

1 Theories of Nationalism and the Soviet Ukrainian Context

INTRODUCTION

On 24 August 1991 the Ukrainian parliament, or Supreme Council, declared national independence, their action subsequently being confirmed by 90.3 per cent of the population in a referendum on 1 December 1990. The central task of any contemporary political history of Ukraine must be to try to explain how this occurred. This opening chapter seeks to place Ukrainian nationalism in a theoretical context, without, however, arguing that Ukraine's entire recent history can or should be retrospectively analysed as a necessary development towards the nationalism of today.

As Ukraine, in common with the other constituent parts of the former Soviet Union, has recently experienced a self-styled national 'revival', the main theoretical question is whether it has anything in common with the great European or colonial revivals of the last two centuries.

The literature on such revivals is enormous.¹ There are very many potential theoretical explanations as to why national movements develop, although not all have been specifically applied to the contemporary Soviet context, and still fewer to Ukraine itself. As recent works by Alexander Motyl, Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger have noted, Sovietology's coverage of nationality problems in the USSR has often been lacking in theoretical perspective, or has failed to make its perspective sufficiently clear.² Even when political science approaches to Soviet studies became more common after the decline of the 'totalitarianism' paradigm in the 1960s, they rarely paid commensurate attention to the national question.³

This chapter will, however, consider the work of those authors who have looked at the recent development of nationalism in the Soviet Union and Ukraine in a theoretical context. Their approaches reflect changes in the theoretical approach to nationalism over the past three

decades. Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone and Bohdan Krawchenko's work is based on the traditions of the 1960s and 1970s, which stressed the primacy of socio-economic factors in political science analysis. Hence they draw heavily on Karl Deutsch and Michael Hechter. In contrast, Alexander Motyl's work reflects the increasing emphasis on the role of the state that became popular from the mid-1970s onwards, and Kenneth Farmer's emphasis on nationalism as a cultural phenomenon has much in common with the work of Anthony Smith.⁴

DEFINITIONS

Anthony Smith has defined nationalism as 'an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, cohesion and individuality for a social group deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation'.⁵ This definition will be followed throughout this book. 'Autonomy' in the Soviet context could, however, have a variety of meanings, ranging from seeking to defend and maximise Ukrainian interests within an all-Union context to outright separatism; hence the term 'nationalism' is reserved here for the latter phenomenon; namely, the pursuit of an independent nation-state.

The 'social group' deemed to be a 'nation' is defined by Smith as: 'a named human population sharing a myth of common descent, historical memories and a mass culture, and possessing a demarcated territory, common economy and common legal rights and duties.'⁶

The first half of this definition identifies the primarily *cultural* markers of ethnicity, which can be transformed into nationhood by the addition of the civic attributes mentioned in the second half of the extract. That is, ethnic communities, or *ethnie*, have been in existence almost as long as recorded history; modern nations simply extend, deepen and streamline the ways in which members of *ethnie* associated and communicated, by adding higher levels of territorial and political organisation to the community.⁷

If ethnicity is cultural and the state is a civic system, the attempt by nationalists to combine the two is often problematic. Nationalism is taken to be a series of propositions designed to argue that the only legitimate basis for establishing a modern community is the nation, which is argued to be a more effective alternative to purely legalistic methods of social bonding. The attempt to create such bonds can either come from below via the intelligentsia, or from above via the state.

Not all national groups are possessed of states, however. Nor is the reverse true. The nation and the state are not codeterminous. In fact, in the Soviet Ukrainian context, the conflict between the nation or *ethnie* and the supranational state was of paramount importance.

The relationship of cultural nationhood to the state or to socio-economic factors is a complex one. Three possibilities will be considered below.

For both socio-economic determinism and the state-centred approach, culture is an intermediate variable, operated on from below by socio-economic change in Krawchenko's perspective, or manipulated from above by the state in Motyl's. The third possibility, that culture itself is always the dependent variable, is rejected because of the difficulty in granting causal power to such an abstract variable.

In the light of this analysis, the basic argument of this book is that Ukrainian independence was the joint work of two elite groups. As with many previous national revivals, the initial stages involved a groundswell from below led by the local cultural intelligentsia.⁸ However, given the nature of Soviet-type societies and the specific weaknesses in Ukrainian society discussed in Chapter 2, the cultural intelligentsia was not strong enough to achieve power and universalise the national message alone. It was therefore the 'national communists' - those members of the *apparatus* who embraced Ukrainian nationalism at a relatively late stage - who finally made the decisive contribution by providing all-important state resources.

In other words, of the three theoretical possibilities, the one that makes most sense in the Ukrainian context is the manipulation of nationalism from above by elements in the state. Despite the intelligentsia starting the push towards independence, national communism in the end was decisive.

What theoretical arguments, then, have been put forward concerning the development of nationalism in the Soviet Ukrainian context?

MODERNISATION THEORY

Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone⁹ and Bohdan Krawcheko¹⁰ have emphasised the importance of modernisation processes and socio-economic change in generating nationalist discontent. They argue that the silent social revolution that transformed the Soviet Union after 1917 was the primary causal factor in a rising tide of nationalist discontent, clearly visible even before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985.

Although the regime may have been able to contain most of its manifestations, it was nevertheless faced with a growing problem of systemic instability engendered by the nationalities issue. Whether or not such discontent would have had the capability to overhaul the system, its existence was more a cause of Gorbachev's reforms than a consequence of them.

Both writers base their analysis on the writings of Karl Deutsch, which ironically had much in common with official Soviet ideology on the nationalities question in this period.¹¹

Both Western and Soviet approaches rested on the amorphous concept of 'modernisation' - meaning processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and a rising division of labour and consequent mass production of education, plus a progressive tendency towards growth first in manufacturing and then in services. Modernisation supposedly replaced traditional social relations, with their emphasis on ethnic or localist identities, with, on the Western perspective, universal economic rationality, and, on the Marxist perspective *rastsvet* (flourishing) of ethnic groups, but then their *sblizhenie* (drawing together) and eventual *sliianie* (union) as the 'Soviet People'.¹²

The argument that national identities and nationalism are the product of traditional societies, and are therefore doomed to transcendence by the march of modernisation, is still popular.¹³

Deutsch's work did not necessarily imply the decline of nationalism, however. Deutsch suggests a formula whereby in multi-ethnic societies the relative strengths of competing tendencies towards differentiation and assimilation depend on the relative powers of the dominant and minority social groups in social communication.

Whether ethnic groups diverge or unify, according to Deutsch, depends on whether there is choice or compulsion involved, perceptions of material costs and benefits, frequency and nature of inter-group contact, symbols and barriers between the groups, and so on. Most important, however, is the relative strength and similarity of social communication networks. If modernisation provides an ethnic group with sufficient resources (school systems, linguistic networks, densities of economic intercourse, and so on) to increase their levels of internal social communication, and hence their sense of identity, such groups are more likely to differentiate than assimilate.

This is related to Samuel Huntington's general theory of political stability. Whether a social and political order is stable or unstable in the face of such growing national mobilisation depends on its ability to 'institutionalise', i.e. provide a sufficient supply of channels of political

participation to match the growing demand for it. Political, and social, disorder 'is in large part the product of rapid social change and the rapid mobilisation of new groups into politics, coupled with the slow development of political institutions'.¹⁴

John A. Armstrong and Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone both applied this perspective to Soviet, and specifically Ukrainian, nationality problems in the 1960s and 1970s.

According to Armstrong the Ukrainians were 'younger brothers' to the Russians. The Ukrainians were relatively low on the scale of social mobilisation and culturally close to the Russians, hence the former's assimilation was likely, given current policies and demographic trends.¹⁵

Rakowska-Harmstone argued, from the same perspective, that for many key republics in the Soviet Union since the 1950s, particularly Ukraine, 'the rate of development of ethnic nationalism has outstripped the rate of national Soviet integration'.¹⁶ The tendency of socio-economic development to foster increasing levels of ethnic awareness, (*rastsvet*, in other words), had simply swamped the state's ability to assimilate people to a Soviet, or even Russian, identity. In any case, the Soviet system's denial of truly equal participation opportunities for all nationalities made assimilation less likely, she argued.

In terms of national integration, the system was caught in a dilemma. Its ideological and institutional matrix lent legitimacy, even if only a secondary one, to ethnic claims. At the same time, the exercise of ethnic rights and autonomy was effectively denied in conditions of political centralisation and one nation's hegemony.¹⁷

The result was ethnic discontent, although the regime's coercive capabilities ensured that 'the ethnic nationalism phenomenon remains clearly within the constraints imposed by the system'.¹⁸

The argument rests on the tension caused when newly, or already, mobilised ethnic groups are able to achieve some *partial* degree of 'participation', but not to the degree warranted by their level of mobilisation. Otherwise, there would be an obvious contradiction between arguing that ethnic discontent is caused by inadequate participation, and simultaneously arguing that it results when ethnic groups come to control some parts of the state and make demands on the centre.

As argued by Krawchenko, participation, in the sense of representation in the leading bodies of society (state, cultural and economic institutions), has been disproportionately reserved for the dominant Russian nationality, and in the sense of access to political decision-making, reserved for the communist elite.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC THEORIES

The arguments of Bohdan Krawchenko and Wsevolod Isajiw are similar.¹⁹ Although also based on the Deutschian theory outlined above, the authors also use Michael Hechter's concept of a 'cultural division of labour'.²⁰

Krawchenko stresses that nations are always made by elites.²¹ The growth of any particular group's national consciousness depends on first, the creation of specifically national elites by modernisation processes, and, second, the manner in which the same processes furnish national elites with the necessary tools (schools, modern means of communication), and the necessary audience (concentrated urban populations), for the propagation of the national message, though this also depends on 'the central state's toleration of the national message they communicate'.²²

Krawchenko, therefore, argues that the attempt to create a Ukrainian state in 1917-20 was fatally handicapped by the relatively under-developed Ukrainian social structure. In Otto Bauer's sense of the term, Ukraine was a 'non-historical nation', not because it lacked an historical past, but because it lacked a social structure of indigenous elites to lead and disseminate the development of national consciousness.²³

Ukrainian society in 1917 was overwhelmingly rural (80 per cent of Ukrainians lived in villages, and 97 per cent of them were peasants) and 87 per cent illiterate.²⁴ Ukrainians accounted for only 30 per cent of the urban population, were under-represented in the working class (40 per cent of 'workers' were Ukrainian, but the figures were considerably less in the large industrial centres, which were a bulwark of Bolshevism), and were a minority amongst educated elites on Ukrainian territory, which tended to be Russian, Jewish or Polish (for example, Ukrainians accounted for only 13 per cent of those engaged in trade or commerce and only 30 per cent of the liberal professions).²⁵

Not only did the Ukrainian national movement lack much of a base in urban centres, the intelligentsia or the working class in 1917, but the latter acted as the carriers of a specifically archi-Ukrainian ideology. The predominant 'cultural infrastructures' on Ukrainian soil before the revolution equated empire with civilisation and Ukraine with barbarism, and the working class was either apolitical or inclined to socialism.²⁶

Alternative channels of nationalist social communication had been slowly revived since the early nineteenth century, but the above-

mentioned weaknesses in the Ukrainian social structure, combined with severe state repression, made it difficult to make significant inroads into the dominant imperial consciousness (conditions in Habsburg Galicia were more favourable). Consequently, even many mobilised Ukrainians suffered from a 'Little Russian' or 'younger brother' complex, which made them relatively willing subjects of the empire.²⁷ Therefore, Krawchenko argues, 'the policies of the Central Rada [the short-lived Ukrainian parliament of 1917-20] existed, to a large extent, in thin air'.²⁸

Since the failure of Ukraine's bid for independence in 1917-20, however, the social structure of Ukrainian society has been transformed (as has the nature of other national social groupings on Ukrainian soil, the Russians included). This ironic by-product of Soviet modernisation has, according to Krawchenko, helped overcome some of the strategic structural weaknesses of Ukrainian society, as large numbers of Ukrainians were drawn from the countryside to the cities, creating by the 1960s and 1970s indigenous majorities in most of the leading sectors of society.

This can partly be explained by Deutschian formula, since, whereas in the nineteenth century relatively small numbers of Ukrainians were more easily co-opted into the dominant imperial culture, after 1917 the influx of Ukrainian humanity into the cities swamped the system's assimilational ability, thus increasing indigenous capacities for social communication and culture formation. Therefore,

the [newly mobilised] Ukrainian ethnos is a good deal more stable [i.e. non-assimilated] than some theorists of the merging of nations would hope.²⁹

More fundamentally, however, mobilisation did not take place in a vacuum, but within the confining and distorting context of a hierarchical cultural division of labour' (i.e. a division of social labour which also corresponds, albeit imperfectly, with cultural [here ethnic] divisions, so that Ukrainians tend to be over-represented in low status positions, and Russians predominant in higher-status areas).³⁰

Newly mobilised Ukrainians, confident of their right to equal status in a manner impossible in 1917, found themselves in competition for education and employment with growing numbers of Russian immigrants (there were 11.4 million Russians in Ukraine by 1989), as the Ukrainians tried to move up the social ladder.³¹ The over-concentration of Russians in leading positions of society created a

social blockage and a displacement of resulting tensions onto ethnic relations.³²

If such an over-concentration of Russians was not the result of overt discrimination, it was supposedly the inevitable consequence of the structure of Russian society being more urban, educated and mobile than Ukrainian society, and of state support for the Russian language.³³ This was also the theme of one of the most famous Ukrainian dissident works of the 1960s, Ivan Dziuba's *Internationalism or Russification?*³⁴ Motyl has, however, pointed out that Ukrainians who accepted the imperial priorities of the state enjoyed considerable upward social mobility as 'younger brothers' in the Soviet period.³⁵

Therefore, the idea is again that a previously powerless ethnic group has increased its degree of mobilisation sufficiently to allow it to resent the fact that its further progress is artificially inhibited.

This was not, of course, a smooth or continuous process. Krawchenko argues that the purges of Ukrainian elites in the 1930s were designed to forestall the first early effects of such 'Ukrainianisation' (although the purges also destroyed much of the Russian intelligentsia in Ukraine).³⁶

After 1953, renewed Ukrainianisation again brought Ukrainians close to a hegemonic position in 'the strategic centres of social, economic and political life'.³⁷ Hence, for Krawchenko, postwar nationalism was being incubated throughout society, but most importantly in the local apparatus of the state, the result of a long march through the institutions by new Ukrainian elites. It would only be natural to expect them to seek to gain control over their own society as soon as they were given the opportunity to do so.

There is much merit in Krawchenko's approach. It helps to explain why, *ceteris paribus*, any Ukrainian national movement would be stronger in 1989-91 than in 1917-20, particularly in terms of elite leadership.

The problem with such an analysis is that opportunity is all-important. It will be argued in this book that the immense power of the Soviet state must be recognised by assigning primary causal power to the state rather than to socio-economic processes. No groundswell of popular protest from below was conceivable until the state was reformed from above. Even when Gorbachev's reforms allowed pressure from below to develop, the primary political actors were still state elites. They could, as in previous eras, have put the nationalist genie back in the bottle. The fact that they did not do so, and that the logic of their situation impelled them to politicise national culture from above, was ultimately decisive.

RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY AND THE STATE

Our analysis will largely follow that of Alexander Motyl, who has stressed the primacy of the state in permitting or promoting the development of nationalism,³⁸ first, because truly nationalist politics were only really possible in the drastically changed political circumstances of the late 1980s; and, second, because nationalism was more of an unintended product *oiperestroika* than a problem it sought to address and contain. '*Perestroika* has not so much *released* pent-up forces waiting to assert themselves as it has *created* them.'³⁹ Hence nationalism was not much of a threat to the Soviet regime until the late 1980s, although the repression that kept it hidden would also account for the violence of the subsequent nationalist upsurge.

As Tilly has argued, vague notions of 'modernisation', 'discontent' and 'disequilibrium' are simply too broad to serve as useful analytical tools. Any analysis that over-relies on them will fall into the trap of determinism. Concrete political actions create history not abstract forces, and therefore any explanation of events must always concentrate on describing the available channels of political activity and genuinely active agents: individuals, groups and the state, with the latter being particularly important in the Soviet Ukrainian context.⁴⁰ To this end, Motyl proposes a much clearer distinction between what he calls the 'private sphere', 'the public sphere' and the state, because the political factors determining the possibilities for national self-assertion in each sphere vary enormously.

The first, the 'private space' of home and family, has largely been free of state interference since the death of Stalin, and purely private channels of social communication have been left to operate freely.⁴¹ Second, there is the 'public sphere' which is 'located between the individuals comprising society, or the private sphere, and the state, the public sphere is the site of organised public activity and discourse'.⁴²

Motyl uses rational choice theory to argue that the necessary conditions for nationalist collective action against the state in the public sphere would be anti-state interests and attitudes, followed by their 'de-privatisation', organisation and mobilisation by elites; and finally opportunity, or the ability to use public space for collective action.⁴³ However, the state, defined by Motyl as an instrument of potential control and regulation over private and public society, still retained enough of its totalitarian character in the post-states era to prevent any challenge to its monopoly control of public space (that is, only the first of the four conditions was met).⁴⁴

The most important factor in the appearance of nationalist discontent in the public sphere is simply the last factor of opportunity. Before the late 1980s, although ethnic grievances and even specifically nationalist sentiments may well have been present, the Soviet state's willingness to use severe repression against any trespass of rivals onto its jealously guarded monopoly of public space, kept such attitudes 'privatised'. The balance of costs and benefits likely to accrue from nationalist opposition to the state mean that only the most committed of dissidents would risk challenging its monopoly of the 'public sphere' (see Chapter 3). In Ukraine, this period lasted until 1989, when the retirement of the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi, who had held his post since 1972, brought the Brezhnev era to a close in Ukraine.

The 'public sphere', therefore, was insulated from whatever effects modernisation processes and the emergence of new national elites may have produced. Motyl's *Will the Non-Russians Rebel?* implied that this situation could have continued almost indefinitely, whereas the logic of Rakowska-Harmstone's and Krawchenko's arguments would be to suggest that the state and the public sphere were more permeable or to predict a pressure cooker model of social change welling up from below, and leading to eventual crisis.

As political factors, and especially the state, are always of primary importance, and the state effectively prevented any challenge to its monopoly control of the public sphere, the only possibility for the expression of national demands was within the state itself. Having originally argued that the totalitarian Soviet state could survive indefinitely, immune from the influence of nationalism, Motyl later abandoned the view of the totalitarian state as a monolithic and impenetrable entity, and argued that the federal system itself had an inherent tendency towards the production of certain types of nationalism, or 'national communism', of which the state had continually to purge itself, even before 1985.⁴⁵

The origins of the term 'national communism' lie in the Austro-Marxism of Otto Bauer and in the politics of 1920s Ukraine.⁴⁶ Ukrainian leaders such as Mykola Skrypnyk and intellectuals such as Mykola Khvylovyi sought a national route to communism, but shared its Utopian ideals. They argued that a national route was a necessary means to the construction of communism, as it was the only way to ensure popular participation, but they also considered that national and cultural particularities were quite compatible with a socialist system.

The phrase 'national communism' however, by the 1980s no longer implied a commitment to the building of Utopian goals in a national context. It simply referred to those members of the CPSU who chose to pursue their goals in a specifically national context, and whose politics were based primarily in the defence of national interests, despite whatever ideological baggage they still carried with them.

Motyl's argument differs from that of Krawchenko, in that national communism is a consequence of the implosion of the central state, whereas from Krawchenko's bottom-up perspective national communism is the result of previous processes of socio-economic change which mobilised an ethnic Ukrainian majority into the leading positions in the state.⁴⁷

Although the Soviet federal system was not decentralised in terms of offering local elites a genuine share in day-to-day decision-making, the system had a chronic tendency towards creating advocates of national interests from within its own ranks.⁴⁸ Soviet officials in the republics, appointed to administer power downwards over a particular national group, tended to develop a natural tendency to promote the demands of that group upwards, and utilise the group's resources to strengthen their own hand in relations with the central state.⁴⁹

That is, although the central Soviet state had totalitarian ambitions, its overreach would periodically lead to a declining ability to control the periphery (such as in the 1920s, the Krushchev era and the 1980s). Nationalism within the regional state apparatus itself, in the sense of the local elite starting to pursue its own interests, could then no longer so easily be kept in check. In other words, the federal system was the one fault-line along which the otherwise seamlessly totalitarian state would begin to split, once it began to decentralise. However, the pre-*perestroika* state always retained sufficient centralised coercive capacity to complete the cycle by recentralising, and beating local demands down again.

Although *perestroika* has been interpreted, at least in part, as an attempt by the metropolitan centre to eliminate this cyclical tendency towards 'penetration crises' caused by the expansion of local ethnic power networks with the power to resist or block central initiatives and create a more efficiently centralised state, its practical effect was the opposite.⁵⁰

Through *glasnost* and his own struggles to assert himself as a figure, Gorbachev undermined the power and prestige of the key central institutions, particularly the Communist Party, while his failure to reform the economy decreased the periphery's traditional material

dependence on the centre. 'Attempting to pursue reform and power simultaneously, and thereby repudiating the traditional pattern of Soviet succession dynamics, guaranteed failure on both counts', and ensured that the inevitable attempt by the centre to repeat the cycle of the past and recentralise was a failure.⁵¹ As the centre could no longer offer resources or legitimacy, republican leaders had to seek both among their local populations.

Second, developments in state politics were paralleled by a growing tendency to oppositional collective action which went far beyond previous phases of the cycle, once coercion and control were relaxed or became ineffective, and by an eventual alliance between such movements and national communist republican leaderships.

Motyl returns here to rational choice theory to explain why oppositional nationalist challenges to the state in the Gorbachev era became not only possible, but also logical.

The traditional rational choice paradigm, as stated by Olson, is that many types of collective action (such as trade union action or a nationalist campaign to increase the language rights of the indigenous ethnic group) face potentially debilitating organisational problems.⁵² If individuals are rationally self-interested, then any cost-benefit analysis will lead to under-participation in collective action. The costs to be borne by individuals who join in collective actions are immediate and obvious (personal expenditure of time, energy and resources, the possibility of suffering sanctions in the Soviet context), whereas the benefits tend to come in the form of 'public goods'. That is to say, for example, a law favouring the use of the language of the indigenous nationality would benefit all members of that nationality, regardless of whether they contributed to the actions which helped secure the benefit, or not. Hence, rational individuals will 'free-ride' on the original action, seeking to enjoy the benefit from which they cannot be excluded, but avoiding the personal costs of taking part. As this **will** be a near-universal calculation, many forms of collective action will be chronically short of participants.⁵³

Motyl argues that Olson's stress on the provision of additional material 'selective benefits' to encourage participation in collective action (such as a trade union offering insurance schemes to its members) is only one way of overcoming the problem of how to organise such action. However, as Zald and McCarthy have observed, 'a number of factors, including interest in individual goods, interest in collective goods, and solidarity with others interested in collective goods, may all move actors to mobilise for collective action.'⁵⁴ That is

to say, collective action can also be based on group solidarity, a commitment to moral purpose, and on the existential impulses of group identity, as much as by a desire for material personal reward.⁵⁵

Motyl states that once the state reduces coercion and constraint sufficiently to create a 'public space' large enough to permit collective action, such action will take place if prior problems of organisation, leadership and resources have been overcome. Without the material resources to provide selective benefits, and overcome the 'free-rider' problem, 'the major task in mobilisation ... is to generate solidarity and moral commitments to the broad collectivities in whose name movements act.'⁵⁶

National identities, as Motyl points out, may be particularly, if not uniquely, well suited to such a task, namely generating strong feelings of the community as a collective subject, which can then serve as the basis of its collective action.

As Rachel Walker has said,

a society cannot operate coherently or efficiently without a recognisable, reasonably inclusive and, most important, persuasive sense of the 'we'... a persuasive social construct of this sort must exist if a society is to be recognisably social rather than simply a nominal amalgam of fractured and alienated parts. And it is one of the central functions of political discourse to construct this hegemonic 'we' ... it is the identity of the group which makes political (and for that matter economic) action possible.⁵⁷

Cultural feelings of national identity and solidarity are then the perfect cohesive for collective action, especially when all other possible focal points for group organisation, such as class, had been disorganised and atomised as a consequence of the long period of domination of public space by the Soviet state. 'The communist revolution ... has weakened or destroyed competing political currents, with the exception of nationalism, and thereby upgraded the last.'⁵⁸

Soviet rule effectively destroyed civil society in the sense of self-organising social spheres independent of the state, which in any case had lacked much of a history in pre-communist Ukraine (apart from Galicia). Channels of organisation that would seem natural in Western Europe (interest groups, social classes) have yet to be created, as the (re)building of civil societies in the old Soviet Union is a painful process still very much in its infancy.⁵⁹ Hence the growth of ethnic, and eventually nationalist, demands in the public sphere was,

by default, a logical development, which was given extra intensity by all sorts of other demands (environmental, social and economic) being sublimated into nationalist movements, because of the lack of any alternative outlet.

The same arguments, when combined with the problems connected with the sheer size and diversity of Ukrainian society discussed in Chapter 2, helps to explain why bottom-up nationalist collective action was relatively difficult to organise, relatively late in appearance, and never encompassed a majority of the population in the manner of the Baltic states.

In Ukraine it was unlikely that a nationalist movement could create a situation of 'dual power', from whence it would proceed to outright victory over an enfeebled state.⁶⁰ There is no specific logic that makes the relation between the power of the state and of the national movement that seeks to challenge it a necessarily zero-sum game (that is, one always expands as the other contracts). Indeed, in Ukraine the mobilisational ability of both was in simultaneous decline, after the nationalist challenge peaked in October 1990.⁶¹ Instead, Ukraine had to wait for an alliance between the opposition and dissident forces within the state, as in the Baltic States and Armenia as early as 1988-9, although this was delayed until as late as the spring of 1991.

From then onwards the situation was transformed. The elections of 1990, and the referendum of March 1991, showed that support for the national opposition was confined to 25-33 per cent of the electorate. Once the state began to politicise the population from above, near-unanimous (90 per cent) support was achieved for independence by December 1991.

Certain elements within the state were more vulnerable to nationalist sentiment than others, and therefore more likely to make common cause with oppositional nationalist agitators in the *perestroika* period. These would include members of the cultural intelligentsia's own bureaucratic *apparat*, and those officials who wish to maximise their independence from the centre for the sake of maximal personal freedom of action, or rational-technical opposition to an irrational, overcentralised bureaucracy.⁶² Against this, however, must always be set the fact that empires always function through the placement of representatives in the periphery whose primary loyalty is to the centre, to function as the 'bridgehead which the centre in the Centre nation establishes in the centre of the Periphery nation'.⁶³

In Ukraine, the latter were comparatively numerous. This meant that state elites did cross over *en masse* to national communism, even

in 1990-1, but rather the Communist Party was effectively split, with a substantial body of conservatives in resistance to bridge-building with the opposition.

THE STATE, CULTURE, IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM

Kenneth Farmer has examined the cultural basis of Ukrainian nationalism, and its origins in concepts of personal and collective identity.⁶⁴ If the idea of culture as the main independent variable is rejected, then national identity is either provided from below, by the intelligentsia, or from above, by the state.⁶⁵

Although at times Krawchenko implies that the groundswell of socio-economic tension from below is sufficient in itself to generate a politicised national identity and consequent nationalist discontent, his argument more normally emphasises the intermediary role of elites. The social change that produced upward Ukrainian mobility is instrumentally important in so far as it affects the composition of the elites who control the process of culture formation or replication, and whether this will have a specifically national content.

For Motyl, culture only becomes important when the state allows it to. Either the state loses control and national cultures become the perfect cohesive for collective action against the state, or national communists politicise and manipulate culture from above in order to create a power base for themselves. The power of the pre-Gorbachev state meant that its 'Soviet' culture was indeed stable. It should not be argued retrospectively from the collapse of any sense of Soviet identity that it did not command significant support in the *pre-perestroika* period (or during the latter's early stages). Farmer's analysis, written in 1980, shows that, in the competition between the rival myth-symbol complexes of 'proletarian internationalism' and 'national moral patrimony' (i.e. traditional Ukrainian national identity), the *pre-perestroika* Soviet state was possessed of a considerable comparative advantage.

If the strength of any given nationalism in the cultural sphere is a joint function of its own cultural resources, its relationship to the state system and of any possible interaction between the two, then the purpose of Chapter 2 is to show that the cultural resources available to Ukrainian nationalism have traditionally been relatively weak, despite the strong Ukrainian national revivals that took place in the 1920s and 1960s. Hence, although the Soviet regimes in the Baltic

republics were relatively easy prey for resurgent nationalisms in the *perestroika* era, the Ukrainian movement that began to challenge the state in 1988-91 was not strong enough to finish the job.

The key factors tipping the balance in the struggle for Ukrainian independence were the appearance of the national communists and the total collapse of the centre. In an extraordinarily short space of time, the Soviet empire failed the periphery in all key respects. The Soviet connection had offered at various times a Utopia, access to a wider world, the prestige of empire, the hope of technical and material progress, of raising individual and community standards of living. Messianic belief in Utopia had disappeared by the 1960s, however, and the flow of material benefits and related social mobility to all intents and purposes ground to a halt sometime in the mid-1970s.

More importantly, the official Soviet ideology and identity system's key failure was its inability to create and sustain the moral and cultural constructs by which a community can order its existence once *glasnost* was unleashed on people's historical myths and memories. (Ironically, it could be argued that the High Stalinist period, with its evidence in blood, was more stable and effective in this sense - at least it gave people some sense of where they were going.)

Therefore, the crisis of the state in the *perestroika* period was also one of identity and legitimacy. Gorbachev's failure to recognise this and his consequent blindness to the need to develop some kind of reintegrative strategy allowed the crisis to worsen. As argued above, only nationalism could provide an alternative set of unifying myths, symbols, values and principles, a sense of identity (a 'we') and once unleashed proved a powerful successor to the Soviet identity (which of course never fully suppressed national identities in any case).

As Smith points out, 'nationalism provides the most compelling identity myth in the modern world' through its power of 'transcending oblivion through posterity the restoration of collective dignity through an appeal to a golden age, the realisation of fraternity through symbols, rites and ceremonies'. To this might be added the powerful way in which nationalist notions of 'homeland' help to situate the individual, and the manner in which the notion of national uniqueness give a sense of worth to the identity in question.⁶⁶

Nationalism was therefore grasped by the national communists both as the best means of legitimating their challenge to the centre, and as a reintegrative strategy for the territories they hoped to control.

This time the failure of the centre to recentralise meant that a certain critical point of no return was passed (in Ukraine in early

1991) whereafter the material, cultural and authority resources in the republics outweighed anything the centre had to offer, and the USSR was effectively doomed. The loyalties that are generated in the cultural sphere are distinguished from material or political interests precisely by their capacity to meet deep-rooted individual and collective psychological and identity needs, and therefore tend to be 'either-or': (in this case Soviet or Ukrainian) that is, not divisible or easily transferable. It may be possible for some individuals to feel 'multiple' or 'situational' loyalties, in more stable social epochs, but a Gresham's law tends to operate in more conflictual periods, as the strongest loyalty squeezes out the rest.⁶⁷

In Chapter 2 we turn to an analysis of the specific weaknesses in the Ukrainian situation referred to above. Although the logic of the argument is that attention needs to be devoted to events at the centre, it will be assumed that the story of the USSR's last days is well enough known, and the analysis of Chapter 3 onwards will therefore concentrate mainly on Ukraine.

Notes and References

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4. Of the many works of Anthony D. Smith, the following are quoted from: (ed.), *Nationalist Movements* (London: Macmillan, 1976); *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Holmes and Meier, 1983); *The Ethnic Origin Of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); 'The Myth of the "Modern Nation" and the Myths of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (January 1988) pp. 1-26; and *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991).
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6. Smith, 1988, pp. 9-10. Compare the slightly different wording in 1991, p. 14.
7. Smith, 1986, p. 215.
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10. Bohdan Krawchenko, 'The Impact of Industrialisation on the Social Structure of Ukraine', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. xxii, no. 3 (September 1980) pp. 338-57; 'The Social Structure of Ukraine at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *East European Quarterly*, vol. xvi, no. 2 (June 1982) pp. 171-81; (with J. Carter) 'Dissidents in Ukraine Before 1972: A Summary Statistical Profile', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Winter 1983) pp. 85-8; (ed.) *Ukraine After Shelest* (Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1983), especially his 'Ethno-Demographic Trends in Ukraine in the 1970s', pp. 101-19; 'Changes in the National and Social Composition of the Communist Party of Ukraine From the Revolution to 1976', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Summer 1984) pp. 33-54; 'The Working Class and the Nationality Question in the UkSSR', *Soviet Nationalities Survey*, vol. 1, nos 9-10 (September-October 1984); (especially) *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Ukraine* (Oxford: St Antony's/Macmillan, 1985); 'The Social Structure of the Ukraine in 1917', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. XIV, nos 1/2 (June 1990) pp. 97-112; 'National Memory in Ukraine : The Role of the Blue and Yellow Flag', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990) pp. 1-21.
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 16. Rakowska-Harmstone, 1977, p. 33.
 17. Rakowska-Harmstone, 1977, p. 38.
 18. Rakowska-Harmstone, 1977, p. 31.
 19. For Krawchenko, see above. Wsevolod Isajiw, 'Urban Migration and Social Change in Contemporary Soviet Ukraine', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. xxii, no. 1 (March 1980) pp. 58-86.

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24. Krawchenko, 1990, p. 106; and 1982, p. 175.
25. Krawchenko, 1990, pp. 100 and 111; and 1985, table 1.5, p. 44. The figures refer to 1897, but Krawchenko, 1990, argues that little had changed by 1917.
26. See Orest Subtelny's comprehensive *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1988) chs 18 and 19. The Ukrainian version is *Ukraïna: Istoriia* (Kyiv: Lybid; 1991).
27. See David Saunders' review article, 'Modern Ukrainian History (II)', *European History Quarterly*, vol. 21 (1991) pp. 81-95, for a discussion of 'Little Russianism', and a survey of some of the recent literature on this period, Subtelny included. Paul Robert Magocsi, 'The Ukrainian National Revival: A New Analytical Framework', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, vol. XVI, nos 1-2 (1989) pp. 45-62, also argues that the 'Little Russian' mentality was widespread.
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30. Krawchenko, 1985, p. 253.
 31. *Ukrains'ka RSR u tsyfrakh: 1990* (Kyiv: Tekhnika, 1991), p. 23.
 32. Interestingly, Soviet research has also admitted this possibility. See Iu. V. Arutiunian and Iu. V. Bromlei (eds), *Sotsial'no-kul'turnyi oblik sovet-skikh natsii: Po rezul'tatam etnosotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986).
 33. Isajiw, 1980, pp. 60-3.
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 36. See Krawchenko, 1980.
 37. Krawchenko, 1985, p. 3.
 38. Alexander J. Motyl, 1990, and *Will The Non-Russians Rebel? State, Ethnicity and Stability in the USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987). See also his 'The Sobering of Gorbachev: Nationality, Restructuring and the West' in Seweryn Bialer (ed.), *Politics, Society and Nationality Inside Gorbachev's Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 149-73; 'Empire or Stability? The Case for Soviet Dissolution', *World Policy Journal*, vol. VIII, no. 3 (Summer 1991) pp. 499-524; 'Helping Gorbachev or Helping the Nationalities: The Unreformable Soviet Federation and the West', in A. Kagedan (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Soviet Future: Aspects of Centre-Republic Relations in the USSR* (Ottawa: Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, 1991) pp. 133-50; and 'Totalitarian Collapse, Imperial Disintegration, and the Rise of the Soviet West: Implications for the West' in Michael Mandelbaum (ed.), *The Rise of Nations in the Soviet Union* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1991) pp. 44-63. Although dealing with the USSR in general, Motyl's work focuses on Ukraine.
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 40. Charles Tilly, 'Does Modernisation Breed Revolution?', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 5, no. 3 (April 1973) pp. 425-47. See also Motyl, 1987, pp. 131-4; and 1990, pp. 157-9.
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50. See, for example, Steven L. Burg again, 1990; or Mark Beissinger's excellent study of UkSSR and RSFSR elites in 'Ethnicity, the Personnel Weapon, and Neo-Imperial Integration: Ukrainian and RSFSR Provincial Party Officials Compared', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol. xxi, no. 1 (Spring 1988) pp. 71-85. John A. Armstrong's classic work, *The Soviet Bureaucratic Elite. Case Study of the Ukrainian Apparatus* (New York: Praeger, 1959) describes the local oligarchy in the Ukrainian SSR. On the concepts of 'penetration', 'participation', 'distribution' and 'legitimacy' crises see Leonard Binder (ed.), *Crises and Sequences in Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).
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58. George Schopflin, 'National Identity in the Soviet Union and East Central Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Special issue on 'National Identity in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union', vol. 14, no. 1 (January 1991) p. 11.
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