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Constructing and Reconstructing Nations: Reflections on Timothy Snyder's Contribution to the Ukrainian Case

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Timothy Snyder's *The Reconstruction of Nations* is a sweeping study that encompasses over four centuries of history for the lands of present-day Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Belarus.[1] His goal is to examine the formation and transformation of national ideas. As he puts it, this study "unifies the early modern Polish nation and its multiple successors" (p. 9). Snyder's major thesis is that a multiethnic, multiconfessional, and multicultural noble nation emerged in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after the Union of Lublin (1569). Its core was Polish, and he occasionally refers to it as Polish, but he asserts that the term applied to citizenship and civilization rather than to language and ethnicity. He sees this tolerant, inclusive early modern formation receding only slowly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, finally to disappear only during World War II. He sets out to examine how four modern national ideas emerged from the single early modern one. Snyder sees this process as a recasting of the concept of the nation into an ethnic and linguistic community in the nineteenth century. He believes that the nineteenth-century ethnic nationalists ignored the early modern nation and looked for precedents for their nation building in the medieval period. He traces the rise of this ethnic nationalism as a late but destructive phenomenon, which fully culminated during World War II. He sees this process as inexorably leading to twentieth-century ethnic cleansings. Snyder then goes on to examine briefly how the new concept of nation related to the Soviet-imposed post–World War II order before explaining in detail developments since 1989.

Snyder depicts the post-1989 world as one in which a wise policy pursued by the Polish government has mitigated the problems of the past, largely by concentrating on interstate relations. The last four chapters—roughly one third of the book—which deal with how the Polish elite came to rethink its Eastern policies and to employ them in relations with its neighbors after the collapse of the

Soviet bloc, truly depict one of the great turning points in East Central European history. In marked contrast, events in the Balkans come to mind, though the more cynical might say that the mid-century ethnic cleansing and the Soviet-enforced separation of the nations of East Central Europe in some way provided a better basis for establishing stable relations than the Yugoslav state and the mix in the Balkans did. In addition, the fixation on Russia by Polish and other politicians made for sound reasons to avoid conflicts. Clearly the émigré program of Jerzy Giedroyc and the Paris journal *Kultura* provided the intellectual foundation for conceiving a new relationship of Poland with its eastern neighbors, above all predicated on their independence. That the 1990s Polish elite followed this doctrine made possible the major breakthrough in the region. One might have hoped that Snyder had more carefully presented the other states and their role in the process, but he has done a groundbreaking job in providing an analysis of this period and linking it to past events.

There is much that is thought provoking and new in Snyder's innovative study. He has challenged the straitjacket of periodization that restricts studies of nations into modern and pre-modern periods. His goal of breaking down traditional national histories in order to remind us of pre-national and multiple identities is commendable. One can be grateful for Snyder's comparative perspective on the peoples of the old Commonwealth, even if he does not appear to have been able to read the full literature on the Lithuanians.[2] He has provided us with interesting explanations—why, for example, the Lithuanian national movement succeeded and the Belarusian national movement seems to have failed. He has integrated the fate of the Jews in Eastern Europe into his research. He has also provided us with a valuable overview of his own research on World War II, above all on Polish-Ukrainian mutual ethnic cleansings. Certainly the mid-twentieth-century ethnic cleansings and resettlements in lands from Anatolia to the Baltic give weight to his argument about the revolutionary nature of ethnic nationalism, though one can see other outcomes, such as the accommodation of the Finnish national movement and the Swedish elite or the preservation of Hungarian minorities in successor states to the Crown of St. Stephen.

It is in challenging traditional historical periodization and accounts of national communities and national movements that Snyder has given most reason for reflection. One only has to look at his chapter entitled "Early Modern Ukraine (1569–1914)" to understand that he seeks to overthrow the traditional periodiza-tion of nineteenth- and even early twentieth-century East Central Europe as modern. Yet whatever the merits of Snyder's work in innovation and focusing on phenomena left out of more traditional works on nation-forming in the region, the book seems to me not to have proven many of its hypotheses. When one asks what it affords the historian of Ukraine or of national concepts and movements in Ukraine, my answer must be that the book seems to be too thinly argued

on insufficient evidence to be wholeheartedly accepted. This discussion will concentrate on what Snyder's vision can tell us about Ukraine and Ukrainians, though of course the intermixing of peoples and cultures will make it range more widely.

In general terms, Snyder's work seems to be an idealization of what he believes to be the early modern noble nation. As he tries to argue for its enduring nature, he devotes little attention to the question of whether it possibly could have proved vital for Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians in an age of increasing mobilization of the populace in the social, cultural, and political spheres. He also seems indifferent to the empowering and liberalizing elements of the nineteenth-century national movements that gave them such success for the Czechs of Bohemia and the Ruthenians/Ukrainians of Galicia. His goal is to challenge the traditional histories of the national movements and to argue for the archaic nature of the societies he is examining. Certainly this viewpoint often provides fruitful examples of holdovers from earlier periods. Yet at times it seems to cross over to what might be called the "calm paradise" school of thought pervasive among many dominant and traditional groups' discourses. The narrative of this type of thinking usually predicates peaceful and cordial relations that were disturbed by outside agitators and new movements, often leading to violence. It does not consider that discourse between the dominant and dominated is rarely open and seldom sees that the dominant group's vision of the other is often a generation or two out of date. Snyder wishes us to concentrate on the archaic that he sees as underlying the modern, but in so doing he may be missing the possibility that at times the modern may be cloaked by the archaic.

Snyder reminds us of one of the Lemko republics as a non-Ukrainian political formation during 1918–1919, and provides information from a quirky website on the village of Dobra Shliakhetska that interethnic and social relations remained traditional in some areas of Galicia until very late. The problem in assessing the significance of Snyder's work is that by devoting more attention to the non-Ukrainian Lemko republic (with no mention of the rival Ukrainian one) than to the West Ukrainian National Republic established in 1918, and to Dobra Shliakhetska rather than to the hundreds of Galician villages where scholarly studies indicate that modern national politics had penetrated more fully, he may be skewing the views of readers who have no knowledge or access to the body of scholarship that he does not really engage. He has in practice challenged the thesis by scholars such as Ivan Lysiak-Rudnytsky that the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918–1919 marked a fundamental break in Polish-Ukrainian relations, as well as all the studies on the Ukrainian national movement and its dense network of organizations in Western Ukraine that have argued that modern national politics had successfully reached the peasantry by the interwar period. While it seems that Snyder has provided a useful service by asking us to question these assumptions,

he has not really provided us with new research on the difficult question of how to judge the attitudes and identities of some one hundred years ago. Instead he has merely put forth a hypothesis that World War II was the crucial period for "national modernity," a hypothesis that has some plausibility for Volhynia but is much more questionable for Galicia.

When I found that Snyder described the centrist UNDO as a left-leaning organization, I began to question how thorough his grasp of interwar Galician politics is (p. 218). He seems to apply labels and judgments too casually. For example, he tells us that "in light of Polish claims and Jewish presence we see the radical nature of the aim of Galician Ukrainian activists in 1918: to found in Galicia a Ukrainian national republic with a capital in Lviv" (p. 137). What he means by "radical" is quite difficult to pin down. Certainly the earliest political demand of the Ruthenian-Ukrainian movement in 1848 had been to divide Galicia into a Polish half and a Ruthenian half with Lviv as its capital, so Ukrainian claims to the city and territory were hardly new. Snyder for some reason overlooks this event in his discussion, perhaps because he wishes to push the "beginning of the end of early modern politics" off to 1863 and the Ukrainian-Polish rivalry in Galicia off to 1876 (p. 4). With the impending fall of the Habsburg Empire and the certain establishment of national states, it is difficult to see what other goals the Ukrainian movement could have for the Ukrainian majority in Eastern Galicia, including the goal for the capital city, whose population was dwarfed by the surrounding rural one. While it is true that Ukrainians were a minority of Lviv's 206,000 inhabitants in 1910,[3] Snyder's comparison of the Lviv issue to that of Vilnius is somewhat stretched both because Ukrainians were a more considerable presence in Lviv and because Lviv was an island surrounded by predominantly Ukrainian populated territories. But in both cases, Snyder has a tendency to project back in time the relative importance of the late twentieth-century city.

Before deciding what was radical, it is crucial to pose alternatives. The Habsburg Empire was crumbling in October 1918, and new national states were being formed. Certainly Polish forces were about to try to establish a Polish state that included Eastern Galicia and would have to resort to military means because they could not likely win a plebiscite. Given the principles of self-determination of the period, Sir Lewis Namier and others viewed the Polish claim to Eastern Galicia as radical.[4] The issues are complex, but they would be better served by a more careful juxtaposition of views and alternatives.

Snyder has covered so much in such a succinct manner that it is hard to criticize him for what he has left out. Still, my suspicion of his grasp of early twentieth-century Ukrainian politics seems to be borne out by his failure to detect, or at least to marshal, a major body of thought in twentieth-century Ukrainian politics that would seem to buttress his argument that concepts of a non-ethnic nation stemming from an earlier age were still vital. While he mentions that

V'iacheslav Lypyns'kyi was a major political thinker, he does not explain that Lypyns'kyi sought to found a Ukrainian nation and state on a non-ethnic basis and saw the integration of the "Polish nobility" (whether of Polish or of Ruthenian-Ukrainian descent) as essential for the state- and nation-building project as well as for the stratum's continuation. I think an evaluation of the impact of Lypyns'kyi's ideas might reveal that they were already an anachronism and did not win over many adherents. Still, their examination would seem to be crucial in a book that seeks to link early modern and modern concepts of nation.

The core of Snyder's argument is for the longevity of the early modern concept of nation (from the Union of Lublin to World War II). Certainly, his integration of the early modern period into the discussion of the development of nationhood represents a much-needed avenue of research. One frequently assumes that the early modern period is avoided or dismissed simply because the nineteenth- and twentieth-century specialists do not wish to leave times with which they are comfortable to examine a new scholarly literature and to read difficult sources. Snyder has been willing to undertake this task. His text shows that he has considered many of the questions and phenomena of the period, while his footnotes reveal an examination of a substantial literature, if not of sources. Still, Snyder's neophyte status in the field does emerge in some of the confusions and errors he makes. He slips when he tells us that unlike the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Ukrainian lands did not have the protection of a separate law code after the Union of Lublin, which is not the case for the bulk of the Ukrainian lands (p. 111). More troubling about his discussion of the culture of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is his confusing description of the literary language of that state. He tells us that "local recensions of Church Slavonic, introduced by Orthodox churchmen from more southerly lands, provided the basis for Chancery Slavonic, the court language of the Grand Duchy" (p. 19). Later he tells us that this language was similar to Belarusian (p. 32), and later still that "a Belarusian-Ruthenian vernacular was used as a literary language in the sixteenth century" (p. 42). His confusing descriptions and lack of a clear explanation of the relation of various languages make his judgment on how Polish came to dominance somewhat suspect.

The problems with the treatment of the question of nation in the early modern Ukrainian case in Snyder's book may be grouped into three categories. The first is his simplified, distorted, and dated portrayal of what constituted a nation in the early modern Commonwealth. The second is his assertion that the modern ethnic national movements took medieval rather than early modern precedents in defining their nationhood, when in fact the Ukrainian movement based itself on the early modern period. Third, in declaring that all four modern national ideas (Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian) derived from an early modern noble "Polish" national idea, he has substantially ignored that the modern

Ukrainian national idea derived to a great degree from the areas that broke away
from the Commonwealth in the mid-seventeenth century and formed a new
political-social model in the Cossack Hetmanate.

In asserting that "nation" in the early modern Commonwealth meant the
noble citizenry of the state and not its linguistic-cultural peoples, Snyder has
pushed one questionable trend in Polish historiography beyond acceptable limits.
He depicts the nobility as the nation of the Commonwealth and maintains that
this nation called itself Polish. He asserts that this nobility of various origins
propagated a myth of itself as being descended from the ancient Sarmatians and
that this myth excluded the rest of the population (pp. 21–2). There is a reputable
literature from which Snyder draws these views, but had he read more widely,
he would have found that almost all components are questioned and that in some
cases other interpretations seem more plausible. One problem, of course, is the
very length of the early modern period, since the situation in the late sixteenth
century was often very different from that in the late eighteenth. Frequently our
vision of the old Commonwealth has been shaped by the late eighteenth-century
Enlightenment's depiction, especially for questions such as Sarmatism.

Was the "nation" in the Commonwealth the collectivity of the nobility?[5]
Certainly the nobility were the active citizens of the Commonwealth, though at
times the term *obywatel* also referred to burghers. In modern literature on the
Commonwealth one frequently encounters the descriptive term *naród szlachecki,*
which is often interpreted as "noble nation" and seen as proof that the nobles
saw themselves collectively as the nation. Yet while the phrase occurs in early
modern texts, it is not the dominant use of *naród.* It has been argued that far from
designating the collective "noble nation," *naród szlachecki* merely indicated that
a person had been born a noble and not acquired the status. When one looks at
uses of the terms for nation, either Polish *naród* or Ukrainian-Belarusian *narod*
or Latin *gens* or *natio,* one finds that they at times refer to all inhabitants of a
political entity. They most frequently, however, refer to cultural linguistic com-
munities (Italians, Germans, Ruthenians, Poles) in a manner remarkably similar
to modern usage. This most prevalent early modern usage reflected the Biblical
interest in the peoples who dispersed from Babel and the humanist interest in
philology and genealogy of peoples. In the case of Ukrainian-Polish relations,
discussion has long centered on a noble type known as *gente Ruthenus, natione
Polonus,* supposedly of Ruthenian ethnicity or descent and of Polish political
nationality or allegiance.[6] More recent research has not found this exact phrase
to have occurred in the early modern period and has revealed that it was coined
in the early nineteenth century as a way of subordinating the Ruthenians (Ukrai-
nians) of Galicia to the Polish nobility, including those of Ruthenian descent.
Far from being an early modern concept, it seems to have arisen in what Snyder
sees as the age of the new ethnic nationalism as a way of taming that force. In

fact, the early modern texts reveal no such clear delineation of *natio* as political or civic nation and *gens* as ethno-cultural group, much less a hierarchical order between them.

Snyder should not have maintained that the concept of nation changed; rather he should have shown that the significance of nation in political life changed. In the early modern period, political weight was given to the *ojczyzna* (the fatherland), and as the Commonwealth became the fatherland for the noble citizenry as well as other strata of the population, it commanded primary political loyalty. It was the decline of the fatherland as an object of loyalty after the Partitions (the Commonwealth faded even more quickly) and the emphasis on nation as an object of political loyalty that changed relations among national and social groups on the territory of the old Commonwealth. Even here one must be careful to define terms with appropriate nuance. After 1569, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania remained a fatherland for its populace. We know from the Lithuanian Statute of 1588, which did not even mention the Commonwealth's existence, that after the Union of Lublin "Lithuanian" sentiment remained strong. It seems likely that even as the Commonwealth became a fatherland, Lithuania also remained one and in that context determined identity and loyalty. The other mitigating factor is the rise of the significance of the "Ruthenian nation" not only as a designation for an ethno-linguistic-religious group, but also as an object of political loyalty that crossed estate boundaries in the seventeenth century.

Snyder has also presented a highly suspect vision of Sarmatism by maintaining that the nobles (in his terminology, at times, "gentry") asserted that whatever their origin and religion they, unlike other strata of the population, were descended from the Sarmatians. One can indeed find evidence that with the creation of the Commonwealth the concept of the ancient geographers' Sarmatia was used as a unifying factor. There were extensions of Sarmatian origin to peoples other than the Poles, including mentions of Sarmatian Ruthenians. Certainly, the complex genealogies of the early modern period included Sarmatians, Slavs, Roxolanians, and other ancient peoples; and the juggling of ancient peoples permitted many variants for demographic and geographic groupings. Yet a myth of Sarmatian descent could never fully unite the diverse nobles of the Commonwealth, in part because the sixteenth-century Lithuanian high nobility already had a view of itself as descendants of the Romans, an origin theory that became elaborated in the early modern period, in part on the basis of similarities between the Lithuanian language and Latin, and that served to distinguish Lithuanian nobles from Ruthenian (Belarusian and Ukrainian) nobles. Snyder seems unaware of this theory, as he is of the continued vitality of Lithuanian identity among the Grand Duchy's elite after the Union of Lublin.

Snyder has too readily accepted the questionable hypothesis that Sarmatism posited a different descent for the nobility from the rest of the population. There

is little evidence for a theory of separate descent. The dominant theories of Polish identity involving the peasant king Piast or the first ruler Lech continued to see the Poles as a Slavic offshoot in which the entire Polish people or nation had a common descent. In the question of descent, the Polish high nobles could not equal the Lithuanian elite's theory of separate descent from Roman patricians.

If Snyder has presented a questionable view of political concepts and social groupings in the early modern Commonwealth, he has committed a more obvious error in forcing on the Ukrainian case his model that modern national movements overlooked the early modern period and focused on the medieval period. He lays out this model for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and it might have some validity in describing the modern Lithuanian movement—although, as I have pointed out, significant developments in the early modern period strengthened a type of Lithuanian identity (usually political, but at times also for a Lithuanian ethno-linguistic community). More surprising is that while Snyder devotes considerable attention to early modern Ukraine and even says "the period 1569–1659 established crucial foundations for the emergence of modern nations" (p. 117), he neither adequately develops what these foundations were for Ukrainian nationhood nor sufficiently emphasizes the degree to which the early modern, not the medieval, period served as the focal point for the modern Ukrainian national movement.

Although it may be maintained that the nation was not an object of political loyalty in the early modern Commonwealth (as opposed to the fatherland or the state), the "Ruthenian nation" might be an exception. As Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel demonstrated in her monograph (unlike the summarizing article in English), not cited by Snyder, expressions of national consciousness among nobles and Cossacks increased in the period from the Union of Lublin to the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising.[7] Snyder has also missed Ihor Ševčenko's perceptive essay on the subject of Ukrainian self-identity, indeed not even mentioning his volume, which also includes one of the most insightful examinations on the Polish element in the Ukrainian past.[8] From very different perspectives, Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi and V'iacheslav Lypyns'kyi long ago provided substantial evidence on the intensification of Ruthenian identity among various social strata and on the use of "Ruthenian nation" in political discussions. More recently, the concept has been examined in the works of David Frick and Serhii Plokhy and has been employed in the general work on Ukrainians by Andrew Wilson.[9] It may be maintained that the overlapping of religious and ethno-national identity in terminology and perception strengthened the conception of the Ruthenian nation as a historical collectivity comprising various social strata. At the same time, the lack of a Ruthenian polity seems to have elevated "Ruthenian nation" to an object of political loyalty. The degree to which this late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century concept survived to the end of the early modern period in the lands that remained in the Commonwealth may be questioned, but to have

excluded this essential model of nationhood from the discussion of early modern nationhood in the Commonwealth is unacceptable.

Nowhere does Snyder clearly state that the Ukrainian national movement of the nineteenth century drew primarily on the early modern period for self-definition. The Cossacks, the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising, the Haidamakas, the struggle over the Union of Brest, and the cultural achievements from the Ostrih Bible to the Ukrainian Baroque were the major points of cultural self-definition. While there was mention of the medieval in the writings of the Ukrainian national movement, the early modern period was the major point of reference. The Cossack hetmans, both before and after Khmel'nyts'kyi, were the thread of Ukrainian political continuity. The religious struggles and polemics against the Poles and Latin Christianity were seen as the beginning of a centuries-old struggle against Polish "oppressors." In its populist rendition it was also seen as a struggle against social oppressors—that is, the Polish nobility including the renegades who had assimilated and betrayed the nation and the people. One need not agree with their interpretations, but one must see the centrality of their perception of the early modern period in defining modern Ukrainian nationhood.

In practice, the leaders of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ukrainian movement made abundant use of early modern texts and phenomena in shaping the modern Ukrainian idea. Texts that decried Polish persecution of the Ruthenian nation, defended the use of the Ruthenian language, or cast the Cossacks as knights defending the Ruthenian people and heirs to the Kyivan Rus' inheritance could easily be used to bolster the modern Ukrainian cause. Early modern historical works that portrayed Khmel'nyts'kyi's struggle against the Poles as heroic and defined Ukraine as a fatherland to which all its sons should pledge their allegiance shaped modern Ukrainian patriotism. We may criticize the modern formulators of Ukrainian identity for their selectivity in sources and their anachronistic interpretations, but we should remember that they were using authentic early modern texts, artifacts, and events.

As the Ukrainian movement matured from the mid-nineteenth century, it shifted in its use of the early modern period. The development should not be seen as a linear shift from some early modern "Polish" noble model of nation to an ethnic exclusionary model as outlined by Snyder. In the mid-nineteenth century, Volodymyr Antonovych had seen it necessary to reject his gentry stratum, his Catholic faith, and his Polish antecedents in order to throw in his lot with the people and their nationality and become a Ukrainian. He seems to have judged correctly in what resonated with the Ukrainian activists and their potential constituency: the Cossack past and a populist message. By the beginning of the next century, an activist of similar origin, V'iacheslav Lypyns'kyi, maintained his faith and, to a degree, culture as he tried to argue for the positive role of the Polish and polonized nobility in building a Ukrainian state based on a territorial and statist

concept of Ukrainian nationhood. In using history to justify the politics of the present, Lypyns'kyi demonstrated the considerable role of nobles in supporting Khmel'nyts'kyi's revolt and establishing the Hetmanate. He saw their positive contribution as having hastened a full break with the Commonwealth.

The question of the break with the Commonwealth brings to the fore the final way that Snyder's schema of the modern Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian national ideas developing directly out of some "Polish" noble early modern model is inadequate. For if Snyder generally runs into problems for casting his net too widely and failing to delve deeply enough into the questions he touches upon, in the Ukrainian case he errs in limiting his geography, above all by giving short shrift to the Ukrainian territories that the Commonwealth lost in the mid-seventeenth century—the Cossack Hetmanate and Zaporozhian Sich—and to their significance for the modern Ukrainian national idea. Although he mentions some of the events after the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising, paying special attention to continued Polish influence, he rushes quickly back to the terrain of the partitioned Commonwealth of 1772 without exploring adequately the significance of what he elsewhere describes as a double failure: "Ukraine failed the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth failed Ukraine" (p. 117).

The failure was one of the political and social structures of the Commonwealth that allowed for the emergence of a new Cossack elite and new political thought, including the conceptualization of the Ukrainians (as either Cossacko-Ruthenians or the Little Rus') as a nation and Ukraine as a fatherland. The imprint of the Commonwealth and the old noble culture was immense in the lands where the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising succeeded. So was that of the Ukrainian culture of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the conceptualization of the Ruthenian nation. Still, something new was engendered in the revolts against the Commonwealth in Ukraine: the political cultures and social orders of the Zaporozhian Sich and the Cossack Hetmanate. The Zaporozhian Sich was a center of resistance to the Commonwealth from the late sixteenth century. From the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising to its destruction by Russian imperial forces in 1775, the Sich maintained the old Cossack tradition. In contrast, the Cossack Hetmanate evolved into a more complex polity, with a new social elite and political culture. Despite integration into the Russian imperial elite and culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Hetmanate's elite and culture provided the impetus and the early modern model for the modern Ukrainian movement. The texts, artifacts, and social groupings of both the Cossack Hetmanate and the Sich that arose out of revolts against the Commonwealth served as the basis and subject of modern Ukrainian culture and the national idea. The nineteenth-century ideas of how an ethno-linguistic nation should be socially and politically organized reached a Ukraine that already had a historical tradition very different from that of the Commonwealth, above all in having a political past and cultural tradition

that had flourished outside the structure that Snyder has described. It was this Ukrainian tradition that later spread to the Ukrainian lands that had remained in the Commonwealth until the Partition. When the advocates of the Ukrainian national movement in Galicia and Volhynia thought of their national history in the period after Khmel'nyts'kyi, they turned to the Zaporozhian Sich, the Mazepan baroque, the Velychko Chronicle, and the hetmans. Their concepts of nation came to a great degree from the political culture of the eighteenth-century Hetmanate and its Cossack social stratum, especially its officer elite.

Although examination of the early modern period does not constitute a large part of Snyder's book, its centrality to his thesis makes this element of prime importance. Snyder has had the courage to present a bold challenge to the field. He offers a new paradigm to show how nations emerged and developed in East Central Europe. He has directed us toward the need to break down barriers between national histories and historical periods. He has amassed rich material on all the groups and cultures of the area. Certainly, he has written a work that will spark much rethinking, debate, and discussion. While some may join me in viewing Snyder's work as profoundly flawed, every historian of Ukraine must reflect on what Snyder has offered for the reconsideration of Ukrainian history.

NOTES

1.   Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, 2003), 384 pp. ISBN (cloth) 0-300-09569-4; ISBN (paper) 0-300-10586-X.

2.   Nowhere does the author cite literature in Lithuanian. While most scholars in the Polish and Ukrainian fields do not know Lithuanian, they do not usually make comparative and bold statements dealing with Lithuanian culture and thought, especially for the twentieth century when Lithuanian writings flourished. Thus a statement about interwar Lithuania that "Lithuanian culture had never won a contest with Polish culture; it would never lose one with Russian" (79) might be easier to accept from an author who had access to modern Lithuanian culture.

3.   Statistics are disputed, and Snyder is correct in questioning what we know of the national loyalties and political goals of inhabitants who had mixed and multiple identities. Generally, Ukrainians are estimated at 15–19 percent, Poles at 50–52 percent, and Jews at 28 percent in 1910.

4.   See Mark Baker, "Lewis Namier and the Problem of Eastern Galicia," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 23, no. 2 (Winter, 1998): 59–104.

5.   One can find a systematic exploration of most of the issues (except for the Ruthenian nation) discussed in the next three paragraphs in David Althoen, "That Noble Quest: From True Nobility to Enlightened Society in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1550–1830," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2000). This remarkable thesis examines the literature and undertakes careful examination of the source material for the various concepts mentioned here.

6.   One finds an echo of this in Snyder's assertion that "the nation of this Commonwealth was its nobility, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. United by common political and civil rights, nobles of Polish, Lithuanian, and East Slavic origin alike described themselves, in Latin or Polish, as "of the Polish nation." See Snyder, 1. Also, see David Althoen, *"Natione Polonus* and the *Naród Szlachecki:* Two Myths of National Identity and Noble Solidarity," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 52, no. 4 (2003): 475–508.

7.   Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel, *Świadomość narodowa szlachty ukraińskiej i kozaczyzny od schyłku XVI do połowy XVII w.* (Warsaw, 1985).

8.   Both essays are in Ihor Ševčenko, *Ukraine between East and West* (Edmonton and Toronto, 1996).

9.   David A. Frick, "Meletij Smotryc'kyj and the Ruthenian Question in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 8 (1984): 351–75; idem, "'Foolish Rus': On Polish Civilization, Ruthenian Self-Hatred, and Kasijan Sakovyč," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 18, nos. 3–4 (December 1994): 210–48; Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (New York, 2001), chap. 4; Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (New Haven, 2000), chap. 3.