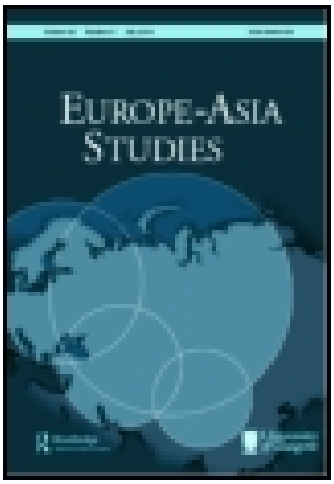

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The politics of state building: Centre-periphery relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine

Roman Solchanyk [a]
[a] RFE/RL Research Institute , Münich
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The Politics of State Building: Centre–Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine

ROMAN SOLCHANYK

A FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE confronting the newly independent Ukrainian state is the preservation of its territorial integrity in the face of claims by neighbouring countries and regional movements supporting one or another form of self-determination. The problem can be viewed from several perspectives. First, there is the question of Russia's claims to territory presently within the boundaries of Ukraine. To date such claims have not been made on an official, inter-state level, although in the aftermath of Ukraine's declaration of independence on 24 August 1991 the Russian parliament as well as leading Russian political figures, including President El'tsin, have raised the question of reviewing borders between the two countries. A case in point is Crimea, which was transferred from the RSFSR to Ukraine in 1954 and which has now become enmeshed in the Ukrainian-Russian dispute over the Black Sea Fleet. Such heavily Russian and linguistically Russified areas as the Donbass and parts of southern Ukraine have also frequently come into question. Second, there is the question of centrifugal forces within Ukraine itself, which are oriented either towards territorial autonomy or, in some cases, secession. Regionalist sentiment is prominent in Crimea, the Donbass, and in Zakarpattya *oblast'* (Transcarpathia) in Western Ukraine. Finally, there is the potentially serious problem of irredentism in several countries on Ukraine's western border, particularly Romania.

The Ukrainian–Russian nexus

A key element in the polemics between Ukraine and Russia on territorial issues is the 11.3 million-strong Russian minority in Ukraine, which accounts for almost 22% of the country's population. Not infrequently, Russian spokesmen, 'democrats' as well as 'patriots', have linked the question of borders to Russia's prerogative to protect the interests of Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine. Thus, two days after the Ukrainian declaration of independence, El'tsin's press office issued a statement in his name maintaining that Russia reserved the right to review its borders with those republics, apart from the three Baltic states, intent on withdrawing from the USSR. Although the statement did not specifically mention Russian minorities, the presidential press secretary, Pavel Voshchanov, later explained that it referred mainly to the Donbass, Crimea and northern Kazakhstan, all of which have substantial Russian populations. 'If these republics enter the renewed Union with Russia it is not a

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS SUPPORTING UKRAINIAN INDEPENDENCE, 1 DECEMBER 1991

Eastern Ukraine		*Western Ukraine*	
Donets'k	83.90	L'viv	97.46
Luhans'k	83.86	Ivano-Frankivs'k	98.42
Zaporizhzhya	90.66	Ternopil'	98.67
Dnipropetrovs'k	90.36	Volyn'	96.32
Kharkiv	86.33	Rivno	95.96
		Zakarpattya	92.59
Southern Ukraine		Chernivtsi	92.78
Crimean ASSR	54.19		
Odessa	85.38	*Cities*	
Kherson	90.13	Kiev	92.88
Mykolaiv	89.45	Sevastopol'	57.07
Central Ukraine			
Kiev	95.52		
Poltava	94.93		
Chernihiv	93.74		
Sumy	92.61		
Cherkasy	96.03		
Kirovohrad	93.88		
Zhytomyr	95.06		
Khmel'nyts'kyi	96.30		
Vinnytsya	95.43		

Source: Demokratychna Ukraina, 5 December 1991.

problem', he said. 'But if they go, we must take care of the population that lives there and not forget that these lands were settled by Russians. Russia will hardly agree to give away these territories just like that'.[1] In an interview the following evening on central television, the mayor of Moscow, Gavriil Popov, expressed his support for Eltsin's position, adding that he doubted whether the republican declarations of independence were legal, and called into question Ukraine's jurisdiction over Crimea and the Odessa *oblast'* in the event of its secession from the Soviet Union.[2] Soon after the 1 December 1991 referendum on Ukrainian independence, another prominent Russian democrat, the mayor of St Petersburg, Anatolii Sobchak, advanced a similar argument, maintaining that in the past Russia had handed over to Ukraine 'a whole series of Russian provinces, the so-called Novorossiya, whose population is for the most part Russian', and that the Russian minority in Ukraine was threatened with 'forcible Ukrainianisation'.[3] The Nobel Prize laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn went a step further. On the eve of the Ukrainian referendum, he proposed that the results of the vote be considered not in sum, but rather on a regional basis insofar as 'each *oblast'* should decide for itself where it belongs'.[4] As it turned out, Solzhenitsyn would very probably have been disappointed. The majority of voters in each of the 24 *oblasti* of Ukraine, in Crimea, and in the cities of Kiev and Sevastopol' opted for independence (see Table 1). Moreover, the Ukrainian vote, which resulted in 90.32% favouring independence, was widely interpreted as an act of secession from the Soviet Union and, perhaps more importantly, as a break with the centuries-long association with Russia.

Solzhenitsyn's proposal, which implicitly rejects the idea of Ukraine as a legitimate

entity, brings into focus an important dimension that cannot be ignored in any discussion of political borders between Ukraine and Russia, namely, the specific nature of the historical relationship between the two countries and the no less specific Russian view of what constitutes 'Russia' and the 'Russian' nation. Historically, mainstream Russian political thought never considered Ukraine to be anything other than 'Little Russia' (Malorossiya) and Ukrainians as an offshoot of a larger all-Russian (*obshcherusskii*) nation. Thus, Vissarion Belinsky (1811–48), perhaps the foremost representative of Russian Westernism, could write that

> Little Russia was never a state and consequently it did not have a history in the strict sense of the word.... The history of Little Russia is a stream discharging into the great river of Russian history. Little Russians were always a tribe and never a nation.[5]

With few exceptions, Russian public opinion, regardless of its political orientation, rejected the idea of Ukraine as an historical concept. Official government policy went further, treating the manifestation of Ukrainian cultural and linguistic distinctiveness as 'separatism' and a 'threat to the unity of the Russian nation and the strength of the state'.[6] This theme, namely, that 'Ukrainianism' represents a mortal danger for Russia, was succinctly expressed by Petr Struve (1870–1944), one of the leading representatives of Russian liberal democracy in the decades before the Bolshevik revolution:

> If the 'Ukrainian' idea of the intelligentsia takes root in the masses and ignites them with its 'Ukrainianism', it threatens a gigantic and unprecedented schism of the Russian nation, which, such is my deepest conviction, will result in veritable disaster for the state and for the people. All our problems with the 'periphery' will become mere trifles compared to the prospect of the 'bifurcation' and—should the 'Belorussians' follow the 'Little Russians'—the 'trifurcation' of Russian culture.[7]

To counter such a development, Struve called on progressive public opinion in Russia to 'initiate an ideological struggle against "Ukrainianism" as a tendency that [aims] to weaken and, in part, even to abolish the great acquisition of our history—all-Russian culture'.

The perception of the 'Ukrainian idea' as essentially destructive of Russia underlines the degree to which, from the Russian standpoint, Ukraine has traditionally been viewed as geographically and culturally a part of Russia. This point is amusingly illustrated by Ivan Drach—the well-known poet and former head of the Ukrainian democratic opposition Rukh—who tells the story of a Russian tourist from Tambov who, seeing Kiev for the first time and charmed by its beauty, asks in astonishment: 'But when did the Ukrainians steal all of this from us?'[8] In this context, to 'lose' Ukraine is tantamount to losing a part of Russian history and, consequently, identity. Stated differently, the Ukrainian problem is very much a Russian problem, that is, an integral part of the problem of Russian national identity, which has yet to be resolved. This was clearly reflected in an interview with Mikhail Poltoranin, at the time the Russian Minister for the Press and Mass Information, in early 1992. Asked by a journalist what he thought of the dangers stemming from centrifugal and nationalist tendencies in Russia, Poltoranin responded by accusing the Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk, of nationalism, that is, 'separatism'.[9] For Poltoranin, therefore,

Ukraine remains a part of Russia. One can assume that the same is true for the former Russian Vice-President Aleksandr Rutskoi, who told the readers of *Pravda*: 'The historical consciousness of Russians (*rossiyan*) does not permit anyone mechanically to bring the borders of Russia in line with the [borders of the] Russian Federation'.[10] From this perspective, the discussion about Ukrainian–Russian borders is in fact a discussion about something rather more fundamental, namely, whether or not Russia is prepared to come to terms with the 'Ukrainian idea'.

Crimea: Ukrainian, Russian or Crimean?

The Crimean question is arguably the most complex of the territorial problems facing Kiev. An important factor is that Crimea is the only large administrative sub-division of Ukraine with an ethnic Russian majority. According to the 1989 census, Russians accounted for 67.04% of the peninsula's population, while Ukrainians constituted only 25.75%. Moreover, 47.4% of Ukrainians in Crimea considered Russian to be their native language.[11] The language factor is crucial there, as it is in other parts of Ukraine with a heavy Russian or Russified presence, because after Ukrainian was made the official state language at the end of 1989 the fear of 'forcible Ukrainianisation' became a potent political issue that easily lent itself to manipulation by political groups supporting Crimean self-determination. That such fears have little or no basis in reality is another matter. Thus, Ukrainian-language schools, which would be the most efficient vehicle for such Ukrainianisation, do not exist in Crimea. At present, there is not a single Ukrainian-language school in Crimea for its 626 000 Ukrainians.[12] Ukrainian-language broadcasts on local television and radio are limited to ten and twenty minutes weekly, respectively; and the region's main newspaper, *Krymskaya pravda*, ceased publishing in Ukrainian in September 1991.[13] Another distinguishing feature of Crimea is that it was previously part of the RSFSR. The peninsula was transferred to Ukraine by decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet (19 February 1954) on the initiative of a resolution of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet (5 February 1954) to mark the 300th anniversary of the 'reunification' of Ukraine with Russia. At the time, the gesture was officially justified in terms of Crimea's territorial proximity and close economic and cultural ties to Ukraine. Almost a decade earlier, in June 1945, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet stripped Crimea of its status as an autonomous republic within the RSFSR, and in June 1946 the RSFSR passed an appropriate law reflecting the change. Crimea's autonomy—within Ukraine—was restored by the Ukrainian parliament after a local referendum in January 1991, but now the question has been raised, in Russia as well as in Crimea, as to the legality of the 1954 transfer. The situation is further complicated by the demands of the Crimean Tatars, who were deported from the peninsula *en masse* in 1944 together with several smaller nations and are now returning to their historic homeland in large numbers. Their primary objective is to secure national-territorial autonomy on the peninsula, a step that Kiev has so far been reluctant to take.[14] Finally, the question of Crimea's status is directly linked to the problem of disposing of the Black Sea Fleet.

Demands for the restoration of Crimean autonomy surfaced in summer and autumn 1989—at a time when the Ukrainian language law was in preparation and the

democratic opposition centered in Rukh was beginning to emerge as a serious political force—and gained momentum after Ukraine's declaration of state sovereignty in July 1990. Interestingly, it was the Communist Party that began to mobilise public opinion in support of Crimean self-determination. One of the first to act was the Sevastopol' city party committee, which, at its plenum in August 1989, recommended holding a referendum on three questions: restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, official bilingualism and whether or not Ukrainian should be taught in Crimea, and the resettlement of the Crimean Tatars.[15] Support for autonomy was also evident at the plenum of the Crimean *oblast'* party committee convened the following January to discuss nationality relations.[16] At the XXVIII Congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine in June 1990, the first secretary, Volodomyr Ivashko, gave the green light for autonomy, arguing that the Crimeans themselves should have the final say in the matter.[17] And at the end of October, the election and report conference of the Crimean party organisation adopted a resolution stating that the best option for Crimea was the restoration of its autonomy 'as a subject of the USSR'.[18] Critics of Crimean autonomy have argued that the Communist-Party-dominated local administration, which was not dislodged from power after the elections in spring 1990, has been in the forefront of the campaign for self-determination with a view towards isolating itself from the more reform-minded national parliament in Kiev. By transforming Crimea into an 'autonomous preservation', according to this view, traditional power structures could continue operating more or less undisturbed by developments in the Ukrainian capital. This argument, although certainly not without merit, nonetheless minimises the extent of popular support in Crimea for some form of self-determination, which was nourished throughout 1990 and 1991 by fears that 'Ukrainian separatism' was on the rise and that Kiev would ultimately reject Gorbachev's plans for a new Union treaty. The first concrete step to restore autonomy was taken by the Crimean *oblast'* soviet in September 1990, when it adopted a statement addressed to the USSR and RSFSR Supreme Soviets regarding the need to nullify the 1945–46 decisions.[19] Two months later, an extraordinary session of the Crimean *oblast'* soviet issued a declaration on the state and legal status of Crimea, which ruled that the abolition of Crimea's autonomy was unconstitutional and maintained that the Crimeans were entitled to the restoration of their statehood in the form of the Crimean ASSR 'as a subject of the USSR and a party to the Union treaty'. At the same time, the deputies decided to hold a referendum on 20 January 1991 on the question of statehood, in which all of the nations deported from Crimea were encouraged to take part.[20] The referendum, in which 81.4% of eligible voters cast their ballots, resulted in a 93.3% affirmative answer to the question: 'Are you for the restoration of the Crimean ASSR as a subject of the USSR and a party to the Union treaty?' The majority of Crimean Tatars, however, boycotted the vote, maintaining that they alone were entitled to decide Crimea's fate. The boycott was supported by Rukh, the Ukrainian Republican Party, the Democratic Party of Ukraine and other national democratic groups. Kiev's official position was that the Crimeans were entitled to the restoration of their autonomy, and this was reflected in the law 'On the Renewal of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic' passed by the Ukrainian parliament on 12 February, which restored Crimean autonomy 'within the borders of the Ukrainian SSR'.[21]

The Ukrainian declaration of independence in August 1991 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union provided the stimulus for the emergence of a full-fledged Crimean separatist movement. Within little more than a week, on 4 September, the Supreme Soviet of the Crimean ASSR declared the state sovereignty of Crimea as a constituent part of Ukraine and the 'supremacy, unity and indivisibility of the Crimean ASSR'.[22] The main force behind the separatist campaign was the Republican Movement of Crimea (RDK), which advocated nullification of the 1954 decisions transferring the peninsula to Ukraine and independent statehood. The RDK was also the most active proponent of another local referendum, for which it proposed the following question: 'Are you for the independence of the Republic of Crimea in union with other states?' Groups holding similar views include the 20 January Movement, Democratic Tavrida and Democratic Crimea.[23] Their strength and influence were demonstrated in November 1991, when the Crimean Supreme Soviet finally passed a controversial referendum law. At the same time, however, the Crimean deputies voted down two other proposals that had been placed on the agenda: an appeal to the now non-existent USSR Supreme Soviet and USSR president concerning annulment of the 1954 decisions and a measure that would have rendered ineffective on Crimean territory changes in the Ukrainian Criminal Code concerning criminal responsibility for advocating the violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity.[24] Nonetheless, the referendum campaign went into full swing at the beginning of 1992, and within a matter of months the RDK was able to secure well over the 180 000 signatures required by law to hold a vote, thereby setting the stage for a direct confrontation with Kiev.

In the meantime, the Crimean question emerged as still another contentious issue between Ukraine and Russia. In mid-January 1992 the Committee on Foreign Affairs and External Economic Ties, headed by Vladimir Lukin, now the Russian ambassador to the United States, distributed to Russian law makers its resolution proposing that the Russian Supreme Soviet declare the 1954 decisions invalid and without legal force. At the time, it was decided to postpone discussion of the issue in order not to exacerbate relations with Ukraine.[25] But on 23 January the Russian parliament voted overwhelmingly to adopt a resolution instructing two of its committees to examine the constitutionality of the 1954 decisions and recommended that the Presidium of the Russian Supreme Soviet approach its Ukrainian counterpart to do the same. The question was placed on the agenda by a group of deputies from the Russia and Fatherland parliamentary factions led by Sergei Baburin, an influential leader of the so-called patriotic-statist opposition. It also secured approval for an appeal from the Russian Supreme Soviet to the Ukrainian parliament urging constructive negotiations on the fate of the Black Sea Fleet.[26] The two issues were clearly meant to be linked, and Baburin, who had just returned, together with a group of Russian deputies, from an unofficial visit to the fleet's headquarters in Sevastopol', made no secret of this in his address to parliament.

The degree to which the Russian patriots view the Black Sea Fleet and Crimean questions as interrelated became fully apparent with the publication of excerpts from a letter sent by Lukin to Ruslan Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Russian Supreme Soviet, recommending, among other things, that Crimea be used as a bargaining chip in the dispute over the fleet. Specifically, Lukin argued that after the 1954 decisions

are declared invalid 'the Ukrainian leadership will be confronted with a dilemma: either it agrees to the transfer of the fleet and [its] bases to Russia, or [the status of] Crimea as part of Ukraine will come into question'. A strong stand on the issue, he added, would have the additional benefit of 'evoking broad popular support for the Russian leadership, which would give us more time and possibilities for manoeuvring with regard to implementing economic reforms'.[27] Lukin's letter also points to the broader context within which the Crimean and Black Sea Fleet questions must be viewed, namely, the fundamental problem of Russia's attitude towards an independent Ukrainian state. He argued that the Ukrainian leadership had as its main goal 'to sever completely [Ukraine's] special relationship with Russia, including in the military-political arena'. By formally declaring Ukraine a neutral state, he maintained, the Ukrainians intended to follow in Eastern Europe's footsteps and move towards the West 'without us'. How this 'special relationship' is understood in Moscow is clear from an interview with Baburin regarding his visit to Crimea:

> I am convinced that the history of the Soviet Union has come to an end, although unconstitutionally, illegally and immorally. But the history of the state—up to February 1917 it was called the Russian Empire, then they tried to destroy it, but in 1922 it was reborn as the Soviet Union; in 1991 they tried to destroy it again, just like in 1917, by dividing people according to their nationality—the history of this state continues.[28]

In an earlier interview Baburin was more precise:

> Above all, there is a tremendous difference between Russia and the Russian Federation. Russia is the former Soviet Union.... Politicians, not the people want national states. As for their will and the 'referendums' on independence—this is the biggest lie of all.[29]

Baburin's position that there is more to Russia than the Russian Federation, which is shared by former Vice-President Rutskoi, calls into question, above all, the legitimacy of an independent Ukrainian state.

El'tsin, who on several occasions has maintained that the Crimean question is an internal Ukrainian matter,[30] has attempted to distance himself from the patriots, maintaining that 'extreme situations arising in the Supreme Soviet, for example, the demand for the almost immediate return of Crimea to Russia', serve only to complicate the situation.[31] The Ukrainian parliament, for its part, responded by adopting a statement on 6 February 1992 rejecting Russia's claim to Crimea, arguing that it violated several Ukrainian–Russian agreements that guaranteed the inviolability of existing borders as well as Article 5 of the Minsk agreement creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and that, in any case, the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 had been carried out in accordance with legal norms.[32] At the same time, a parliamentary delegation from Kiev led by Deputy Chairman Vladimir Grinev was sent to Crimea to hold talks with the local parliamentary leadership. The negotiations resulted in a joint statement supporting, among other things, delineation of power between the Crimean republic and Ukraine and a Crimean free economic zone, which was subsequently approved in a resolution adopted by the Ukrainian parliament.[33] At the end of March 1992 an agreement was reached by parliamentary delegations from Crimea and Kiev that a draft law worked out by the two sides and serving as the legal foundation for a power-sharing

arrangement would initially be examined by the Crimean parliament and then submitted for approval in Kiev.[34] Soon thereafter, on 2 April, the agreement and the draft law detailing respective spheres of power were approved by the Crimean parliament.[35]

At this juncture El'tsin dispatched none other than Rutskoi to Crimea (and to the breakaway Dniester Republic on Moldova's left bank) at the head of a delegation that included presidential adviser Sergei Stankevich and Gen. Boris Gromov. In Sevastopol' Rutskoi renewed Russia's claim to Crimea, arguing that 'common sense' dictated that the peninsula should be part of Russia:

> If one turns to history, then again history is not on the side of those who are trying to appropriate this land. If, in 1954, perhaps under the influence of a hangover or sunstroke, the appropriate documents were signed according to which Crimea was transferred to the jurisdiction of Ukraine, I am sorry, such a document does not cancel out the history of Crimea.[36]

Asked if he knew anything about military equipment being transferred from Crimea to Russia, Rutskoi answered: 'Why should we transfer anything from Russia to Russia?'[37] With regard to the Black Sea Fleet, he expressed the view that it was and would remain a Russian fleet. Stankevich, for his part, asserted that the 1954 transfer of Crimea to Ukraine had no legal basis and that the Russian Supreme Soviet would 'put an end to it'. The chorus was joined by Sobchak, who criticised the Russian authorities for failing to move resolutely in defending Russian national interests, including Crimea and the Black Sea Fleet, and urged El'tsin to repeal the 1954 decisions. 'Crimea has never belonged to Ukraine', reasoned the St Petersburg mayor, 'and there are no legal or moral grounds for Ukraine to lay claim to Crimea'.[38]

Rutskoi's remarks in Crimea coincided with a blunt warning from El'tsin, issued on 3 April, that any attempts to change the status of the Black Sea Fleet unilaterally would force Russia to place the entire fleet under Russian jurisdiction, followed by its transfer to the strategic forces of the CIS. Nonetheless, two days later, Kravchuk issued a decree 'On Urgent Measures Regarding the Building of the Armed Forces of Ukraine', which, among other things, provided for the formation of a Ukrainian navy on the basis of that part of the Black Sea Fleet located on Ukrainian territory.[39] This was followed by El'tsin's decree of 7 April making good his earlier warning, which was announced not by a Russian government official but by Marshal Evgenii Shaposhnikov, commander of the CIS forces, at the Sixth Congress of Russian People's Deputies. This detail served only to confirm a suspicion already nurtured by many Ukrainians that the CIS armed forces were in fact a surrogate for Russia's military. Ukraine's response to these developments took the form of statements from the parliament and its presidium criticising Rutskoi by name for interfering in Ukrainian internal affairs and calling into question Ukraine's territorial integrity and borders; a similar note was sent to Moscow by the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[40] The Ukrainian and Russian decrees were subsequently suspended as part of an agreement establishing government commissions charged with negotiating a settlement on the disputed Black Sea Fleet. Those talks proved fruitless, and it was only during the Kravchuk–El'tsin summit in Yalta in early August 1992 that an agreement was reached to place the fleet under the direct joint command of the

Ukrainian and Russian presidents for a three-year period, after which it was to be divided between the two sides. The Yalta agreement, however, did little to reduce tension among the fleet's personnel, which reached serious proportions in spring 1993 and prompted another Kravchuk–El'tsin summit in Moscow in June that year. The result was an agreement to split the fleet evenly, including personnel and matériel, and initiate the practical formation of the Ukrainian and Russian navies in September 1993. The agreement, which is subject to ratification by both parliaments, was immediately denounced by an assembly of Black Sea Fleet officers, and was received cooly in the upper echelons of the Russian military establishment.[41]

The tension between Kiev and the Crimean authorities, which reached a peak in spring 1992, was temporarily defused, with both sides ultimately backing away from a direct conflict. A decision on the referendum was scheduled to be taken by the Crimean parliament when it opened on 5 May 1992. Shortly before, Kravchuk issued a strongly worded statement addressed to the population of Crimea and to all people's deputies and political forces on the peninsula condemning the referendum campaign, which he maintained was being organised by separatists determined to destabilise the situation, sow discord among the peoples of Crimea and between Crimea and Ukraine, and exacerbate Ukrainian–Russian relations. While assuring the Crimeans that their interests would be better served within the framework of broad political and economic autonomy, he also issued a stern warning that Ukraine would not permit any changes in its borders and that he would never sit down at a negotiating table to discuss the division of Ukrainian territory.[42] At the same time, the Ukrainian parliament adopted on its first reading a draft law 'On the Delineation of Power between Ukraine and the Republic of Crimea'. The document, which had been agreed upon by both sides, defined Crimea as an autonomous part of Ukraine that independently decides all questions within its competence.[43] In its final form, however, the law, renamed 'On the Status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea', was extensively altered to the detriment of Crimea. Even the name change was intended to demonstrate that Crimea and Ukraine were not equal partners, as had been implicit in the original version.[44]

When the Crimean parliament convened, the prevailing mood was that Kiev had reneged on an agreement that had been painstakingly negotiated over several months. The upshot was an unexpected vote adopting a declaration of independence, a corresponding resolution, and a proposal that Crimea and Ukraine conclude a bilateral treaty. The independence declaration was made subject to a local referendum scheduled for 2 August, which now required that voters respond to two questions: 'Are you for an independent Republic of Crimea in union with other states?' and 'Do you approve of the act declaring the state independence of the Republic of Crimea?'. The Crimean parliamentary chairman, Mykola Bahrov, attempted to soften the anticipated reaction in Kiev by arguing that the independence declaration was not tantamount to secession from Ukraine. And in another conciliatory move, the following day the Crimean parliament inserted a special clause into its constitution stating that Crimea was a component part of Ukraine that conducts its relations with Kiev on the basis of a treaty and other agreements.[45]

The response from the centre was immediate and unequivocal. The presidium of the parliament met on 6 May and declared Crimea's actions unconstitutional.

Kravchuk, who was on an official visit to the United States, maintained that the independence declaration had no legal basis. Various political parties called for the dissolution of the Crimean parliament, the imposition of direct presidential rule on the peninsula, and even the arrest of Bahrov and other Crimean leaders.[46] The full parliament discussed the situation in Crimea on 13 May and adopted a resolution that described the decisions taken in Simferopol' as unconstitutional; suspended the resolutions on independence and the referendum; set a 20 May deadline for the Crimean parliament to annul its resolutions; ordered a parliamentary commission to review all legislation adopted by the Crimean parliament to examine its constitutionality; and proposed that the president take immediate measures to restore law and order in Crimea. At the same time, it offered to continue the dialogue with the Crimean authorities on the basis of the Ukrainian constitution and the law on Crimean autonomy.[47] In a separate appeal to the Crimeans, the parliament's presidium explained that its actions were motivated by a desire to avoid confrontation and provide the Crimean authorities with an opportunity to rectify their 'mistakes'. Pointing to the ongoing bloody clashes in the Transcaucasus and the Transdniester region, their appeal emphasised the need for further consultations and negotiations.[48]

By all accounts, Kiev's resolute stand had a sobering effect on the Crimean leadership. Bahrov's first reaction was that a compromise solution must be found, but that both sides had to be prepared to make concessions. The presidium of the Crimean parliament met on 18 May and proposed that the independence declaration and corresponding resolution be annulled and, in view of Kravchuk's expressed readiness to pursue further talks, that the referendum address the question of support for Crimea's constitution rather than the independence issue. The Crimean lawmakers convened on 20 May but were unable to reach a decision. On the following day, however, four resolutions were passed that: (1) annulled the resolution on the declaration of independence (but not the declaration itself), reasoning that independence had been attained by virtue of adopting the local constitution; (2) proposed that Kiev suspend the law on Crimean autonomy and a draft law defining the role of the president's representative in Crimea; (3) called for the formulation of concrete proposals on delineation of power; and (4) suspended until 10 June its resolution on the referendum, pending the delineation of power between both sides and consultations with the referendum organisers.[49]

The dialogue with Kiev was resumed on 1 June at a meeting in Yalta that ended in a joint statement confirming, *inter alia*, that Crimea, as a constituent part of Ukraine, should have the necessary political and legal possibilities to realise its unique potential, including the right to independent ties with other countries in the social, economic and cultural spheres. At the same time, it was stressed that the peninsula cannot be considered a subject of international law. The meeting also decided to form a joint working group charged with finalising a power-sharing agreement.[50] Later in the month, a joint session of the presidia of the Crimean and national parliaments was able to find compromise solutions to all outstanding problems, specifically questions regarding Crimean citizenship and property rights. Subsequently, the Crimean parliament approved the amended power-sharing scheme, and on 30 June the Ukrainian parliament passed a law 'On the Delineation of Power between the Organs of State Rule of Ukraine and the Republic of Crimea'. From the

standpoint of the Crimeans, the new legislation is an improvement over its predecessor, providing for joint Crimean–Ukrainian citizenship and granting the Crimeans property rights to all of the land and natural resources on their territory. In an accompanying resolution, however, the Ukrainian parliament ruled that the law would take effect only after the Crimean constitution and local legislation were brought into line with the Ukrainian constitution and the referendum called off. The Crimean parliament, in turn, after initially failing to agree on the referendum issue, decided on 9 July to place a moratorium on its resolution to hold a referendum.[51]

Thus, after a long and difficult process Kiev and the Crimean authorities reached a compromise. It would be unwise, however, to suggest that the problem has been resolved altogether. The Crimean parliament still has at its disposal the referendum threat, which, as Bahrov pointed out, may be used at any time.[52] A deciding factor will be the success or failure of the accommodation reached between Kiev and Simferopol' as perceived by the Crimeans themselves. Another outstanding issue is the estimated 230 000 Crimean Tatars who have already returned to the peninsula, but have largely been excluded from the political process. So far, the Crimean Tatars have consistently supported the centre against both the Crimean leadership and the separatist movement, but their patience is wearing thin. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is the unpredictability of the political forces at work in Russia. On the same day that Crimea rescinded its resolution on independence, a closed session of the Russian parliament passed a resolution declaring the 1954 decisions as being 'without the force of law from the moment they were taken' and urging that the Crimean problem be resolved through Ukrainian–Russian negotiations with the participation of Crimea and 'on the basis of the will of its population'.[53] At the same time, it issued a statement to the Ukrainian parliament noting that Russian public opinion was beginning to question 'the sincerity of the intentions of certain founders of the CIS' who, it maintained, 'are seeking to break up the Commonwealth'. The document referred to attempts to divide the former Soviet armed forces and the fleet, which left no doubt whom it had in mind. Further, it pointed to increasing public pressure for 'effective measures in defence of the state interests of the Russian Federation' and demands for a 'legal assessment' of the 1954 decisions on Crimea. By raising the Crimean issue, the statement argued, Russia had no intention of making any kind of territorial claims on Ukraine, but rather to call attention to the sad state of affairs in the CIS.[54] Several days earlier, Khasbulatov, the speaker of the Russian parliament, also insisted that Russia had no territorial claims on Ukraine, regardless of what decisions might be taken by its lawmakers.[55] Such explanations were not taken at face value by Kiev, which responded in a predictable fashion. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent its Russian counterpart a note maintaining that the Russian parliament's actions undermined such fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act as the territorial integrity of states and the inviolability of borders.[56] The Ukrainian parliament adopted its own resolution and statement on the issue, describing Moscow's position as constituting direct interference in Ukraine's internal affairs and an 'act of political blackmail'.[57]

The Russian deputies raised the Crimean issue again at their Seventh Congress in December 1992, instructing the parliament to review the status of Sevastopol'. The pretext was a long forgotten decree adopted by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme

Soviet in October 1948 that defined Sevastopol' as a separate administrative and economic entity with republic status. According to the law makers, the decree removed the city from Crimea's jurisdiction and it was therefore not a constituent part of Crimea when the peninsula was transferred to Ukraine. Approximately six months later, on 9 July 1993, the Russian parliament adopted a nearly unanimous resolution asserting Sevastopol's 'Russian federal status', providing for its financing from the Russian budget, and calling for negotiations with Kiev on the city's status 'as the main base of the single Black Sea Fleet'. The parliament's decision was immediately rejected by El'tsin, who said that he was 'ashamed' of the lawmakers, and by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which declared that the action was at odds with the executive branch's efforts to pursue Russian interests concerning the Black Sea Fleet.[58] Kiev responded in a predictable manner. The Ukrainian parliament passed a resolution describing the decision as 'an aggressive political act of Russian parliamentarians against Ukraine' that was intended to 'violate Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty'. Dmytro Pavlychko, the influential head of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, described the Sevastopol' decision as 'tantamount to a declaration of war against Ukraine'.[59] And for the first time in the two-year confrontation between Ukraine and Russia over Crimea the international community, including the United Nations Security Council, took an official stand on the issue, criticising Moscow for violating internationally recognised norms and agreements.[60]

Russia's ambivalent attitude towards an independent Ukraine is a key factor impinging not only on the future of the CIS but also on Western security interests in the region and, more broadly, in Europe as a whole. The Russian parliament's stand on Crimea clearly reflects the strength of opposition leaders like Baburin, who was quoted by *Izvestiya* as telling the Ukrainian ambassador in Moscow that 'either Ukraine reunites again with Russia or there will be war'.[61] Baburin's political credo, and that of former Vice-President Rutskoi, is well known and unambiguous. The crucial question is to what extent the dictates of political survival will force El'tsin and his team to co-opt the ideological platform of the patriotic-statist opposition with regard to the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. The statements by the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, perhaps the staunchest Western-oriented figure in the El'tsin administration, that territorial claims on Ukraine cannot be excluded and that he favours Ukraine's 'reunification' with Russia, suggest that the nationalist opposition is a force that cannot be dismissed.[62] An indication of the political climate in Russia in mid-1992 was El'tsin's almost apologetic explanation to the Sixth Congress of Russian People's Deputies that Russia never abandoned the Soviet Union and was forced to join the CIS by the actions of the other republics (except Kazakhstan).[63] It is also worth considering the implications of the recommendations made by Evgenii Ambartsumov, Lukin's successor as head of the Russian parliamentary Commission on International Affairs and Foreign Economic Ties, which called for the rejection of Kozyrev's foreign policy course and proposed international recognition of a Russian 'doctrine (along the lines of the US "Monroe Doctrine" in Latin America) proclaiming the entire geopolitical space of the former [Soviet] Union the sphere of [the Russian Federation's] vital interests'.[64] In essence, the same idea was advanced by El'tsin in his February 1993 address to the Civic Union, which requested that the international community, including the United

Nations, grant Russia 'special powers as a guarantor of peace and stability' on territory of the former Soviet Union.[65] Clearly, by assuming the role of 'Eurasian gendarme', as it was aptly characterised by *Izvestiya*, Russia would place itself on a direct collision course with Ukraine.

The Donbass and 'Novorossiya'

The situation in the Donbass and in southern Ukraine presents a rather different picture. These regions have significant Russian populations and the Russian language is dominant, but Ukrainians remain the majority group in each *oblast'*. In Donets'k Russians are 43.6% of the population and in Luhans'k 44.8%. In the southern *oblasti* the proportion of Russians is considerably smaller: 27.4% in Odessa, 20.2% in Kherson and 19.4% in Mykolaiv. As in Crimea, the language question and the negative stereotype of 'Ukrainian nationalism and separatism' have played an important role in mobilising support for the regionalist sentiment that made itself felt in the aftermath of Ukraine's declaration of sovereignty in summer 1990. In the Donbass this took the form of discussions about reviving the short-lived Donetsk-Krivoi Rog Republic organised by the Bolsheviks in early 1918. Another variation on this theme has been the idea of a Donetsk-Dnieper or Dnieper autonomous region.[66] In Odessa regionalism manifested itself through the Democratic Union of Novorossiya, which campaigned for 'special state status' within 'the historical boundaries of Novorossiya (today's Odessa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovs'k and Crimean *oblasti*, and also part of the Dniester region of the Moldavian SSR)'.[67]

As long ago as the end of 1989 it was reported that a Popular Movement of Donbass had been formed in Voroshilovhrad (now Luhans'k), which, although it supported Rukh on such issues as the need for democratisation, state sovereignty and development of Ukrainian culture, nevertheless had reservations about the 'nationalist and extremist' attitudes of some Rukh members.[68] An organised regionalist movement emerged the following year, after the declaration of Ukrainian sovereignty, taking the form of the Donbass Intermovement. The group traces its origins to a meeting in Donets'k in early November 1990 at which an 'initiative group of internationalists' distributed leaflets calling for the formation of a mass movement in defence of a new Union treaty and the safeguarding of a single all-Union economic market. The group's spokesman was USSR people's deputy Oleksii Boiko, a department head and professor at Donets'k State University, who confided that his main concern was the 'growing nationalist itch' in Ukraine as reflected in Kiev's economic policies:

> If the economic union is indeed broken, we deputies of all ranks of Left Bank Ukraine will begin our campaign. There can be no one model for such different regions! The easiest way out of the situation is an autonomous region within the republic.[69]

The Donbass Intermovement held its founding conference in December 1990 and campaigned for a local referendum on the question of joining Donets'k *oblast'* to the USSR as a subject of the federation if Ukraine did not sign a new Union treaty. After the August putsch the Donbass Intermovement called for a referendum on autonomy within Ukraine.[70] Similarly, the Democratic Movement of Donbass, which was formed in Luhans'k, called on voters to reject Ukrainian independence in the 1

December referendum and urged a referendum on the formation of an autonomous Donetsk-Krivoi Rog region as a constituent part of a federated Ukraine within the USSR.[71] For a short time, the chief spokesman for these and similar groups was USSR people's deputy Viktor Honcharov, who stirred up a major controversy in Ukraine after his speech to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in September 1991, in which he argued that Ukraine's declaration of independence was unconstitutional and that 'national separatists' had taken over in Kiev.[72] More moderate in its views is the Movement for the Rebirth of Donbass, which was formed in early 1992. Its main aim is the creation of a free economic zone in the region; ultimately, its supporters would like to see Ukraine as a federal state.[73]

The main focus of regionalism in southern Ukraine has been the Novorossiya movement, which made its appearance in Odessa in August 1990. Its main spokesman was Oleksii Surylov, a professor at Odessa State University, who argued that the inhabitants of southern Ukraine were Novorossy, a separate ethnos formed by the descendants of settlers from Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany and France, and that the region should therefore have autonomous status within a federated Ukrainian state.[74] According to critics, Surylov worked for a time in Chisinau (Kishinev) and served as a consultant to the leaders of the breakaway Dniester Republic in Moldova.[75] The movement, which was registered as a cultural organisation for the preservation of local customs, does not appear to have gained a mass following, and its newspaper, *Novorossiiskii telegraf*, closed after a short time.[76] Nonetheless, the idea of a separate 'Novorossiya' does have its supporters, which was demonstrated in summer and autumn 1991 during the preparations for the Ukrainian referendum. In November 1991 it was reported that representatives from the Odessa, Kherson, Mykolaiv and Crimean *oblasti* had met in Odessa to discuss the question of forming a new state formation, 'Novorossiya'. This was necessitated, they explained, by the growth of 'nationalist tendencies' in Ukraine, its increasing isolationism, and diminishing ties with Russia. Leaders of the self-proclaimed Dniester Republic also expressed interest in the idea, seeing it as a way of exerting pressure on Chisinau.[77]

The elected organs of local government in the eastern and southern *oblasti* have exercised caution in their relations with the central authorities in Kiev, officially distancing themselves from the maximalist demands of regionalist movements while supporting the overall aim of greater autonomy. The Donets'k *oblast'* soviet, for example, addressed an appeal to the Ukrainian parliament in October 1991, requesting that it consider introducing a provision into the new Ukrainian constitution that would create a federal structure for Ukraine modeled on the German *Länder*. The appeal emphasised that the proposal was being made with the aim of guaranteeing maximum support for independence at the forthcoming referendum and in order to preclude attempts at forming 'new autonomous republics'.[78] Similarly, a conference in Odessa attended by leaders of local soviets from Crimea, Odessa, Mykolaiv and Kherson adopted a joint statement supporting Ukraine's declaration of independence.[79] It should also be noted that the results of the Ukrainian referendum in the eastern and southern *oblasti* indicated that there was little enthusiasm there for separation from Ukraine. In the Donbass more than 83% of voters supported Ukrainian independence; in the southern *oblasti* the corresponding figure was between 85% and 90% (see Table

1). Since independence, however, the Donbass in particular has begun to take an increasingly assertive stand *vis-à-vis* Kiev, which is reflected in demands for regional autonomy, particularly in the economic sphere, closer links with Russia and further integration within the CIS, and state status for the Russian language in Ukraine.[80] Thus, in July 1993, the Donets'k *oblast'* soviet resolved to hold a local referendum on whether state status of Russian should be incorporated into Ukraine's draft constitution and the appropriate changes made in the 1989 language law.[81] These issues, together with the demand for a nationwide referendum on confidence in the president and parliament, figured prominently in the June 1993 Donbass miners' strike, which further exacerbated the already existing government crisis in Kiev in the summer and ultimately forced the authorities to yield to most of the strikers' demands, particularly with regard to the confidence vote that had been scheduled for 26 September 1993. The miners' sentiments were succinctly expressed by a leader of the Donets'k Strike Committee, who told a Western journalist:

> We're interested in greater regional self-administration for the Donbass, not separatism nor even the type of autonomy the Crimea has. We contribute a large proportion of revenue to Ukraine and get almost nothing in return. Now we want to decide how much to give Kiev, not *vice versa*.[82]

In addition to the miners, who have emerged as a serious force to be reckoned with, the political landscape is dominated by the Civic Congress of Ukraine, a coalition of regional opposition groups from eastern and southern Ukraine that claims a membership of over 2 000 in about half of Ukraine's *oblasti*. The Congress traces its origins to a conference dubbed the Civic Congress of Democratic Forces of Ukraine, which was convened in Donets'k in June 1992 for the purpose of establishing a coordinating centre for opposition activities on a national level. In attendance were representatives of such groups as the Movement for the Rebirth of the Donbass, the Civic Forum of Ukraine, the Movement for Democratic Reforms, the Intermovement, the Socialist Party, the Association of Mining Cities of the Donbass, and others. The Congress was more successful in forming an organisational structure at its second conference, also held in Donets'k in October of that year, where the discussion by delegates from 18 *oblasti* focused on such themes as a federative structure for Ukraine, two state languages, dual Ukrainian–Russian citizenship, and integrative processes within the CIS.[83] Finally, it is not entirely fortuitous that the Donbass has provided fertile ground for a concerted effort to revive the banned Communist Party of Ukraine, a process that was initiated at a national congress of Ukrainian communists convened in Makiivka in March 1993 and attended by more than 300 delegates from throughout the country, including eight parliamentary deputies. The second stage of what was termed the 'restorationist congress' was held in Donets'k in June 1993, and adopted a declaration on the renewal of the party's activities, a statute, and elected a leader of the former Donets'k *obkom* as its new first secretary.[84]

Zakarpattya: the Ruthenian question

Zakarpattya is the westernmost *oblast'* of Ukraine, bordering Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The region was united with Ukraine in 1945, having

previously been part of Hungary and, during the interwar period, Czechoslovakia. Slovak and Hungarian influences, including assimilation of the local population, have been considerable. This, coupled with the relatively recent—from the historical standpoint—development of the Ukrainian national movement there, has resulted in the retention of the traditional Ruthenian (Rusyn) consciousness among a segment of the local population.[85] In addition, although Ukrainians constitute 78.4% of the population, there is a significant Hungarian minority, accounting for 12.5% of the population.

The movement for autonomy in Zakarpattya is led by the Society of Carpathian Ruthenians, which was formed in February 1990 as a regional cultural-educational organisation. In September that year the Society's board adopted a 'Declaration of the Society of Carpathian Ruthenians on the Return of the Status of an Autonomous Republic to the Zakarpattya *oblast*". The declaration rejects the legality of all legislative acts of the USSR and Ukrainian Supreme Soviets adopted in 1945 and 1946 regarding Zakarpattya's unification with the Ukrainian SSR, recognising only the Munich Treaty of 1938, which dismembered Czechoslovakia and led to the creation of an autonomous Subcarpathian Ruthenia within Czechoslovakia. It goes on to demand that the Soviet president and the USSR Supreme Soviet restore the autonomous republic of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, but without specifying within which country. The Society considers Ruthenians to be a Slavic nation separate from the Ukrainians, and traces their ancestry to the 'western Slavic principalities of the Croats'.[86]

In some respects, the situation in Zakarpattya resembles that in Crimea. As in the latter, the local power structures after the 1990 parliamentary elections remained in the hands of the regional Communist Party, which was headed by Mykhailo Voloshchuk, who initially was also head of the local soviet. There was also considerable interest in Zakarpattya from outside Ukraine, particularly among political parties in the former Czecho-Slovakia. As in Crimea, the movement for autonomy in Zakarpattya gained pace after Ukraine's declaration of independence. When the *oblast'* soviet opened its session in September 1991 the deputies were greeted by demonstrators and counter-demonstrators split on the issue of local autonomy. The session discussed the autonomy question and, after heated debate, resolved to form a working group on the region's status. Its task was to study the issue, publish its findings, and, after a public discussion, present its proposals to the soviet by the end of the year. Thereafter, the status of Zakarpattya was to be decided by a local referendum.[87] A month later, however, the deputies voted to hold the referendum on 1 December and approved the following question: 'Do you want Zakarpattya to have the status of an autonomous territory as a subject and part of an independent Ukraine and that it not be part of any other administrative-territorial formation?'[88] Several weeks later, after Kravchuk had met local leaders during a campaign trip to the region, the *oblast'* soviet revised the referendum question, deleting the word 'autonomous'.[89] The local referendum yielded a 78% affirmative response to the following question: 'Do you want Zakarpattya to have the status of a special self-governing administrative territory as a subject and part of an independent Ukraine, which would be fixed in the constitution of Ukraine, and that it not be part

of any other administrative-territorial formation?'[90] The vote on Ukrainian independence resulted in 92.6% in favour (see Table 1).

In spite of the referendum results, the Society of Carpathian Ruthenians has not abandoned its position. At a meeting with Czecho-Slovak parliamentarians in January 1992, it repeated previous demands that Prague annul the 1945 treaty with the USSR resulting in Zakarpattya's unification with Ukraine. More recently, the Society's leadership has called upon the United Nations Secretary General to pressure Kiev to restore Zakarpattya's autonomy, which it claimed was lost 'as a result of the annexation in 1945 by the Stalinist totalitarian regime'.[91] The draft programme of the Subcarpathian Republican Party, formed in Mukachevo in March 1992, goes further, calling for the transformation of Zakarpattya into an independent and neutral state. In mid-1993 it was reported that the extremist wing of the Ruthenian movement had proclaimed the formation of a provisional government of Subcarpathian Ruthenia that had set itself the task of either gaining independence or uniting with Slovakia.[92] The local leadership, although sensitive to the demands of the Ruthenian position, views its self-governing status primarily in economic terms and has complained bitterly that Kiev has done little to implement the idea of a free economic zone in the region in spite of Kravchuk's assurances.[93]

Ukraine and its western neighbours

To one degree or another, irredentist sentiment is evident among political parties and groups in most of Ukraine's western neighbours. However, only Romania has, in effect, made official territorial claims on Ukraine. In June 1991 the Romanian parliament adopted a declaration on the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact denouncing the 1940 annexation of Northern Bukovina (Chernivtsi *oblast'*) and Southern Bessarabia (Odessa *oblast'*) as null and void and urging the Romanian president, parliament and all political forces to 'assist in the fulfillment of the legitimate aspirations of the population of the forcibly annexed Romanian territories'.[94] The result was a sharp official reaction from Kiev in the form of a parliamentary statement that characterised the territories in question as 'Ukrainian lands settled by our ancestors from time immemorial' and described the Romanian action as 'in effect making territorial claims on Ukraine'.[95] Relations between Kiev and Bucharest were further exacerbated the following November, when the Romanian parliament, under pressure from more than a dozen political parties and groups, issued a statement saying that the results of the Ukrainian referendum on independence would be considered invalid on 'Romanian territories forcibly included as part of the USSR'. A similar statement was issued by the Romanian government. Kiev responded with a formal protest from the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the abrupt cancellation of a planned visit to Bucharest by Ukraine's foreign minister.[96]

The re-integration of Northern Bukovina and Southern Bessarabia into what is termed 'historical Moldova' also figures prominently in the political programme of the Moldovan Popular Front. At its founding congress in May 1989 it adopted a resolution to that effect and proposed that the Moldovan government raise the question with Kiev.[97] Officially, Chisinau has not made such demands, although a Moldovan parliamentary commission has declared that the events of 1940 amounted

to the occupation of Northern Bukovina and Southern Bessarabia.[98] It is no secret, however, that public opinion in Moldova views these territories as rightly belonging either to Moldova or Romania.

The former Czecho-Slovak government had stated on various occasions that it had no territorial claims on Ukraine. In spring 1992 the then Prime Minister, Marian Calfa, told Ukrainian television viewers that his country had no interest in revising its borders with Ukraine. The statement came in response to calls in Czecho-Slovakia for a referendum in Zakarpattya on its reintegration into Czecho-Slovakia.[99] This has been the position of the Czecho-Slovak Republican Party led by Miroslav Sladek. At the end of 1991 Sladek argued that Czecho-Slovakia should be reorganised as a federation of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. He attended the founding congress of the Subcarpathian Republican Party in Mukachevo, where he suggested three alternatives for the region—autonomy within Ukraine, independence, and unification with Czecho-Slovakia, which he personally favoured—and proposed that a referendum decide the issue.[100] After the break-up of Czecho-Slovakia Sladek maintained that his party, which he characterised as 'Czechoslovak', would continue the struggle for the reunification of the Czech lands with Slovakia and Zakarpattya.[101] Several political groups in Hungary, including the Union of Free Democrats and the Hungarian Democratic Forum, have also raised the question of Zakarpattya, calling for the return of Hungary's 'eastern lands'. In Poland too there are groups and organisations which consider the formerly Polish eastern territories (Eastern Galicia and the Volyn' and Rovno *oblasti*) to be historically Polish territory.[102]

Conclusion

Kiev's response to regionalist sentiment has been to pursue a policy of accommodation towards national minorities while insisting that any attempts to dismember the country will not be tolerated. Both the democratic reform movement and the authorities have been consistent in recognising the rights of Ukraine's non-Ukrainian citizens.[103] From its inception, Rukh supported national-cultural autonomy for Ukraine's national minorities, which was reflected in its founding documents. At its Second Congress, in 1990, it adopted a resolution on national-territorial autonomy for those minorities without their own statehood outside Ukraine and national-cultural autonomy for all other groups. Equal rights for all nationalities are guaranteed in an address adopted by the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet shortly after Ukraine's declaration of independence; an appeal to all citizens from the parliament on the eve of the Ukrainian referendum; a similar statement from the Committee on Nationalities Affairs of the Cabinet of Ministers; the 'Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine' adopted by the parliament on 1 November 1991; and in the law 'On National Minorities in Ukraine' passed on 25 June 1992.[104] Ukrainian democratic parties and the authorities in Kiev have been particularly careful to emphasise that Ukrainian independence poses no threat to the Russian and Russian-speaking population. Thus, in an article in *Pravda* shortly before the Ukrainian declaration of independence, Kravchuk, responding directly to attempts to cast the Russian minority in the role of a fifth column, maintained:

> I want to point out that the Russians in Ukraine should not be compared with the Russians in the Baltic republics. Here they are indigenous residents, they have lived on this land for hundreds of years ... And we will not permit any kind of discrimination against them. The Russian-language card should not be played. This is a dangerous game ... Our republic, pardon me for saying so, is not Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia or Moldova.[105]

Leading figures in the Ukrainian government and administration like the Minister of Defence, Konstantin Morozov, and the Prosecutor General, Viktor Shishkin, are ethnic Russians.

The 'Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities in Ukraine' states that Ukraine provides for the language of any national group that is compactly settled in an administrative-territorial unit to function 'on a level equal to the state [Ukrainian] language' and specifically states that all citizens have the right to use the Russian language. It also 'guarantees the existence of national-administrative units' in Ukraine. The Hungarians and Bulgarians exercised this right during the referendum on Ukrainian independence. In the predominantly Hungarian Beregszasz *raion* in Zakarpattya, 81.4% of voters approved of transforming the *raion* into a Hungarian national district, and in Bolhrad *raion* in Odessa, where Bulgarians and Gagauz are compactly settled, 83% favoured the formation of a Bolhrad national district.[106] Interestingly, when the law on national minorities was debated in the Ukrainian parliament six months later the provision for national territorial-administrative units was eliminated from the draft, which reflected the impact of the Crimean experience. Instead, the law makers decided to take up the matter in separate legislation.

On various occasions Kravchuk and other Ukrainian leaders have emphasised that Ukraine rejects the concept of 'Ukraine for Ukrainians'. In his letter to the First All-Ukrainian Inter-Nationality Congress held in Odessa in November 1991, Kravchuk assured the national minorities that Ukraine was building statehood for all of its peoples.[107] The dividends from this kind of policy were manifested in the results of the Ukrainian referendum, when the non-Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly for Ukrainian independence. But two years later, with the catastrophic economic situation having taken its toll on all of Ukraine's citizens, the euphoria of independence is hardly visible. A poll published in August 1993 revealed that only 46.8% of those questioned would support independence.[108] Admittedly, two years is a relatively short time to complete the difficult tasks of nation building and state building and simultaneously transform the economy, particularly for a nation that has enjoyed only short periods of political independence in its modern history. How Kiev deals with these problems will surely be closely observed in the regions and by Ukraine's northern neighbour.

RFE/RL Research Institute, Münich

[1] *Reuters*, 27 August 1991. For the text of the statement, see *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 August 1991.

[2] Central Soviet Television, 'Aktual'noe interv'yu', 27 August 1991.

[3] See his interviews with Radio Mayak, 4 December 1991 and *Le Figaro*, 4 December 1991. Earlier, in an interview in *Der Spiegel*, 9 September 1991, p. 174, Sobchak raised the prospect that Russians in the former Soviet republics could be used as 'hostages'.

[4] A. Solzhenitsyn, 'Obrashchenie k referendumu 1 dekabrya 1991 g.', *Trud*, 8 October 1991. See also the response from ten former Ukrainian political prisoners who are also parliamentary deputies in *Trud*, 15 October 1991.

[5] Cited by Mykola Ryabchuk, 'Ukrainskaya literatura i malorossiiskii "imidg" ', *Druzhba narodov*, 5, 1988, p. 250.

[6] V. I. Vernadsky, 'Ukrainskii vopros i russkoe obshchestvo', *Druzhba narodov*, 3, 1990, p. 250. Vladimir Vernadsky (1863–1945), who described himself as a man of 'Russian culture and customs', was the first president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. The essay was written in 1915 and published for the first time in the Ukrainian Komsomol newspaper *Moloda hvardiya*, 12 March 1988. For an analysis of the Ukrainian–Russian relationship, see Roman Szporluk's chapters 'The Ukraine and Russia', in Robert Conquest, ed., *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future* (Stanford, CA, Hoover Institution Press, 1986), pp. 151–182, and 'The Imperial Legacy and the Soviet Nationalities Problem', in Lubomyr Hajda & Mark Beissinger, eds, *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1990), pp. 1–23. For a discussion of recent developments, see Roman Solchanyk, 'Ukraine, the (Former) Center, Russia, and "Russia" ', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 25, 1, March 1992, pp. 33–47; and Adrian Karatnycky, 'The Ukrainian Factor', *Foreign Affairs*, 71, 3, Summer 1992, pp. 90–107.

[7] Petr Struve, 'Obshcherusskaya kul'tura i ukrainskii partikulyarizm. Otvet ukraintsu', *Russkaya mysl'*, 33, 1, January 1912, p. 85.

[8] Ivan Drach, 'Net, ne malorossy!', *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 11 April 1990.

[9] *Trud*, 14 January 1992.

[10] Aleksandr Rutskoi, 'V zashchitu Rossii', *Pravda*, 30 January 1992.

[11] *Naselennya Ukrains'koi RSR (Za danymy Vsesoyuznoho perepysu naselennya 1989 r.)* (Kiev, Derzhavnyi Komitet URSR po Statystytsi, 1990), p. 177.

[12] *Holos Ukrainy*, 22 October 1991; *Literaturna Ukraina*, 7 November 1991.

[13] Radio Kiev, 25 September 1991; *Holos Ukrainy*, 4 October 1991; and *Molod' Ukrainy*, 11 March 1992.

[14] See the interviews with Mustafa Dzemilev, chairman of the Mejlis, the supreme representative organ of the Crimean Tatars, in *Ukraine*, 3, 1992, pp. 6–7 and in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 25 July 1992.

[15] *Izvestiya*, 22 August 1989.

[16] Radio Moscow, 5 January 1990.

[17] *Materialy XXVIII z"izdu Komunistychnoi partii Ukrainy 19–23 chervnya 1990 roku (Pershyi etap)*, (Kiev, Vydavnytstvo Politychnoi Literatury Ukrainy, 1990), p. 31.

[18] *Chto delat'?*, 1, November 1990, p. 13.

[19] *Komsomol'skoe znamya*, 14 September 1990.

[20] *Pravda Ukrainy*, 14 November 1990; *Robitnycha hazeta*, 20 November 1990. The decision to hold a referendum was taken irrespective of the fact that at the time there was neither a USSR nor a Ukrainian referendum law.

[21] For the text of the law, see *Holos Ukrainy*, 15 February 1991.

[22] *Pravda Ukrainy*, 7 September 1991.

[23] *Trud*, 10 March 1992. The RDK has since split into two separate groups: the Russian Language Movement of Crimea, which retained the abbreviation RDK, and the more numerous Republican Party of Crimea. See *Post-Postup*, 16–22 March 1993.

[24] *Molod' Ukrainy*, 26 November 1991; *Holos Ukrainy*, 4 December 1991.

[25] *Pravda*, 18 January 1992.

[26] *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 24 January 1992.

[27] *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 22 January 1992.

[28] *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, 31 January 1992.

[29] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 9 January 1992.

[30] See, for example, *Komsomol'skoe znamya*, 21 November 1990, for his remarks during a joint press conference with Kravchuk after signing the Ukrainian–Russian treaty of 20 November 1990.

[31] *ITAR-TASS*, 25 February 1992.

[32] For the text, see *Holos Ukrainy*, 7 February 1992.

[33] *Ibid.* At the end of February the Crimean Supreme Soviet officially renamed the Crimean ASSR the Republic of Crimea. See *Izvestiya*, 27 February 1992.

[34] *Holos Ukrainy*, 28 March 1992.

[35] *Molod' Ukrainy*, 3 April 1992.

[36] *Pravda Ukrainy*, 7 April 1992.

[37] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 7 April 1992.

[38] *Interfax*, 9 April 1992.

[39] For the text, see *Pravda Ukrainy*, 8 April 1992.
[40] For the texts, see *Pravda Ukrainy*, 8 April 1992; *Demokratychna Ukraina*, 11 April 1992; and *Holos Ukrainy*, 10 April 1992.
[41] For a detailed analysis of the Black Sea Fleet dispute, see John W. R. Lepingwell, 'The Black Sea Fleet Agreement: Progress or Empty Promises?' *RFE/RL Research Report*, 9 July 1993, pp. 48–55.
[42] For the text, see *Holos Ukrainy*, 21 April 1992.
[43] *Holos Ukrainy*, 24 April 1992; *Pravda Ukrainy*, 25 April 1992.
[44] For the text, see *Holos Ukrainy*, 5 May 1992.
[45] *Izvestiya*, 6 May 1992; *Holos Ukrainy*, 8 May 1992.
[46] *Holos Ukrainy*, 7 May 1992; Radio Ukraine, 6 May 1992; and *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 8 May 1992.
[47] For the text, see *Holos Ukrainy*, 15 May 1992.
[48] For the text, see *Demokratychna Ukraina*, 19 May 1992.
[49] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 19 May 1992; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 22 May 1992; and *Nezavisimost'*, 23 May 1992.
[50] For the text of the joint statement, see *Holos Ukrainy*, 3 June 1992.
[51] *Holos Ukrainy*, 1 July 1992; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2 July 1992; and *Nezavisimost'*, 11 July 1992.
[52] *Holos Ukrainy*, 10 July 1992.
[53] For the text, see *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 25 May 1992.
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Izvestiya*, 19 May 1992.
[56] *Khreshchatyk*, 27 May 1992.
[57] For the texts, see *Holos Ukrainy* for 4 and 5 June 1992.
[58] Suzanne Crow, 'Russian Parliament Asserts Control over Sevastopol', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 30 July 1993, pp. 37–41.
[59] *The New York Times*, 10 July 1993. For the text of the Ukrainian parliament's resolution, see *Uryadovyi kuryer*, 17 July 1993.
[60] For the text of the presidential statement issued by the United Nations Security Council on 20 July see *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 25 July 1993.
[61] *Izvestiya*, 26 May 1992.
[62] See the interviews with Kozyrev in *Le Monde*, 7–8 June 1992; and 'Itogi', *Ostankino Television*, 6 June 1993.
[63] For the text of El'tsin's speech, see *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 23 April 1992. At the time of writing the Russian Federation was the only former Soviet republic that had not formally proclaimed its independence from the USSR.
[64] Excerpts from the recommendations were published in *Izvestiya*, 7 August 1992.
[65] *The New York Times*, 1 March 1993. El'tsin subsequently clarified the statement, saying that Russia would only assume such a role if requested (*ITAR-TASS*, 4 March 1993).
[66] *Holos Ukrainy*, 23 January 1991; *Holos Ukrainy*, 28 February 1991; *Moloda Halychyna*, 13 April 1991; and *Samostiina Ukraina*, 13, September 1991.
[67] *Programma Demokraticheskogo Soyuza Novorossii* (typescript), p. 1.
[68] *Radyans'ka Ukraina*, 30 November 1989.
[69] *Molod' Ukrainy*, 8 November 1990.
[70] *Komsomol'skoe znamya*, 1 June 1991; *Holos Ukrainy*, 3 October 1991.
[71] *Vechirnii Kyiv*, 4 October 1991; *Kyivs'ka pravda*, 11 October 1991; and *Pravda Ukrainy*, 22 October 1991.
[72] *Izvestiya*, 5 September 1991. See also his interview in *Komsomol'skoe znamya*, 6 September 1991 and his article 'Opomnites' slavyane!', *Rabochaya tribuna*, 1 October 1991.
[73] *Holos Ukrainy*, 11 February 1992; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 February 1992.
[74] *Robitnycha hazeta*, 9 August 1990; O. Surylov, 'Tsentral'na problema—suverenitet', *Pid praporom leninizmu*, 23, 1990, (December), pp. 14–16.
[75] *Literaturna Ukraina*, 22 November 1990; *Kul'tura i zhyttya*, 5 January 1991.
[76] See the interview with Surylov in *Kul'tura i zhyttya*, 1 June 1991.
[77] *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 16 November 1991.
[78] Radio Mayak, 21 October 1991.
[79] *Holos Ukrainy*, 2 November 1991. The statement was not signed by the delegation from Mykolaiv.
[80] For an analysis of recent developments in the Donbass, see Andrew Wilson, 'The Growing Challenge to Kiev from the Donbas', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 20 August 1993, pp. 8–13.

[81] *Holos Ukrainy*, 3 August 1993.
[82] *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 June 1993.
[83] *Holos Ukrainy*, 16 June 1992; *Pravda*, 6 October 1992; and *Holos Ukrainy*, 17 October 1992.
[84] *Interfax*, 7 March 1993; *Demokratychna Ukraina*, 11 March 1993; *Pravda*, 22 June 1993; and *Holos Ukrainy*, 22 June 1993.
[85] For a discussion of past and present developments in Zakarpattya, see Oleksa Mishanych, *Vid pidkarpats'kykh rusyniv do zakarpats'kykh ukraintsiv. Istoryko-literaturnyi narys* (Uzhhorod, Vydavnytstvo 'Karpaty', 1991).
[86] For the text, see *Otchyi khram*, September–October 1990, pp. 1–2.
[87] Zakarpats'ka Oblasna Rada Narodnykh Deputativ, Rishennya 'Pro status Zakarpattya v skladi nezalezhnoi Ukrainy', 1 October 1991 (photocopy of original).
[88] *Zakarpats'ka pravda*, 6 November 1991; *Demokratychna Ukraina*, 12 November 1991.
[89] *Holos Ukrainy*, 21 November 1991; *Radyans'ka Verkhovyna*, 23 November 1991.
[90] *Holos Ukrainy*, 4 December 1991.
[91] *CSTK*, 23 December 1991; Radio Kiev, 23 January 1992; and *Holos Ukrainy*, 3 April 1993.
[92] Radio Ukraine, 25 May 1993, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22 May 1993.
[93] See the interviews with the presidential representative in Zakarpattya in *Ukraina*, 23, 1992, pp. 4–5 and the head of the local soviet in *Holos Ukrainy*, 24 July 1993.
[94] See Vladimir Socor, 'Annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina Condemned by Romania', *Report on the USSR*, 19 July 1991, pp. 23–27.
[95] For the text, see *Radyans'ka Ukraina*, 9 July 1991.
[96] *TASS*, 28 November 1991; *TASS*, 29 November 1991; and Radio Kiev, 29 November 1991.
[97] *Radyans'ka Ukraina*, 13 September 1989; *Chto delat'?*, 1, November 1990, p. 2.
[98] *Infonovosti*, 26 June 1991.
[99] *CSTK*, 30 March 1992; *ITAR-TASS*, 31 March 1992.
[100] *Zakarpats'ka pravda*, 25 March 1992.
[101] *Die Tageszeitung*, 14 April 1993.
[102] Petro Kolomiets', 'Ne dilit', to i ne podileni budete', *Ukraina*, 1, 1992, p. 1.
[103] See *Minority Rights: Problems, Parameters, and Patterns in the Context of the CSCE* (Washington, DC, United States Congress, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1991), p. 79; and Denis J. B. Shaw & Michael J. Bradshaw, 'Problems of Ukrainian Independence', *Post-Soviet Geography*, 33, 1, January 1992, pp. 10–16.
[104] For the texts, see *Radyans'ka Ukraina*, 31 August 1991; *Demokratychna Ukraina*, 23 October 1991; *Kul'tura i zhyttya*, 26 October 1991; *Demokratychna Ukraina*, 5 November 1991; and *Holos Ukrainy*, 16 July 1992.
[105] *Pravda*, 16 July 1991.
[106] *Holos Ukrainy*, 4 December 1991; *Holos Ukrainy*, 7 December 1991. On the Hungarian minority, see Alfred A. Reisch, 'Transcarpathia's Hungarian Minority and the Autonomy Issue', *RFE/RL Research Report*, 7 February 1992, pp. 17–23.
[107] For the text, see *Holos Ukrainy*, 16 November 1991.
[108] *Reuters*, 24 August 1993.