



‘Two Ukraines’ Reconsidered: The End of Ukrainian Ambivalence?

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Abstract

The 2014 Russo-Ukrainian war, euphemistically called the ‘Ukraine crisis’, has largely confirmed, on certain accounts, a dramatic split of the country and people’s loyalties between the proverbial ‘East’ and ‘West’, between the ‘Eurasian’ and ‘European’ ways of development epitomized by Russia and the European Union. By other accounts, however, it has proved that the Ukrainian nation is much more united than many experts and policymakers expected, and that the public support for the Russian invasion, beyond the occupied regions of Donbas and Crimea, is close to nil. This article does not deny that Ukraine is divided in many respects but argues that the main – and indeed the only important – divide is not between ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, or Russophones and Ukrainophones, or the ‘East’ and the ‘West’. The main fault line is ideological – between two different types of Ukrainian identity: non/anti-Soviet and post/neo-Soviet, ‘European’ and ‘East Slavonic’. All other factors, such as ethnicity, language, region, income, education, or age, correlate to a different degree with the main one. However divisive those factors might be, the external threat to the nation makes them largely irrelevant, bringing instead to the fore the crucial issue of values epitomized in two different types of Ukrainian identity.

Introduction

The notion of Ukraine as a cleft country has become a kind of common wisdom broadly expressed in both popular and academic discourses. Newspaper articles frequently describe Ukraine as divided into the ‘nationalistic’ West and ‘pro-Russian’ East – without any elaboration on what ‘nationalistic’ and ‘pro-Russian’

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mean, or how the two adjectives belonging to different semantic fields can be matched as antonyms in an odd binary opposition. The 2014 Russo-Ukrainian war, euphemistically called the ‘Ukraine crisis’, has only exacerbated the notion of Ukraine as a split country, with a frontline in the easternmost region of Donbas graphically representing that split on the national map.

The devil, however, as usual, dwells in details, which rarely seep into mass media even though they are increasingly scrutinized and discussed in the scholarship. A sort of academic consensus has emerged that (1) Ukraine is not sharply and unambiguously divided along ethnic or even linguistic lines; (2) ethnicity, language, and political orientations correlate but not necessarily match; and (3) no clear and indisputable dividing line can be drawn across the Ukrainian territory for a number of interconnected reasons, including (a) the proverbial West and East are quite heterogeneous within, (b) the lands between them are even more heterogeneous and versatile, and (c) there is no popular will in Ukraine for any division (GfK Ukraine 2014; Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2014c; Pew Research Center 2014).

Still, the problem remains to find the essence of the Ukrainian discord that cannot be exclusively attributed to Russian subversion or even invasion; Russia, in fact, only opportunistically exploits Ukraine’s weakness and multiple internal contradictions (Kudelia 2014; Umland 2014). So, what is the core of Ukraine’s disunity, vulnerability, and susceptibility to external pressure and manipulation?

I suggest that it is two different types of Ukrainian identity that determine the main national divide and subsume all other divides (ethnic, linguistic, religious, social, political, regional) as correlated and contributing to the main one. In proving this, I draw on Steven Shulman’s (2005) pioneer study of correlations between the type of Ukrainian identity (tentatively defined in his work as ‘Ukrainian ethnic’ and ‘Ukrainian East Slavonic’) and support for economic reforms that implies also European/Eurasian, pro-Western/pro-Russian political and civilizational orientations. Timothy Frye’s (2014) recent study of Ukrainians’ voting preferences also advances my argument, as it contends that neither ethnicity nor language of the hypothetical candidate noticeably influence voting patterns, while stated political priorities (pro-Western/pro-Russian) influence the voters’ choice very strongly.

There is a number of other important works that problematize correlations between the language, ethnicity, and political orientations of Ukrainian citizens. In particular, articles by Dominique Arel (2014), Anna Fournier (2002), Andrew Wilson (2002), and Volodymyr Kulyk (1996, 2006, 2011, 2013) disclose a substantial discrepancy between the language use and language identity,¹ and prove that it is not the former but the latter that largely determines respondents’ political orientations. Stepping forward from these insightful studies, I attempt to reconceptualize the apparent Ukrainian political divide as identity-based and value-driven. To this aim, I examine not only the most important topic-related studies but also a broad range of the available sociological data and the expressed views of major political actors, subjected to discourse analysis.

I argue that the main divide in Ukraine is neither Ukrainian/Russian, nor Ukrainophone/Russophone, nor West/East, but essentially Ukrainian/Ukrainian. It

runs primarily about identity inasmuch as each group insists that its members represent the 'true' Ukrainianness, whereas their opponents represent some sort of historical deviation – either artificially constructed by the 'sinister' West intent to undermine East Slavonic unity, or fabricated by the 'perfidious' Russia through the centuries of colonization, assimilation, and political domestication of primordial Ukrainians.

The closest but still very crude analogue here can be drawn to Creole/aborigine relations in Latin America – with the crucial difference that the 'aboriginal' group in Ukraine by the time of colonization had been on the same or higher level of development than the colonizers, and that cultural proximity of both groups made their merger and cohabitation much easier. The 2014 Russo-Ukrainian war made a very strong impact on the members of the 'Creole' group, strengthening in most cases their political loyalty to the Ukrainian state (which they reasonably consider of their own), but also posing them against some residual, mostly cultural/psychological loyalties to the former metropoly and/or the imaginary East Slavonic community that Russia strives to epitomize (Zhurzhenko 2014). As a result, the smaller part of the group joined the Russian side, while the larger part (i.e. plurality of Ukrainian Russians and majority of Russophone Ukrainians) opted decisively for the Ukrainian stance.² This is manifested, *inter alia*, by their mass engagement in the volunteer movement (both military and auxiliary) as well as by a dramatic increase of the nationwide support for Ukraine's membership in the European Union and NATO (GfK Ukraine 2014; Rating Sociological Group 2014b).

Another manifestation of the radical change was the May 2014 presidential election, which brought, for the first time in Ukrainian history, a clear victory to the pro-Western candidate in all Ukrainian regions. The October 2014 parliamentary elections consolidated the victory of pro-Western forces and successfully marginalized both the left- and right-wing radicals. Neither communists nor nationalists from the notorious Svoboda party managed to pass the 5% electoral threshold. And the backbone of the ancient regime – the formidable Party of Regions, re-branded as the Opposition Block, gained only 9% – down from 30% in the previous elections.

For the first time in Ukrainian history, elections did not look like a cold civil war, with a manipulative mass mobilization (Wilson 2005) around some obsolete issues like 'two state languages' or 'closer ties with Russia'. The Russian aggression, paradoxically, not only polarized the Russophone group but also consolidated the major part of it with Ukrainophones around the common cause, against the common enemy. The two major parts of Ukrainian society joined their wills again, as in 1991, when they almost unanimously, by 90%, supported the national independence in referendum. Yet the question remains how deep and long-lasting the occasional unity can be this time, and which institutional changes would facilitate its sustainability.

The Origins of Modern Ukrainian Identity

Ukrainian identity is considered as a typical product of the nineteenth-century nation-building carried out by national intelligentsia. In the absence of the national

state, it was the only institution able and willing to embark on a difficult task of transforming local peasants into Ukrainians (to borrow from the title of Eugen Weber's (1979) classic book). In this, Ukrainians did not differ much from most of the stateless nations of the world. All of them had to pass three stages of nation-building outlined by Miroslav Hroch (1985): phase A – of cultural interest, when a tiny group of intellectuals discovers richness of local cultural heritage and tries to enshrine it in books and artifacts; phase B – of nationalistic agitation, when a broader stratum of intelligentsia tries to inculcate masses with the newly discovered, culture-based identity; and finally, phase C – of mass nationalistic mobilization, when the national activists raise the political demands supported by popular movement.

The only peculiarity of Ukraine was that its 'national revival' (or 'awakening', in Romantic terms) was interrupted in the mid-nineteenth century by the repressive measures of the Russian government, so that phase B was never completed. The second attempt to finish the job in the 1920s, under Bolshevik auspices, had been aborted in the 1930s, as the Bolsheviks radically changed their nationalities policy from a show-window indigenization to a large-scale Russification (Martin 2001).

The process, however, appeared much more successful in a smaller Western part of Ukraine that was left out of Russian embrace after the Polish partition in the late eighteenth century, and increasingly benefited from the relatively liberal, constitutional, and law-abiding Austrian rule. By the end of the nineteenth century, the transformation of local peasants into Ukrainians in the Habsburg part of Ukraine had been basically completed. Remarkably, the West Ukrainian intelligentsia opted for the all-Ukrainian project of nation-building rather than for a development of the local identity into a separate nationality. In fact, they joined forces with Eastern (Dniper) Ukrainians and resumed their project suppressed in the Russian Empire, that resulted in particular in acceptance of Eastern dialects for the all-national standard, and of Eastern historical narratives that highlighted primarily Kyivan Rus and the Cosackdom for the national historical cannon (Himka 1999:109–54).

When Stalin attached the Western Ukraine to the larger Ukrainian Soviet Republic after World War II, he created a hybrid entity where the majority of people considered themselves Ukrainians but assigned to that notion substantially different meanings and emotional attachments. The primary difference stemmed from the fact that Western Ukrainians (like Poles, Balts, and other East Europeans) almost unanimously rejected the Soviet legacy as completely alien, and firmly considered Russia the main 'Other'. Eastern Ukrainians had been much more ambiguous in this regard. While part of them, mostly the Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia, shared the view of the Westerners, the majority had largely internalized the imperial view of themselves as 'Little Russians', that is a separate but very close to 'Great Russians' ('almost the same', in popular parlance) nationality (Grabowicz 1995; Szporluk 2000:71–107).

The scope and essence of the adverb 'almost' has always been vague and flexible (Subtelny 2000:1–7). This comforted Ukrainians in the both the Russian and Soviet Empires because it allowed them to retain some vestiges of their ethnic identity without direct confrontation with the chauvinistic authorities who tended

to criminalize, in their view, too conspicuous forms of national self-awareness as 'separatism' and 'nationalism'. Even though the Soviets abolished the tsarist ban of Ukrainian, they still considered the public use of it, beyond some ritualistic purposes, as highly suspicious; in fact, only uneducated peasants were indulged to freely use their vernacular in daily life, confirming thereby the popular view of Ukrainian as a crude dialect unsuitable for any serious conversation (Motyl 1987:100–01).

The privilege of being 'almost the same folk' as Russians was therefore for Ukrainians a mixed blessing. On one hand, as individuals, they avoided any ethnic discrimination in either the Russian or Soviet Empire as their ethnicity was 'almost the same' and therefore not a problem. Yet, as a group, they were deprived of any cultural rights and even the self-name in the Russian Empire, whereas the Soviets targeted them as a primary object of assimilation within the officially pursued project of 'integration and fusion of Soviet people' (Dzyuba 1968; Kappeler 2003:162–81).

This does not mean that Ukrainian identity in Eastern Ukraine has been completely frozen at the sub-regional level of 'Little Russian'/'Soviet Ukrainian' identity and that no changes occurred. Even in the country as closed and repressive as the Soviet Union, Ukrainians were exposed to a certain diffusion of the ideas and identity patterns, and to modernization in general, however perverse under communism (Krawchenko 1985). Ukrainian Soviet identity was institutionalized by the Bolsheviks in multiple ways – via respective entries in passports and other documents, recurrent censuses, clearly outlined borders for each quasi-sovereign republic, and the establishment of quasi-national institutions like the parliament, government, schools, theatres, publishing houses, etc. It had to be Soviet in political terms but could be Ukrainian in terms of cultural/regional peculiarities – as long as it bore no political aspirations or questioned cultural or linguistic superiority of the 'older brother'.

The ambiguous (one may say, hypocritical) character of that policy had a mixed and long-lasting impact on development of Ukrainian culture and identity. On one hand, all the quasi-national institutions were designed primarily as a propagandistic show-window for the Soviet nationalities' policy and, probably, also as a means to co-opt and corrupt the national intelligentsia. Their primary goal was not to develop national culture but, rather, to keep it provincial, non-modern, purely ethnographic, and obsolete, under a firm control of Moscow and reliable natives.³ Yet, on the other hand, the very existence of these institutions reified Ukrainian identity as not quite illegal and illegitimate. The institutions provided some framework for cultural work of the natives who tried to challenge the limits of the permissible and sometimes succeeded in this, despite the harsh censorship and recurrent repressions. And finally, the moribund institutions became increasingly active during perestroika and ultimately played a crucial role in the institutional legitimization of the independent state after the Soviet collapse (Kulyk 1999:7–19).

In December 1991, the independent Ukraine emerged as a common state of both Soviet and non-Soviet Ukrainians; of those who considered themselves 'almost the same people' as Russians and those who considered Russia the main 'Other'; those

who simply accepted Ukraine's independence as a *fait accompli* and those who had dreamed about it and even fought for it for decades. The impressive 90% support for the national independence in referendum hid a profound difference between the two major groups, of which each had its own reasons for a yes-vote. What was the absolute good for one group, appeared to be just a lesser evil for the other; what for non-Soviet Ukrainians was an accomplishment of their dreams, came to be for their Soviet countrymen just a pragmatic response to some historical incident.

The presidential election, held on the same day as the referendum, shed some light on a profound difference within the impressive 90%-group of Ukrainian 'secessionists'. Two thirds of them cast their ballots for the former communist boss, while only a quarter supported the anti-communist leader of the opposition – a former political prisoner Vyacheslav Chornovil.⁴ It was a clear sign that the Ukrainian Havel had no chance to win in a heavily Sovietized society, which perceived him (and democratic opposition in general) not so much as the democrats but as demonized 'nationalists'. The vote signaled, in fact, that the majority of Ukrainians preferred to have the new state as a continuation of the old one, with the same Soviet habits, institutions, and personnel, rather than to radically break with the Soviet legacy and unequivocally opt for the European way of development. It ushered, for years, an uncomfortable coexistence of two Ukraines (Riabchuk 2003a) – the post/neo-Soviet and the non/anti-Soviet – within an odd hybrid state.

Reification of the Metaphor

Neither the size nor essence of 'two Ukraines' had ever been clarified. In most cases, it was a metaphor applied by both Ukrainian and international publicists to signify ethnic, linguistic, regional, civilizational, or geopolitical divides in the country. All the references held some truth since the easternmost and the westernmost parts of Ukraine – Donbas and Galicia – represented indeed two different worlds, in many terms. But the vast space between them mitigated the differences, so it was not so easy to say where 'one Ukraine' ended and the 'other Ukraine' began. In ethnic terms, Ukrainians predominated in all the regions except for Crimea; the same was with the native language (the 'mother tongue', as reflected in censuses), even though the percentage of Ukrainian native-speakers declined faster than the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians when going east – revealing increasing levels of Russification. Still, only in Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), apart from in the Crimea, Ukrainian speakers became a minority, making up 25% and 30% of the local population, respectively, according to the last national census in 2001.

Political divides were more conspicuous: in December 1991, only Galicia – three tiny oblasts of the total twenty-four in Ukraine – gave a clear preference to the anti-communist candidate. But, again, the decline of support for Vyacheslav Chornovil further east was gradual, culminating predictably with the lowest, one-digits in favour of him in Donbas and Crimea. In time, however, the area of prevailing support for non-Soviet/anti-communist parties and politicians

expanded gradually to other oblasts of Western and, eventually, Central Ukraine. By 2002–2004, it reached the historical border of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that separated, until the late eighteenth century, the Ukrainian territories from the no-man, 'nomadic' lands to the south and east loosely controlled by the Crimean Khanate and subjected eventually to settler colonization under Russian imperial auspices (Arel 2005).

This fault-line appeared the most conspicuous and historically justified since it marked the furthest easternmost reaches of Western/Catholic civilization. Both the believers in Huntington's (1996) scheme and adherents of subtler path-dependence theories (Putnam 1993) could attach some significance to the line which divided not only the Western world – the world of the Magdeburg law, medieval colleges and universities, Renaissance and Baroque humanism, and some rudimentary notions of rule of law and republicanism – from the 'Oriental' world of the Moscow tsardom and Ottoman Empire (Soltys 2005). It divided also the people – those who had historically experienced some Western influence, and those whose cultural and political experience was only Russian and Soviet.

This might be a serious argument but it misses some important nuances. First, the population on both sides of the fault-line is heterogeneous – not only in ethno-linguistic terms but also politically. In 2005, in the most polarized Ukrainian elections, the pro-Western presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko won less than 5% in Donetsk whereas his pro-Russian rival Viktor Yanukovich got less than 5% in Lviv. But closer to the centre, more equal results appeared. In the southern city of Kherson (in Putin's proverbial 'Novorossiya'), Yushchenko won 43%, whereas in the distinctly 'orange' capital city of Kyiv, Yanukovich got a substantial 18%. In 2013, the opinion survey found in Donetsk 22% support for Ukraine's European integration (Cherkashin 2013), whereas in Lviv as many as 13% of the respondents supported the Russia-led Customs Union (Institute of Politics 2013). And secondly, even of greater importance, the discernible 'civilizational'-turned-political fault-line is not primordial but socially and culturally constructed and therefore subject to further, however slow and painstaking, deconstruction and reconstruction.

Ukraine's main problem was not the divide inherited from the past but, rather, the inability of the consecutive national governments to address the problem and offer a comprehensive policy of national integration. Internal divides are hardly a unique Ukrainian problem. A pronounced regionalism can be noticed even in ethnically homogeneous countries like Poland, Germany, Italy, and the United States. These countries (and many others) manage, however, to unify different regions and/or ethnic groups within the functional civic state, securing equal rights and an attractive vision of a common future.

Independent Ukraine was conceived as a civic, inclusive state with Ukrainian linguistic and cultural core and broad rights for ethnic minorities, including the right to use freely their native languages (in schooling, cultural activities, etc.) enshrined in the 1996 Constitution (Kulyk 1999:19–46; Szporluk 2000:327–42). The general expectation was that minorities, primarily ethnic Russians (22% of Ukraine's population by the 1989 census, 17% by 2001) would be satisfied with the granted rights, whereas a large group of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians

(20–30% of the population, by different methods of evaluation) would eventually return to the native fold, at least in the second generation. The process was seen as reasonable and legitimate: since Ukrainians had been objects of forceful Russification for centuries, they would naturally (and willingly) re-establish their primary, unspoiled by colonialism, identity.

‘Two Ukraines’ were seen not so much as geographical entities but, rather, as a metaphor that signified, within the same geographic space, a population that had already passed all three Hrochian stages of nation-building and became, in terms of identity, quite a modern nation, and population that still was stuck somewhere at the Hrochian stage B and therefore open to further nationalization. These two identities – Ukrainian modern (national) and Ukrainian pre-modern (local) – were dispersed unequally over Ukraine’s territory, with predominance of national identities to the west and local identities to the south and east, but also with their mixture, hybridity and coexistence in very different proportions in all regions. Two Ukraines, in a way, overlapped and permeated each other, so that a clear dividing line was really problematic (Riabchuk 2003b; Szporluk 2003; Zhurzhenko 2003). At the same time, a clear preponderance of one of the two identities (and two ‘projects’) in some Ukrainian regions created the impression of their regional provenance and complete dominance in those regions – an impression developed and reified by some politicians striving to promote their own project (and type of identity) as arguably all-national and to marginalize the alternative as merely regional, particular, and therefore unsuitable for the entire nation.

Ukrainian regionalism served their purpose well. Until 2005, according to sociological surveys, only plurality of Ukrainians identified themselves primarily with Ukraine, whereas most of them defined their primary loyalties as either local, regional, residual Soviet, or supranational East Slavonic. Since 2005, with the Orange revolution as a major hallmark, the annual surveys began to reflect a rather stable self-identification of the majority of respondents primarily with Ukraine. Even most ethnic Russians in the country tend to identify themselves if not primarily with Ukraine, than with their region, or Eastern Slavdom, or the Soviet Union, but usually not with Russia. And for virtually all the respondents, Ukraine stands prominently at least the second if not the first object of self-identification (Hrytsak 1998; Institute of Sociology 2010:536).

The inculcation of Ukrainian national identity within the largely pre-national, predominantly ‘local’ population may have passed smoothly if the nascent Ukrainian state had offered them a feasible and attractive programme of modernization, and forged an overarching civic identity for all the citizens based on their attachment to well-functioning state institutions, rule of law, and an appealing vision of the common future. The Ukrainian post-communist state, however, appeared too weak, dysfunctional, and corrupt to unmake Soviets into Ukrainians (Kudelia 2012). The post-Soviet elite that appropriated the independent Ukraine had neither the will nor the capacity for such a move. They chose a kind of a middle way between the Baltic-style de-Sovietization and the Belarus-style re-Sovietization of national life.

In the short run, the post-communists benefited from such a policy since it allowed them to manipulate different groups of society, bribe and co-opt their

leaders with opportunistic concessions, and to promote themselves in the role of an indispensable peacekeeper. In the long run, however, the policy appeared self-defeating and, as we see today, highly damaging for the state. First, the policy made not only possible, but also tempting, for local leaders to channel popular dissatisfaction with their poor social and economic performance at the ominous 'Centre' that privileged allegedly the interest of the 'Other' group, increasingly localized in the west or east, in the heavily demonized Galicia (inhabited by crazy nationalists and led by American pawns) or caricatured Donbas (inhabited by *homo Sovieticus* and controlled by local mafia and the Russian fifth column). And secondly, it enabled mobilization of the local electorate against the main 'Other' (either Western or Russian proxies) that not only dramatically politicized the local identities but also transformed a routine political struggle into a millenarian fight between good and evil, with no less than Ukraine's very existence at stake.

As a result, the inherited Soviet Ukrainian identity that had been largely sub-regional and pre-national, has been neither assimilated into the modern Ukrainian identity (that had evolved largely as ethno-cultural) nor matched with it in some overarching civic identity project. Instead, it developed into the alternative form of Ukrainian national identity, with most of the markers, symbols, narratives, and key values opposite to those of the already existing 'nationalistic' rival. The process, in many terms, was similar to the neo-Soviet identity-building in Belarus.⁵ The primary difference, however, was that the alternative ('traditional', ethno-cultural) identity in Ukraine had been much stronger, in terms of symbolic resources and narratives, and much deeper and more broadly embedded within the population. It could not be so easily marginalized, so the rivalry between the two Ukrainian identities – as between two national projects – was becoming increasingly tough. It was also becoming increasingly, even though artificially, regionalized since both sides tried to discursively undermine the opponents and squeeze them into a marginal regional niche – either Donbas or Galicia, and represent them as alien and not really Ukrainian (artificially constructed and promoted by the West or by Russia).

The process dramatically culminated in 2002–2004, when the beleaguered and dogged by scandal president Leonid Kuchma abandoned his earlier manipulative and seemingly 'balancing' practices and put his bet on the most powerful and, alas, most unscrupulous oligarchic clan from Donbas. Its representative, the Donetsk governor Viktor Yanukovich, was picked up first as the prime minister and then as Kuchma's successor for the presidency. This opened the door to the unrestrained Galicia-bashing and depiction of the incumbents' opponents as rabid fascists, American stooges, and Nazi collaborators (Snyder 2014b; Zhurzenko 2014). The opponents responded with wholesale accusations of the 'Donbas mafia', which did not have an explicitly ethnic/identity-related component but implicitly acquired it through the association with 'Moscow puppets' and from the general context of the regionalized political confrontation.

All the peacekeeping efforts of the new president Viktor Yushchenko had largely failed because of his general weakness and inefficiency of his government but also because of the persistent militant rhetoric of his opponents. Since 2010, after Viktor Yanukovich was elected president and his associates firmly captured the

state, the war of words, symbols, and identities grew to full stream. Acting fully in line with Stephen Shulman's (2005) study of the correlations between Ukrainian identity of the citizens and their pro-Western, pro-market, and pro-democratic orientations, they overtly tried to weaken this type identity as a major obstacle to their authoritarian dominance, and to replace it with a more familiar and convenient Russian/Soviet/East Slavonic identity – the same anti-Western, anti-liberal type as in Russia and Belarus. As Alexander Motyl (2010) sardonically remarked:

Ukrainians should therefore expect the assault on democracy and Ukrainian identity to continue. Indeed, because Ukrainian language, culture, and identity have become so closely bound with democracy and the West, and because the Russian language, culture, and identity have – unfortunately – become so closely bound with authoritarianism and the Soviet past, Yanukovich must attack both democracy and Ukrainian identity with equal vigor.

The government launched a gradual re-Sovietization of textbooks, commemorative practices, and symbolical space in general. In 2012, they pushed through by the parliament with multiple procedural violations the law 'On the Fundamentals of the National Language Policy', which was rightly perceived by many Ukrainians as a deadly threat for both the Ukrainian language (historically marginalized in Ukraine like Gaelic in Ireland) and the integrity of the state in general. Despite the stated goal to protect the minority languages and secure their official use (guaranteed by the Ukrainian Constitution), the law was written in such a way that secured the right not to learn and to use Ukrainian – under any circumstances. It stipulated – in direct contradiction to constitution – that Russian could be used officially not *alongside* but *instead* of Ukrainian, which in practice meant a complete eradication of Ukrainian from at least half of the country (*Dzerkalo tyzhnia* 2010; European Commission for Democracy through Law 2011; Kulyk 2012).

Yet, the most dangerous part of that strategy was creation and/or development of fake radical nationalists, of which the right-wing Svoboda party was probably the most successful project. Within a few years, a marginal group that had never managed to get more than 1% of the national vote, was transformed into a powerful scarecrow for both domestic and international consumption. The authorities' calculation might have been cynical but quite reasonable. Since Yanukovich's Party of Regions had no chance to win the western region, it was advisable to lend the area to a far right in order to weaken positions of liberal nationalists (the real rivals) there, in their traditional stronghold. And, at the same time, to conflate, in the public view, all the national opposition with a fake 'nationalistic Taliban' (Kuzio 2011).

The ultimate goal was probably to stage the 2015 presidential election as a competition of the bad with the worse – a corrupt authoritarian incumbent with a dreadful 'neo-Nazi' rival. The story perfectly played into the Kremlin hands and was effectively used by Russian propaganda during Euromaidan and its aftermath, to justify the unscrupulous interference into Ukraine's internal affairs by the alleged desire to 'protect Russian and Russian-speaking population' from the

mythical 'fascist junta' in Kyiv. The result was disastrous for Ukraine, which lost a part of its territory to Russia, but also, in a way, disastrous for Russia, which greatly miscalculated the scope and essence of Ukraine's internal divide and the alleged desire of Ukrainian Russians and Russophones to seek for touted 'protection' (Latynina 2014; Snyder 2014b).

Instead of another Crimea-style blitzkrieg, Moscow encountered a fierce resistance of Ukrainian troops and volunteer battalions largely completed with the same proverbial 'Russians and Russophones' who presumably suffer discrimination under the 'fascist government', made up also of proverbial Russophones – of Ukrainian, Russian, Armenian, Jewish, and other origins (Davidzon 2014; Sherr 2014). Public support for Ukraine's membership – not only in the European Union but also in NATO – increased exponentially (Rating Sociological Group 2014b), the support for national independence reached an unprecedented, since 1991, level (Rating Sociological Group 2014a), Putin's popularity in Ukraine (beyond Russia-controlled Donbas and Crimea) plummeted from the solid 70% in 2013 to single digits (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2014d), whereas the pro-Western parties and candidates scored a landslide victory in the 2014 snap presidential and parliamentary elections.

Divided We Stand

To add insult to injury, an extensive opinion survey carried out in eight of Ukraine's southern and eastern oblasts – Putin's so-called 'Novorossiya' – revealed that in all of them except for Donbas only 4–7% of respondents would like to see Russian 'peacekeepers' on their soil. But even in Donbas, a slightly higher number of those willing to welcome them (around 12%) was balanced by a similar number of people who expressed their intention to fight Russians with arms (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2014a) – as they actually are doing today in the volunteer battalions.

In April, at the height of the Kremlin's propagandistic advance, only 16% of the Ukrainian Russian-speakers approved the Russian military's intention to 'protect' them (International Republican Institute 2014). A few months later, in another nationwide poll, 86% of respondents declared themselves 'patriots of Ukraine' (6% not), including 69% in Donbas (10% not) – hardly a sign of the separatist fever that reportedly affected the region (Rating Sociological Group 2014a). And, despite Kremlin's efforts to misrepresent the new Ukrainian government as 'putschists' who usurped power illegitimately, only 4% of Ukrainian respondents shared this view (including 10% in Donbas), according to the opinion survey carried out by the reputable Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in December 2014 in all Ukrainian regions except for the annexed Crimea and occupied parts of Donbas (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology 2014b).

It seems that Vladimir Putin and his associates fell victims of their own propaganda. For years, they promoted the notion of Ukraine as an 'artificial' state, deeply divided and ready to split. For months, they brainwashed their own citizens and some foreigners with ungrounded invectives against the 'fascist junta' in Kiev that allegedly persecuted ethnic Russians and forbade the Russian language

(Pomerantsev 2014; Snyder 2014a, 2014c). They missed, or deliberately ignored, the fact that the absolute majority of Russian-speaking Ukrainians and a solid plurality of ethnic Russians in Ukraine are patriots of their country, not of Russia. The Kremlin is still attached to the nineteenth-century notion of nationality determined by soil and blood or even more anachronistically by religion or language. In the meantime, most Ukrainians are patriots of their country by choice, by a common desire to build a democracy they deem 'European' rather than autocracy they deem 'Eurasian'. They define Ukraine as a political nation, in civic terms. Thereby, Russia-born Pavlo Klimkin can be the minister of Ukraine's foreign affairs, Jewish Volodymyr Groysman can be the head of the parliament, Armenian Arsen Avakov can be the minister of internal affairs, and a (primarily) Russian-speaking Petro Poroshenko can be the president of Ukraine.

Pavel Kazarin (2014), a columnist of the reputable Moscow-based *Novaya gazeta*, argues that the Kremlin deliberately ignores a civic character of the Ukrainian nation and imposes an outdated ethno-linguistic matrix upon both Russia and Ukraine: 'Because, to describe Ukraine in political categories would mean to recognize the specific values upon which the nation is built. And this may lead to a highly unpleasant comparison of the values in both countries.'

Igor Torbakov, in his perceptive study of Russian-Ukrainian relations, develops the similar argument in a more academic fashion. He contends that the notion of identity cannot and should not be reduced to 'ethnicity and/or language or to the ways the past is remembered and represented' because it also includes an 'axiological dimension – that is the value system that social groups or a society at large uphold'. So, he argues, ultimately, 'it is precisely in the realm of axiology, not ethnicity, that the identity conflict between Ukraine and Russia is currently taking place' (Torbakov 2014:185).

Indeed, Ukraine is a bilingual country, where most people have a good command of both Ukrainian and Russian and often use them interchangeably, depending on the circumstances. Values rather than languages or ethnicities determine the main divide in the country, even though there are some correlations between all these factors, as well as the factors of region, age, education, or income. Both ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians, both Russophones and Ukrainophones, are divided internally for rather paternalistic Pan-Slavonic/Sovietophile conservatives and more civic-minded, individualistic, pro-European modernizers. The regression analysis shows that the value-based and identity-driven divide between the Soviet/Pan-Slavonic and anti-Soviet/Pan-European Ukrainians correlates much less with ethnicity and language of the respondents and much more with their education and age. Higher education and younger age predictably correlate with pro-Western orientations, whereas lower education and older age correlate with the Soviet nostalgia and Slavophile anti-Occidentalism.

The war, despite all its ugly or even deadly aspects, paradoxically creates a window of opportunity for the Ukrainian government to thrust ahead all the much needed and badly delayed reforms. It also provides an answer to the underlying questions that all previous Ukrainian leaders have tried opportunistically to avoid: who we are, what kind of a nation do we want to build, and in which civilization we

Table 1. The answers of different groups of Ukrainian respondents to a set of value-based questions (Rating Sociological Group 2013:8, 11, 14, 18)⁶

	Does Ukraine need more democracy or a "strong hand"? (%)	Does Ukraine need more freedom of speech or more censorship?	Does Ukraine need to develop market relations or come back to the planned economy?	Do you regret for the Soviet Union? (yes/no)
Education: Basic	9/75	31/27	23/46	62/20
Education: Higher	32/55	47/25	58/25	31/57
Ethnicity: Russian	14/66	21/40	32/44	55/31
Ethnicity: Ukrainian	28/58	47/24	54/28	38/47
Age: 60+ years	19/67	36/31	35/43	61/27
Age: 18–29 years	32/52	49/22	61/19	20/60

Source: http://ratinggroup.com.ua/upload/files/RG_Orientry_052013.pdf

would like to belong? The Russian aggression, as a Russophone scholar from the borderland city of Kharkiv aptly remarks,

catalysed the creation of a political nation. Ukrainian identity, which for so long had been associated with ethnicity, language and historical memory, suddenly has become territorial and political and thus inclusive . . . For the Russian-speaking urban middle class, along with small and medium-sized business owners and the intellectual elites in the East, Russia's antidemocratic tendencies, its self-isolation and its growing hostility to the West make it easier to identify with a (potentially) European Ukraine.

(Zhurzhenko 2014)

This is why, she avers, the majority of Ukrainian Russians and Russophones opted for the Ukrainian state

some driven by considerations of safety and fear of violence, others inspired by a new sense of patriotism, by the pain of national humiliation and by solidarity with those fighting for the nation's territorial integrity. However, there were also those who did – and still do – sympathize with the separatists and with Russia. Some were seduced by promises of higher salaries and pensions, others rediscovered their Russian identity and had never felt at home in the Ukrainian state anyway. One of the difficult questions we will be confronted with after the war is how to live together again in one state.

(Ibid.)

Kyiv is ready to offer a comprehensive package of decentralization reforms and enhanced self-rule to win some support of the local elites and diffuse tensions. The hyper-centralized Soviet system really does need substantial devolution. For this, the EU-sponsored principle of subsidiarity might provide a good template. So far, the Ukrainian government seems to be quite determined to clean up the state, rebuild institutions, and strengthen the rule of law. Civil society stays vigilant – as both the partner of and supervisor over the government. International donors are likely to provide not only expertise but also efficient control over the use of resources and feasibility of reforms.

Still, even in the best-case scenario, the compromise let alone reconciliation between the 'two Ukraines' – the pro-Western and anti-Western; the Sovietophile and anti-Soviet; paternalistic and civic; concerned primarily with survival and concerned with self-realization – will not be easy. Vitaly Nakhmanovych (2014), a Ukrainian historian and Jewish-Ukrainian activist, argues that reconciliation is rather impossible because the underlying values for both groups are incompatible and cannot be quickly altered, if at all. Instead, he contends, Ukrainian politicians should think about accommodation: one group could manage to guarantee some autonomy for the other group, respecting its values. It is very unlikely that authoritarian Ukraine, modeled on Putin's Russia and epitomized in Donbas, can provide such autonomy for democratically minded, Europe-oriented citizens. The Kremlin-ruled Crimea illustrates actually the opposite. But it is quite possible that democratic Ukraine could find a way to accommodate its paternalistic,

Sovietophile, and Russia-oriented fellow countrymen. This is actually what both Latvia and Estonia have rather successfully done for their Sovietophile/Pan-Slavonic co-citizens.

In the meantime, the Kremlin is likely to continue all sorts of pressure and provocations, keeping Ukraine in the purgatory of neither peace nor war, with an apparent goal to prevent any serious international investments in the country and prove that it is a failed state. This is a powerful challenge for both Ukraine's elite and its population at large. It is also a great stimulus and perhaps the last opportunity to finally come to terms with civic maturity, national consolidation, and much-needed institutional reforms.

The undeclared Russo-Ukrainian war has catalysed the growth of Ukrainian civic rather than ethnic nationalism, which was quite a rational and reasonable response of a bi-ethnic and bilingual society to the external military threat. The majority of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians and the plurality of Ukraine's ethnic Russians who had largely remained ambivalent in their loyalty to both Moscow and Kyiv, have opted ultimately for the Ukrainian cause driven primarily by civic rather than ethnic, cultural, or linguistic considerations. This does not mean that the problem of a harmonious coexistence of two major cultural groups in one country is already solved – even though it is reasonably put aside for the time being. The solution would largely depend on Ukraine's ability to reform institutions, introduce rule of law, and develop full-fledged liberal democracy. It is very likely yet that the shared experience of the war, which is broadly perceived by both groups as a war of national liberation, would increasingly legitimize the civic notion of Ukrainian patriotism and make the old dispute on who represents the 'true' Ukrainianness in ethno-cultural terms largely obsolete and irrelevant.

Notes

¹ By language identity, Volodymyr Kulyk (2011) means peoples' attachment to the language they not necessarily use or even know but charge with a high symbolical value.

² The August 2014 opinion survey (Rating Sociological Group 2014a) carried out in all Ukrainian regions except for Crimea, revealed an overwhelming support for the national independence among the Ukrainophones (91% versus 5%), and more ambivalent but still positive attitude of the Russophones (45% versus 30%).

³ The situation is quite familiar for the students of colonialism who define 'cultural phenomena (works of art, cultural institutions, processes in the cultural life of a society) as colonial if they contribute to the entrenchment or development of imperial power – by diminishing the prestige, narrowing the field of operation, limiting the visibility of, or even destroying, that which is local, autochthonous, in a word, colonial, while underscoring the dignity, global significance, modernity, necessity and naturalness of that which is metropolitan or central' (Pavlyshyn 1993:116).

⁴ Roughly the same result was recorded in Ukraine in March 1991 when Mikhail Gorbachev organized a referendum to preserve the Soviet Union as a 'renewed' federation. Only one quarter of the Ukrainian voters said definitely 'no' to Gorbachov's plans signaling thereby unequivocally their pro-independence resolve. The majority, in the meantime, supported Gorbachev's offer just because of a deeply ingrained conformism. In March, as the Soviet Union was still alive, they routinely approved its existence; in December, as it perished, they approved its disappearance – by the same non-confrontational vote.

⁵ ‘The Belarusian egalitarian national ideology, gradually created by President Lukashenka through the years of his rule, is based on a set of collectivist values, presented as innate to the Belarusian nation, but also open to all residents of the country to join. It is ethnically inclusive, but at the same time, the ideology praises the collective, the nation, the state as the ultimate value, which means that people should relinquish self-advancement and other typical values of “deplorable Western individualism” and conform to the majority instead. Dissent is portrayed as socially harmful, and social unity is promoted instead . . . Lukashenka has created a recombinant national identity, by projecting Soviet anti-liberal values onto the sovereign Belarusian nation. The egalitarian national ideology not only further endorsed the sovereignty of Belarus, but also in nation-building terms, it provided a set of attitudes and behavioural patterns favourable to authoritarian rule’ (Leshchenko 2008:1430–31).

⁶ For the sake of brevity, only ‘yes/no’ answers are shown in the table, whereas ‘difficult to say/no answer’ are omitted. Also, the middle age groups besides the youngest and oldest are omitted, as well as the middle group of Russophone Ukrainians – that falls between ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, and all the middle groups between the higher and basic education.

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