly regretted signing the Treaty of Pereyaslav, which, as we have seen, was not a reunion between separated Slavic brother nations, but a military alliance that each side interpreted in a completely different way. The actual terms of the Treaty did not matter as long as Russia, the vastly stronger power, could hold Ukraine in its sphere of influence. In his October 1993 article “Pereyaslav and after: the Russian-Ukrainian relationship,” John Morrison discussed the way in which “all Kiev’s negotiations with Moscow take place in the long shadow cast by Khmelnytsky,” and noted the “widespread belief [in Ukraine] that any security guarantees offered by Russia to a non-nuclear Ukraine will be as worthless as the Tsar’s promises in 1654.”²⁰⁴

Enticements from the west have since fractured Ukraine’s domestic politics and elicited a Russian response typical of Ukrainian experience over the past three centuries. In February 2014,

²⁰¹ “Joint Declaration issued on 5 December 1994 at Budapest by the leaders of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America,” http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/765

²⁰² “Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine’s Accession to the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” December 5, 1994, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/765

²⁰³ Riabchuk, “Nuclear Nostalgia,” 100.

²⁰⁴ Morrison, “Pereyaslav and After,” 679-680.

mass protests in Kiev led to the overthrow – as part of the ‘Euromaidan Revolution’ – of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014). Yanukovich had backed out of an Association Agreement with the EU under pressure from Putin, “who in July 2013... [had] imposed drastic trade restrictions on [Ukraine] in an effort to force Yanukovich not to sign the Association Agreement.”²⁰⁵ On March 4, 2014, shortly after Russia responded to Ukraine’s revolution with the *de facto* annexation of Crimea, “Putin said that the commitments [of the Budapest Memorandum] no longer apply because a ‘coup’ in Kiev resulted in ‘a new state with which [Russia has] signed no binding agreements.’ He [also] said he reserved the right to use military action in southeastern Ukraine to protect ethnic Russians.”²⁰⁶

In the absence of sufficient deterrence, Putin can interpret the Budapest Memorandum just as the tsars interpreted Pereyaslav. Since March 2014, Britain, the U.S., and other European powers have supplied Ukraine with military advisors and non-lethal aid, imposed increasingly strong economic sanctions on Russia, and attempted to negotiate a peaceful solution to the war in Ukraine. But so far, this response has not been strong enough to deter Russia’s steady incursion into eastern Ukraine, which followed its annexation of Crimea. Ukraine’s security, as always, hinges on the willingness of its neighbors to enforce it, and the optimistic vision of the Gorbachev years hangs in the balance.

According to Riabchuk, since 1994 there has been a common refrain in European politics and society that “stupid Kravchuk... gave away our nukes for nothing.”²⁰⁷ As tensions with Russia have increased since Putin came to power in 2000, this “nuclear nostalgia,” has grown stronger, although not to an extent that would sway Ukraine’s non-nuclear status.²⁰⁸ On August 24, 2014 – Ukraine’s independence day – President Petro Poroshenko expressed Ukraine’s view of the international community’s promises, noting how

Twice in the last 100 years under the influence of pacifist ideals, the Ukrainian political elite underestimated the importance of strengthening the defensive capabilities of their country. From 1917 to 1920, this resulted in aggression from the east and loss of Ukrainian independence. And at the turn of this century, we once again fell into the same trap, believing the world had all turned vegetarian; and we even voluntarily disposed of our nuclear weapons. But war came once again from the same direction on the horizon, where, as always, none expected it.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Nicu Popescu, *Eurasian Union: the real, the imaginary and the unlikely*, Chaillot Paper No. 132 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, September 2014), 28-29, quotation on 29.

²⁰⁶ Terry Atlas, “Ukraine Gave Up Nuclear Arms in 1994 Deal Russia Flouts,” Bloomberg Business, March 5, 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-03-05/ukraine-gave-up-nuclear-arms-in-1994-deal-russia-flouts>

²⁰⁷ Riabchuk, “Nuclear Nostalgia,” 101.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 100-105.

²⁰⁹ Petro Poroshenko quoted in “Poroshenko regrets Ukraine formerly gave up its nuclear weapons,” Euromaidan Press, August 24, 2014, trans. Adrian Bryttan, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2014/08/24/poroshenko-regrets-ukraine-formerly-gave-up-its-nuclear-weapons/>

It should be noted that Ukraine's elites, during both the periods that Poroshenko refers to, were – in accordance with their historic “Pereyaslav complex” – preoccupied with the threat of Russian encroachment.²¹⁰ But Poroshenko nicely captures Ukraine's modern history of attempts to negotiate its way out of its east-facing geopolitical fate, beginning with the confused 1917 negotiations between the Central Rada and the Russian Provisional Government.

IV. Russia's Tragedy: Imperial Zeniths and Nadirs

The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union left in its wake an economically, politically, and culturally enervated Russia, alongside a Ukraine in similar straits. Russia was stripped of its superpower status, and Russians were stripped of the social security benefits which were the product of decades of sacrifice. The economic security of late communism, dismal as it had been, stood in sharp contrast to the inequality and loss of personal savings and benefits that resulted from neoliberal economic ‘shock therapy’ and the rise of a Russian oligarchy in the 1990s. Gorbachev may have opened the door for Russia to enter a new security environment, but neither the achievements of superpower nor socialism could be swept aside without regret, and as economic fortunes crumbled, popular nostalgia for the old security environment mounted.²¹¹

Putin, who became president in 2000,²¹² responded to this disillusionment; he reined in or jailed politically independent oligarchs and oversaw a period, after coming to power, in which ordinary Russians climbed out of an economic abyss.²¹³ Putin has also promised to restore Russia's great power status by placing it at the head of a re-integrated union of post-Soviet states.²¹⁴ In short, he has sought to address what he famously referred to as the “major geopolitical disaster” that was the Soviet Union's collapse.²¹⁵

At a meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club in September 2013, Putin articulated all of the foregoing themes, from Russia's dismal 1990s to its post-2000 revival. At one point, he punctuated his speech with praise for Russia's imperial past, articulating his view of how

²¹⁰ See Morrison, “Pereyaslav and after,” 679-680 discusses the history of Ukrainian mistrust vis-à-vis Russia after Pereyaslav, and uses the term “Pereyaslav complex” (703) to describe it.

²¹¹ See Thompson, *Vision Unfulfilled*, 511-540, for an overview of this period.

²¹² Note that from 2008-2012 Putin was nominally Prime Minister of Russia while Dmitry Medvedev was President, but this is widely considered to have been simply a symbolic swap of positions.

²¹³ Thomas Remington, “Patronage and the Party of Power: President-Parliament Relations Under Vladimir Putin,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 6 (August 2008), 967-968.

²¹⁴ Popescu, *Eurasian Union*, 7-8.

²¹⁵ For “geopolitical disaster” quotation, see Vladimir Putin, “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, April 25, 2005,” http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/04/25/2031_type70029type82912_87086.shtml. The full quotation is: “Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century. As for the Russian nation, it became a genuine drama. Tens of millions of our co-citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory. Moreover, the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself.”

...the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the agreements made at Yalta in 1945, taken with Russia's very active participation, secured a lasting peace. Russia's strength, the strength of a winning nation at those critical junctures, manifested itself as generosity and justice. And let us remember [the Treaty of] Versailles, concluded without Russia's participation. Many experts, and I absolutely agree with them, believe that Versailles laid the foundation for the Second World War because [it] was unfair to the German people: it imposed restrictions with which they could not cope, and the course of the next century became clear.²¹⁶

By contrasting Russia's imperial zeniths with Germany's imperial nadir in the context of a speech on Russia's post-Soviet suffering, Putin implicitly placed his own country's "twenty years' crisis" alongside that of Germany's. A popular historiographic tradition has held that in Germany's treatment at Versailles in 1919 lay the seeds of a twenty years' crisis that culminated in the outbreak of WWII.²¹⁷ However, Zara Steiner, in her recent and definitive history of the inter-war period, has contended that Versailles was largely a fair, if flawed settlement, which France and Britain ultimately failed to uphold.²¹⁸ Putin, in any case, sees in Germany's losses at Versailles the analog to his own country's losses in 1991.

Gorbachev was also horrified by the spectre of Soviet collapse; at a Politburo meeting on November 9th, 1989 – the day the Berlin Wall fell – he and his associates frantically discussed strategies to halt the secession of the Baltic states, so as to avoid having "to agree to yet another 'wretched Brest-Litovsk peace.'" ²¹⁹ At the 1917 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Russian Empire had lost a third of its territory to Germany; losing the Soviet Union and letting America win the Cold War was a redux Brest-Litovsk. Yet the two events, like the Treaty of Versailles, can also be interpreted as fair geopolitical settlements. Brest-Litovsk and the Soviet collapse were similar in terms of their consequences for national self-determination; the Russian Empire lost mostly non-Russian territory at Brest-Litovsk, while the Soviet Union's non-Russian republics declared independence in 1991.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Putin et al, "Excerpts from transcript of meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, September 19, 2013," <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>, Putin's main speech on 1-5, quotation on 3.

²¹⁷ For the 'twenty year's crisis' paradigm applied to Russia, see Richard Sakwa, "'New Cold War' or twenty years' crisis? Russia and international politics," *International Affairs* 84, no. 2 (2008), 241-267, Sakwa notes that "E.H. Carr described the period between the two great wars of the twentieth century as a 'twenty years' crisis', during which none of the major items on the agenda after the end of the Great war in 1918 were resolved, and many were exacerbated." (265)

²¹⁸ See Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²¹⁹ Gorbachev in "Session of the CC CPSU Politburo, November 9, 1989," (Translated by Vladislav Zubok) in *Masterpieces of History*, 577.

²²⁰ On Brest-Litovsk see Watson, *Ring of Steel*, 494.

Putin speaks of Russia's national revival, yet it is important to note that he is actually helming a revival of the Russian Empire. Here, we must recall Hosking's thesis that there has always been two Russian nations, and that the imperial nation has always developed at the expense of the mass-cultural nation.²²¹ Boris Yeltsin, leading Russia's Supreme Soviet in 1990, understood this when he claimed that Russia

...does not wish to become the center of any new empire and receive advantages over other republics. Russia, more than others, understands all the ruination such a role would cause precisely because, over a long time, it was she that fulfilled that role.²²²

Russia has always increased internal repression whenever it has strengthened its hold over peoples around its frontiers. In Imperial Russia and Soviet Russia alike, ordinary Russians suffered from Russia's perpetual expansionist impetus.²²³ In Hosking's view, the Soviet Union's collapse pitted the mass Russian nation against the Soviet Imperial structure, and was not a question of non-communists versus communists. In 1990, Yeltsin was therefore a spokesman for the mass Russian nation.²²⁴ As per Hosking's formulation, the gulf between the imperial nation and the stifled mass nation in Putin's Russia is still being met with radical and desperate attempts at mediation by members of a scorned intelligentsia.²²⁵

Russia has also increasingly backed away from the integrated European security environment that was established in the late 1980s and 1990s. Throughout the 1990s, CFE arms-control norms were replaced by NATO's democracy-promotion and security norms in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, while CFE norms also failed to address some of Russia's own security concerns related to ethnic tensions on its borders. Russia perceived a security threat and an erosion of the European arms-control regime in NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe, particularly its 2004 enlargement, which encompassed the Baltic states. These factors influenced Russia's withdrawal from its CFE Treaty obligations in 2007.²²⁶ On March 11, 2015, Russia withdrew from the Joint Consultative Group of the CFE – a forum for confidence-building that it had still participated in since 2007 – making its withdrawal from the CFE framework complete. *The Financial Times* here points to Moscow's common refrain "since the 1990s that it felt

²²¹ Hosking, *People and Empire*, xix-xxviii.

²²² Yeltsin quoted in Morrison, "Pereyaslav and After," 678.

²²³ See Andreas Kappeler, "The Multi-Ethnic Empire," in *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia*, ed. James Cracraft (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 402-403, for ordinary Russian suffering under Imperial Russia.

²²⁴ Hosking, *Rulers and Victims: The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), vii-ix.

²²⁵ Hosking, *People and Empire*, xxvi; and on recent *intelligentsia* activity, see Masha Gessen, *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2014).

²²⁶ Zdzislaw Lachowski, "The CFE Treaty one year after its suspension: a forlorn Treaty?" Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Policy Brief, January 2009, <http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRIPB0901.pdf>; and Hodge, "Future of the CFE Treaty," 1-13.

encircled by NATO,” which it partly “used to justify its actions in Ukraine over the past year.”²²⁷ U.S.-Russian cooperation within the context of the INF Treaty was also in poor shape as of 2014, with both sides accusing each other of being in violation of the terms of the agreement.²²⁸ Russia’s relations with the West – currently mired in Putin’s Soviet-era ‘encirclement’ paranoia and Tsarist-era expansionist mentality – now approximate Cold War nadirs.

Putin sees Ukraine as the keystone of his post-Soviet reintegration project, which currently takes the form of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and consists of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Armenia.²²⁹ Nicu Popescu asserts that the goal of this project is to place Russia at the head of a union that can act once again act as a global “pole of influence,” and that the promise of reviving Russia’s great power status goes hand-in-hand with Putin’s own domestic popularity.²³⁰ Russia has attempted to attract new EEU members by offering them oil and gas subsidies, loans, and access to the Russian labor market, as well as compensation for the high tariffs they have to adopt upon entering the Union. Nevertheless, EEU membership has remained an unattractive prospect for post-Soviet states – most of whom, like Ukraine, have drifted away from a Russian-dominated trading sphere – and an economically unsound strategy for Russia. Putin’s brand of Eurasian integration reflects an assumption “that the larger the Eurasian Union, the stronger Russia’s great power image will be – both domestically and internationally.”²³¹ This is in fact the old logic of Russian Imperial feudalism, which always equated territory with security.

Like Kravchuk, all of Ukraine’s presidents have sat at the helm of a post-Soviet oligarchy and have had a vested interest in resisting the pull of Russian integration. At the same time, while frequently citing NATO and EU membership as goals, they have failed to align Ukraine’s internal affairs with this agenda. Ukraine’s economy remains oligarchic with levels of corruption that would disqualify it from membership in an EU still struggling to digest lesser post-Soviet states such as Bulgaria. Thus, all Ukraine’s presidents have confusedly vacillated between Russia and the West.²³² Putin, however, has treated Ukraine’s integration in any direction as a “zero-sum game,” even though, in reality, NATO and EU membership do not preclude the possibility

²²⁷ Kathrin Hille and Neil Buckley, “Russia quits arms pact as estrangement with Nato grows,” *Financial Times*, March 10, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f6c814a6-c750-11e4-9e34-00144feab7de.html>

²²⁸ Amy F. Woolf, “Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress, December 16, 2014.” Congressional Research Report. Accessed from Homeland Security Digital Library, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=760946>

²²⁹ Popescu, 9, and see 27 for Ukraine as a keystone.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8, 13, quotation on 7.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 9-26, quotation on 19-20.

²³² Kuzio, “Twenty Years,” 435-437; Popescu, *Eurasian Union*, 28; also see Garton Ash and Snyder, “Orange Revolution,” 33 for Ukraine’s oligarchs: “Such oligarchs had a vested interest in the survival of Ukraine. In an enlarged Russia, or a restored Soviet Union, they would have been small fish in a big pond, their connections of little value.”; on Ukraine’s ongoing problems with oligarchy, see “Commitment Anxiety,” *The Economist*, May 2, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21650179-brussels-and-kiev-both-want-more-their-relationship-they-are-getting-commitment-anxiety>

of cooperation with Russia.²³³ This reflects primitive nineteenth-century economic thinking wherein any affiliation of Ukraine with Europe is seen as a proportional disaffiliation with Russia. The logic of traditional Russian imperialism prevails: territory is strength, strength is prestige. Russia's wealth and that of its territories is plundered rather than developed, and isolation and insecurity prompt internal political repression.

When asked at the September 2013 Valdai International Discussion Club if he sees Ukraine as an independent state, Putin unsurprisingly responded with the same tropes used by Russian imperialists since 1654, stating that

Ukraine, without a doubt, is an independent state... But let's not forget that today's Russian statehood has roots in the Dnieper; as we say, we have a common Dnieper baptistry. Kievan Rus' started out as the foundation of the enormous future Russian state. We have common traditions, a common mentality, a common history and a common culture. We have very similar languages. In that respect, I want to repeat again, we are one people.²³⁴

Responding to the same Valdai interrogator's question about Russia's "heavy-armed tactics" in response to Ukraine's prospective EU membership, Putin explained that Russia was struggling to "digest" its own accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and had to erect tariffs to protect itself from the influx of inexpensive products that would otherwise flood Russia through Ukraine. Putin added that it would be safer for Ukraine to join the Eurasian Union, receive subsidies from Russia, and protect its weak economy from the unfettered liberalism of the EU, but that, as an independent state, it could ultimately choose its own path.²³⁵

However, since the onset of the current crisis, Putin has distanced himself from the tropes of fraternity by claiming the right to military intervention on behalf of ethnic Russians in Ukraine. The CSCE, as the Budapest Memorandum's Joint Declaration had reiterated, was a vehicle for shielding populations from the "undesirable consequences of aggressive nationalism and chauvinism."²³⁶ Ukraine, as we have seen, entered into independence with a conception of civic nationalism in which ethnic tensions existed that could either constitute a stabilizing force or, if a powerful political actor was intent on exploiting them, an explosive force.²³⁷ Putin has attempted to exploit Ukraine's apparent ethnic divide, although, as Popescu shows, this has been

²³³ Popescu, *Eurasian Union*, 37-42, "zero-sum" quotation on 37; also see Condoleezza Rice, "Will America heed the wake-up call of Ukraine?" *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/condoleezza-rice-will-america-heed-the-wake-up-call-of-ukraine/2014/03/07/cf087f74-a630-11e3-84d4-e59b1709222c_story.html, in which Rice asserts that "For [Putin], Kiev's movement toward the West is an affront to Russia in a zero-sum game for the loyalty of former territories of the empire. The invasion and possible annexation of Crimea on trumped-up concern for its Russian-speaking population is his answer to us."

²³⁴ Putin et al., "Valdai Discussion Club," 9-10 for this exchange.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-12, 18 for this exchange and Putin's remarks on Ukraine.

²³⁶ "Joint Declaration issued on 5 December 1994 at Budapest."

²³⁷ Garnett, *Keystone*, 11-28.

much more difficult than he would have liked, with only small enclaves in eastern Ukraine showing any active support for Russia's incursions.²³⁸ Putin proceeds from same mentality as the Habsburg absolutists, who eroded the autonomy of their subjects by adhering to the dictum: "Whether you like it or not, His Majesty protects you."²³⁹ And Russian media's ubiquitous claims about protecting Crimeans and other ethnic Russians from Ukrainian fascism are consistent with the manner in which Russian leaders, since Pereyaslav, have always sought to deny the agency of the Ukrainian people.²⁴⁰

V. The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement

In March 2014, shortly after the onset of the current crisis, Ukraine signed the political provisions of a sweeping Association Agreement (AA) with the EU, and signed the remainder of the agreement in June 2014, after Poroshenko's election. The AA signals Ukraine's most substantive turn towards Europe since its independence. Its preamble recognizes "Ukraine as a European country [sharing] a common history and common values with" the EU, and notes "the importance Ukraine attaches to its European identity... the strong public support in Ukraine for the country's European choice... [and] the European aspirations of Ukraine, including its commitment to building a deep and sustainable democracy and a market economy..." Overall, the AA is a vehicle for "gradually approximating Ukraine's legislation with that of the Union." However, the preamble also crucially notes that the AA "will not prejudice and leaves open future developments in EU-Ukraine relations."²⁴¹

Noting the preamble's foregoing statements on Ukraine's European orientation, legal scholars Guillaume Van der Loo, Peter Van Elsuwege and Roman Petrov point out that the AA "does not entail any legal or political commitment towards further enlargement on behalf of the Union" and is therefore not a guaranteed "stepping-stone towards EU membership."²⁴² Nevertheless, Van der Loo et al. argue "that the EU-Ukraine AA is unique in many respects and... provides a new type of integration without membership." They highlight the AA's

²³⁸ Popescu, *Eurasian Union*, 29-30.

²³⁹ Subtelny, *Domination*, 104-105 discusses these absolutist tactics, quotation on 105.

²⁴⁰ For an excellent example of the Russian media's portrayal of Ukrainians as fascist puppets, see the article by the "Americanized Russian-speaking novelist" Gary Shteyngart, "'Out of My Mouth Comes Unimpeachable Manly Truth': What I learned from watching a week of Russian TV," *The New York Times*, February 18, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/magazine/out-of-my-mouth-comes-unimpeachable-manly-truth.html?_r=0; and for a pre-2014 example of the Russian media's portrayal of Ukrainians as a fascist regime, see Riabchuk, "Nuclear Nostalgia," 104; or visit the website of Russian state-funded media giant RT ('Russia Today') - <http://rt.com/> - for ubiquitous examples.

²⁴¹ Quotations from "Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part," Official Journal of the European Union, May 29, 2014, preamble.

http://eeas.europa.eu/ukraine/docs/association_agreement_ukraine_2014_en.pdf

²⁴² Guillaume Van der Loo, Peter Van Elsuwege and Roman Petrov. "The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement: Assessment of an Innovative Legal Instrument," EUI Working Paper (Italy: European University Institute Department of Law, September 2014), 10.

http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/32031/LAW%20_WP_2014_9%20.pdf

“comprehensiveness” in “covering the entire spectrum of EU-Ukraine relations,” the ambitious nature of its goals for economic integration, and its ability to compel Ukraine’s convergence with EU norms through a “legally binding bilateral agreement,” which even includes “far-reaching... monitoring activities” to ensure Ukraine’s compliance with its economic aspects.²⁴³ They also note that the European Council “agreed on an exceptionally wide scope for provisional application” of the AA while it awaits ratification by all EU member states.²⁴⁴

Ukraine’s economic integration with the EU is to take place through a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) within the AA that “will offer Ukraine a framework for modernising its trade relations and for economic development by... aligning key sectors of the Ukrainian economy to EU standards,” and will eliminate “the vast majority of customs duties,” on EU-Ukraine imports and exports “as soon as the Agreement enters into force.”²⁴⁵ While Putin warned of the ruin that would befall Ukraine under such an agreement, the EU has noted that it is “Ukraine’s main commercial partner and accounts for 31% of its external trade, ahead of Russia (2010),” and emphasized how the DCFTA would bolster Ukraine’s commercial standards and international competitiveness.²⁴⁶ The BBC noted the DCFTA’s ability to inflict “short term... pain and disruption” on Ukraine’s economy as well as its ultimately invigorating potential in giving Ukraine “free access to the world’s biggest free trade area.”²⁴⁷

The AA, like Ukraine’s past shifts towards Europe, follows OSCE principles of multilateral arbitration and the promotion of “independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders.”²⁴⁸ With regards to security, the AA aims to bring Ukraine and the EU into “an ever-closer convergence of positions on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest, taking into account the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union, including the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).”²⁴⁹ This convergence, for instance, would “address in particular issues of conflict prevention and crisis management, regional stability, disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and arms export control...”²⁵⁰

²⁴³ Ibid., 2-3, 12-13, “comprehensive... entire spectrum” quotation on 2, “legally binding” quotation on 3, “monitoring activities” quotation on 13.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 6-7, quotation on 6.

²⁴⁵ “Guide to EU-Ukraine Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area,” European Commission, accessed May 4, 2015, quotations on pg. 2. http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2013/april/tradoc_150981.pdf: “Overall, Ukraine and the EU will eliminate respectively 99.1% and 98.1% of duties in trade value.” (2)

²⁴⁶ “EU-Ukraine Association Agreement: ‘Guide to the Association Agreement,’” European Union External Action, accessed May 4, 2015, pg. 3. http://eeas.europa.eu/images/top_stories/140912_eu-ukraine-association-agreement-quick_guide.pdf

²⁴⁷ David Stern, “Ukraine’s sink or swim EU agreement,” BBC News, June 27, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28044480>

²⁴⁸ “EU-Ukraine AA,” preamble.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., preamble.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., Article 7 (1).

With regards to a conception of common security, the EU has already been supporting Ukraine in the context of the current crisis. It has responded to Russia's incursion with diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions, has sought to play a role in the arbitration of a ceasefire and peace process, and has been a major source of financial assistance that has helped to shore up Ukraine's statehood under destabilizing conditions.²⁵¹ In an effort to buoy Ukraine's economy, the EU has also continued to give "Ukrainian exporters... preferential access to EU markets without awaiting entry into force of trade provisions under the EU-Ukraine association agreement," extending this preferential treatment until the end of 2015, after which the DCFTA will provisionally enter into application.²⁵²

Overall, the EU-Ukraine AA is a testament to Ukraine's historically undecided geopolitical affiliation. On the one hand, it represents the most substantive opportunity to enter a "common European home" that independent Ukraine has ever been given. Ukraine's economic integration, security cooperation, and institutional approximation with Europe all stand to benefit immensely from the AA; aspects of this shift have already taken effect as the EU has sought to bolster Ukraine's security and economic prospects in the context of the current crisis. On the other hand, the AA itself is ambivalent with regards to Ukraine's permanent geopolitical orientation, leaving the question of its future EU membership undecided, even while giving it a path to far-reaching integration.

For Ukraine, the challenges of undertaking the "political, socio-economic, legal and institutional reforms necessary to effectively implement"²⁵³ the AA are enormous. As Van der Loo et al. point out, "the effective enforcement and implementation of the... AA is subject to permanent scrutiny," indicating "that the EU is very cautious to open up its Internal Market," to a state as unstable as Ukraine.²⁵⁴ Since its independence, Ukraine has been unable to decisively break with a post-Soviet legacy defined by weak state institutions and oligarchical corruption, even though it has demonstrated its national willingness to resist Putin's manipulations. Russian aggression, moreover, constitutes an even graver threat to Ukrainian statehood than domestic dilemmas. While the AA has given independent Ukraine its most substantive opportunity to orient itself towards Europe, Russia's destabilizing incursion has dealt the most severe blow to Ukrainian independence itself.

²⁵¹ "Factsheet: The European Union and Ukraine," European Union External Action, Brussels, 24 April 2015, 150424/05, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140514_02_en.pdf

²⁵² "Ukraine: unilateral trade measures extended," Council of the European Union, Press Release ST 14689/14, Press 554, Brussels, 24 October 2014, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/145390.pdf

²⁵³ Quotation from "EU-Ukraine AA," preamble.

²⁵⁴ Van der Loo et al., "Assessment," 28.

Conclusion: Between Shevchenko and Khmelnytsky

Catherine could not prevent the legacy of the Cossacks from outlasting her reign and resurfacing in the eras of Shevchenko and the 1917 Revolution. Neither could the Soviet Union, which then largely suppressed scholarship on Cossack topics, prevent another groundswell of interest in and invocation of Cossack history in 1991.²⁵⁵ And broadly inclusive Ukrainian nationalism, in the egalitarian and democratic spirit of Shevchenko, has also manifested itself since Ukraine's independence, notably during 2004's Orange Revolution – a rejection of the corruption and electoral fraud of Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005) – and most recently in the pro-EU sentiment that spurred the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution, which helped rescue the abandoned EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.²⁵⁶

The EU is to independent Ukraine what the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was to Khmelnytsky. It can give Ukraine all the benefits that come with membership in a powerful and progressive federation, but it will not embrace a deeply unstable Ukraine, and is also anathema to an imperialist Russia's geopolitical logic. The Cossacks rebelled because they were being exploited and pushed to the margins of the Commonwealth; they needed a stronger power to guarantee their autonomy, but would have preferred to forego the compromises of foreign alignment altogether, an untenable prospect for Ukraine, then and today. Although Ukraine's geopolitical environment has historically cycled in a way that has brought it closer to Europe during periods of autonomy, the ambiguous and fractured Ukrainian nation has never been able to fully conceive of a European identity for itself, or bring its state institutions in line with such an identity.

Ukraine declared independence in 1991 in the context of a security order which promised to uphold the territorial integrity of the newly-independent states in Eastern Europe. Since then, Ukraine's historic internal and external burdens have demonstrated the limits of these promises. Post-Soviet Ukrainian statehood was weak to begin with, and has since been left to contend with a recidivist Russia. Despite past security guarantees and the promise of increasing Western support, Ukraine has succumbed to the same logic of Russian imperial expansion that has been active since 1654. Ukraine's East-West geopolitical orientation remains undecided, and Ukrainian statehood suffers as a result, caught between the Europe's lofty vision, Russia's resurgent imperialism, and its own Tsarist and Soviet-era legacies.

²⁵⁵ On the 1991 resurgence, see Frank Sysyn "The Reemergence of the Ukrainian Nation and Cossack Mythology." *Social Research* 58, no. 4 (Winter, 1991), 845-864.

²⁵⁶ On the Orange Revolution, see Garton Ash and Snyder, "Orange Revolution," 30-43; and Yekelchuk, *Modern Nation*, 208-228; on how the EU responded to the Euromaidan Revolution, see "Factsheet: EU and Ukraine," 2-3.

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Appendix: Maps

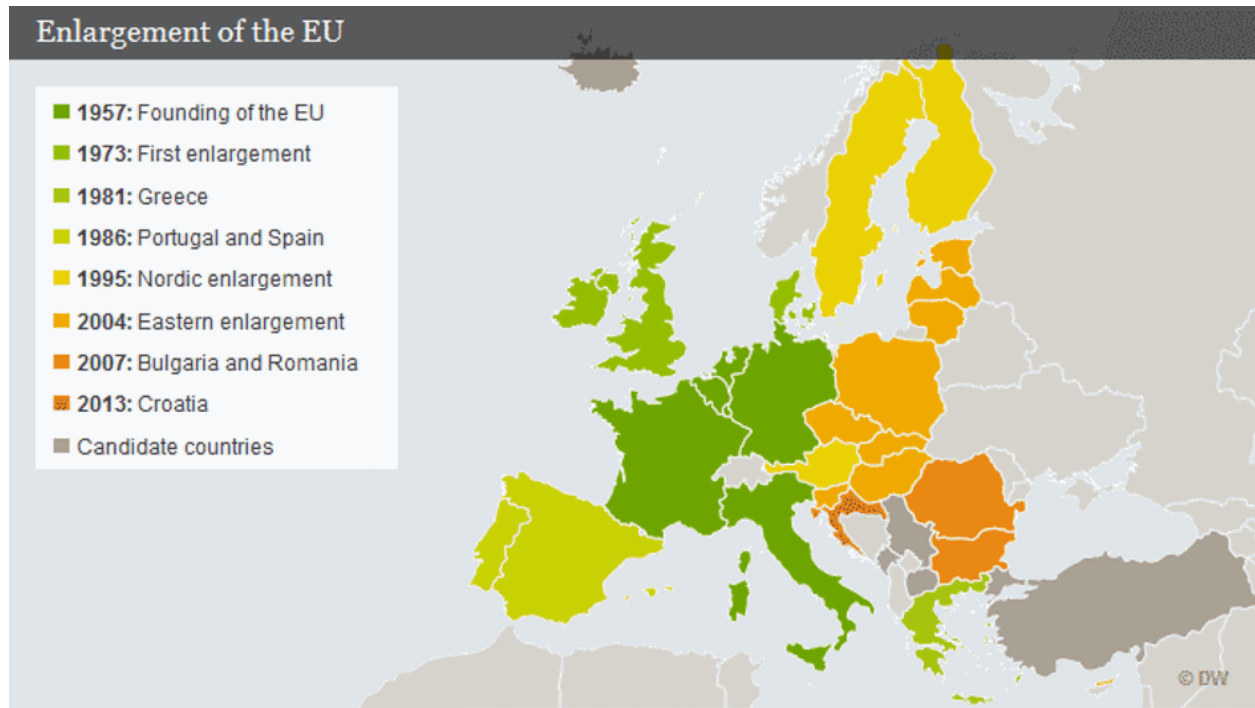
Figures 1-6: Ukraine's territorial evolution, 1569-1999²⁵⁷



²⁵⁷ From Snyder, *Reconstruction*, xiii-xv.





Figure 7: EU Expansion²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ From Benjamin Pargan, “German Minister Roth: ‘EU expansion is also in our interest,’” Deutsche Welle, April 8, 2015, <http://www.dw.de/german-minister-roth-eu-expansion-is-also-in-our-interest/a-18369610>

Figure 8: NATO Expansion²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ From Jonathan Masters, "The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)," Council on Foreign Relations, Updated February 27, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/nato/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato/p28287>