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The third Ukraine: A case of civic nationalism

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Abstract
To some extent, the current Russian-Ukrainian may be described as a conflict between two visions of nation, respectively, ethnic and civic models. Putin believes that a language defines a nation. In his understanding, since many Ukrainians are Russian speakers, they are Russians. His perception of Ukraine is anachronistic. He has failed to notice Ukraine's radical transformation since it gained independence. The current Ukrainian identity has a strong civic component. Its core is represented by a new urban middle class with a new set of values. Sustainability of this identity largely depends on longevity and results of the war.

Keywords
civic nation, identity, middle class, nationalism, values

Introduction

In the first days of the Russian-Ukrainian war, a video became viral (Mojo Story 2022). It was taken in the courtyard of the Ukrainian presidential office in Kyiv. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukrainian president, and four of his closest fellows were delivering a message to Ukraine and worldwide: 'All of us are here protecting the independence of our country'. These words directly responded to Western embassies who offered Zelensky and his team a safe evacuation from the country. Back then, it was believed that Putin and

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Dublin Seminars 2023 ("Nationalism, nation-building, and the decline of empires") were organized by Reset-Dialogues on Civilizations in collaboration with Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme, the Clough Center for Constitutional Democracy at Boston College and Boston College – Ireland, with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – France Delegation. Dublin Seminars took place at Boston College Ireland, Dublin, from May 22-27, 2023.

his army would take Kyiv in three days. Zelensky turned this offer down and chose to fight. Experts say that his message was a critical factor in the failure of the Russian Blitzkrieg in 2022: it boosted the morale of many Ukrainians who volunteered to fight Russians.

In its way, the video also tells a story of a modern Ukrainian identity. Only two of the five persons pictured there – Prime Minister Dmytro Shmyhal and the advisor to the President's office Mykhailo Podoliak – are ethnic Ukrainian. The other two, Zelensky and the head of his office, Andriy Yermak, are of Jewish origin. And the fifth one, David Arakhamia, is Georgian. A person missing from the stage was Oleksii Reznikov, the Minister of Defense. Like Zelenskyi and Yermak, he is also of a Jewish origin. In September 2023, he was replaced by Rustem Umerov, a Crimean Tatar. Regardless of their ethnic origins, all identify themselves as Ukrainian.

The second important feature of the new Ukrainian elites is their age. When the video was taken, Arakhamia and Reznikov were 43 years old, Zelensky was 44, Shmyhal was 47, and Yermak and Podoliak were 50. This frame starkly contrasts Putin and his milieu: Putin was 69, his Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu was 67, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov was 73. The youngest was the Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishhustin (55 years old). Still, he was ten years older than the average Zelensky team age.

One may say that the difference between Russian and Ukrainian ruling elites is between the last Soviet and the first post-Soviet generation. Putin and his men started their careers during the last Soviet decades. At that time, Zelensky and his team were either kids or teenagers. They matured in Ukraine since it became independent in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Another essential feature of the Zelensky milieu is that, except for Shmyhal, none had previous state administration experience. Zelensky and Yermak came from the entertainment industry, Reznikov was a private lawyer, Podolyak made his career as a journalist, and Arakhamia worked in the IT sector. Again, it differs from Putin and his men. They all are *apparatchiks,* that is*,* they made their careers in the state apparatus.

There has been a historical tendency of modern East Europe: the state served as the primary agent propelling economic progress (Gershenkron 1962, 16–21). In the case of Soviet industrialization, this tendency took an extreme form. Nowadays, Ukraine seems to represent the opposite current: most of its elites came from the civil sector and post-industrial economy. All these three features of the Ukrainian president's milieu – their multiethnic character, younger age, and social origins – are three ways to describe the same phenomenon: the emergence and coming to power of a new middle class in Ukraine. To a large extent, it is responsible for reshaping Ukrainian national identity – Zelensky and his team may serve as an example of this transformation.

The origin of the Ukrainian civic nation

To understand the scale and the character of these changes, one has to put them in a historical perspective. Historically, two types of nations emerged: ethnic and civic ones.

The ethnic concept has its roots in ancient Greece. Back then, one could be a citizen of a city-state if both parents were citizens as well. This concept of nationality was based on *ius sanguinis* (right of blood). Since modern nations are much larger than ancient states, the right of blood was replaced with a concept of common ethnic belonging. In most cases, it was defined by a common spoken language. As the German poet Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860) wrote, the German nation extends 'as far as the German's accent rings' (Arndt 1845, 333).

An alternative civic concept of nation was derived from the practices of ancient Rome, where citizenship was based on *ius solis* (right of territory): anyone born in the territory of a state was entitled to be its citizen, provided he was loyal to this state and shared its values. In modern Europe, this principle was epitomized by the French nation. As Ernest Renan stated in his famous Sorbonne 1882 lecture, 'What is a nation?': 'Language invites unity; it does not impose it… There is something in man that is superior to language: the will' (Renan 2018, 260).

Nowadays, there is consensus among historians that, in most cases, the dichotomy of 'civic'/'ethnic' nation does not work (Brubaker 1998). With few exceptions, ethnic nations have numerous minorities and civic nations are built around an ethnic core. So the correct question is not 'civic or ethnic nation', but 'What is the core around which a civic nation is built?'

At the core of Ukrainian identity stands a myth of Ukrainian Cossacks as national freedom fighters. In the words of the Ukrainian national anthem, all Ukrainians 'are of the Cossack kin'. The Cossack myth refers to the Ukrainian state that emerged due to the 1648 victorious Cossack rebellion against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Cossack ideal was 'Ukraine with no Poles and no Jews' (Kostomarov, 1930, 56)– which could be defined as an ethnic concept of the nation. The reality was different. Among the Ukrainian Cossacks, many were of non-Ukrainian ethnic origins (Luber 1983, 108–109). In 1959, the Russian emigrant newspaper *Novoe Russkoye Slovo* expressed its surprise that 'the most uncompromising fighters for the freedom of Ukraine were non-Ukrainians: Pylyp Orlyk was Czech, Petro Mohyla was Moldovan, Count Kapnist was Greek, and Collard Belgian' (Hrytsak 2019a, 26).

In the XVIII century, the Russian Empire dissolved the Cossack state, and Ukrainian lands were divided between Russian and Polish rule. A Western part of the latter was integrated into the Austrian empire – but even under Austrian rule, most local elites were Polish. By the XIX century, the offspring of the Cossack elites were mainly assimilated into the Polish or the Russian imperial nobility. After the loss of their elites, Ukrainians became a typical non-historical/non-state nation of 'priests and peasants' (Rudnytsky 1987, 37–48). And since peasants spoke Ukrainian – or dialects of what would become the Ukrainian language – it was considered a primary marker of Ukrainian identity. Apart from it, the language acquired an almost sacred status. Its public use was twice – in 1863 and in 1876 – forbidden by the Russian imperial regime. It was a strategic decision: allowing Ukrainians to have their own language could have led to Ukrainian separatism. Hence, the Ukrainian language became a symbol of national martyrdom. Switching to another language is treated as the gravest sin.

Most of the newly formed Ukrainian elites were made by *intelligentsia* of low social origins. In the XIX century, they were discussing what their nation was. Are they doomed to become a part of the Russian or the Polish nation? Should they build their Ukrainian nation? Or, perhaps, there would be a place for two nations, according to the Serbo-Croatian scenario – one nation for the orthodox Ukrainians in the Russian Empire and the other for Catholic Ukrainians in the Austrian Empire? The Polish orientation was thought in terms of a civic nation of all ethnic groups that lived on territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Russian project was of an imperial character: it was thought to be a community of imperial subjects denied any political agency. And the Ukrainian orientation was considered in ethnic terms.

In the final result, the Ukrainian ethnic-national orientation won over in these debates. The strength of this formula lies in its double message of social and national liberation. Or, as Moses Rafes, a leader of the Bund (Jewish Socialist Party), wrote:

> In Ukraine, where the landowner was a Russian or a Pole and the banker and merchant were most often Jews and neither understand the common speech, for a Ukrainian, the expression 'down with the lords' could mean 'down with the Poles, down with the Russians, down with the Jews' (Graziosi 1997, 18).

In a more attractive and highly artistic way, this formula was articulated by Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861). He was born as a serf and became a symbol of a new Ukrainian peasant-based national identity. Shevchenko glorified Ukraine's Cossack past but had a disdain for assimilated Cossack elites. His heroes were the ordinary Ukrainian people oppressed but struggling for social and national emancipation. His model of the new Ukrainian nation was close to that of the French Revolution – indeed, he sounded just like a Jacobin, calling for regicide.

Shevchenko was arrested for his poetry and sentenced to exile as a private in the army without 'the right to write'. His martyrdom enhanced his image as a national prophet. Therefore, his poetry was read with an almost religious fervour (Luckyj 1971). The later generations of Ukrainian leaders were said to carry Shevchenko's poetry in one pocket and Marx's *Das Kapital* in the other. In the words of Mykhailo Drahomanov (1841–1895), a leading XIX-century Ukrainian thinker, under conditions when most Ukrainians were impoverished peasants, every Ukrainian should be a socialist, and every socialist should be a Ukrainian (Drahomanov 1970, 59).

The new formula of the Ukrainian identity proved successful once the Russian empire collapsed in 1917. The Ukrainian socialists managed to get massive support from the local peasantry, which helped them build a national state – the Ukrainian People's Republic. They felt like gods building Ukraine out of nothing. But then peasants turned their backs on this state once the Russian Bolshevik army attacked it. Later on, peasants rebelled against the Bolsheviks. The moment for Ukrainian independence was lost, and Ukraine was integrated into the Soviet Union. Ukrainians paid for this loss dearly: in the 1930s, most of their elites were repressed, and peasants became victims of Stalin's collectivization and the Holodomor (Graziosi 1996).

The spectacular failure of the Ukrainian People's Republic led to the reconsideration of Ukrainian identity. The key figure in this respect was Viacheslav Lypynsky (1882–1931). He was born to wealthy Polish landowners in Ukraine. Driven by the feeling of *noblesse oblige*, he decided to shift from Polish to Ukrainian identity. Lypynsky blamed Ukrainian leaders for their narrow concept of Ukrainian identity. In his opinion, one could not build the Ukrainian national state relying on peasants, but had to attract professional elites, who, in most cases, were of non-Ukrainian ethnic origins. Thus Lypynsky propagated a civic model of the Ukrainian nation tailored after the US example, 'through the process of the living together of different nations and different classes on the territory of the United States' (Pelenski 1985, 339).

His criticism struck a nerve among interwar Ukrainian intellectuals in Western Ukraine under Polish rule. Their biographies were similar to that of Lypynsky in that they were not ethically 'pure' Ukrainians. They were raised either in half-Polish (Omelian Pritsak, 1919–2006) or half-Jewish (Ivan L. Rudnytsky, 1919–1985) families. They survived the war and made their careers at the North American universities. In their further articulation of civic identity, the main difference between Ukraine and Russia was not in language or religion, but in a different type of relationship between the state and society (Rudnytsky 1987, 18). Despite Ukraine did not have a long tradition of national state, it had a solid historical record of civil activity which Russia largely lacked.

The ethno-nationalist variants

Lypynsky and his followers initially made little headway among the Ukrainians outside Soviet rule in interwar Poland. They were under the sway of Ukrainian xenophobic nationalism. Very much like the Lypynsky conservative liberal ideas, the ideology of Ukrainian nationalism took shape in the shadow of the defeat of the Ukrainian state. Its main ideologist was Dmytro Donstov (1883–1973). For him, the main problem with Ukrainian nationalism was it displayed not too much but too little ethnic hatred. His concept of Ukraine was an extreme version of an ethnic nation purified from Poles, Russians, Jews, and other minorities. Dontsov was a vociferous critic of both Drahomanov and Lypynsky, hated Communism, and admired fascism: he saw the latter as the future of Europe (Erlacher 2021; Zaitsev 2019).

His view became very popular among the members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), founded in 1929, and especially among its younger radical wing. The latter were called Banderites, after their leader Stepan Bandera (1909–1959), and they made the backbone of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) established in 1942. True to its ideology of xenophobic nationalism, the UPA was responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Poles in Volhynia, and some of its members participated in the Holocaust (Himka 2021; Motyka 2006; Shkandrij 2015).

But most tenaciously, the UPA fought against the Soviet rule once Stalin annexed Western Ukraine in the wake of WWII. By that time, Ukrainian nationalism underwent a further ideological turn. It resulted from the Ukrainian nationalists' failure to win support from the population of industrialized Eastern Ukraine, especially in the Donbas. Even though local Ukrainians moderately supported the idea of a Ukrainian national state, they

could not accept Dontsov's ideology, which they considered too close to fascism (Stakhiv 1995). By the end of the war, most Ukrainian nationalists revised their ideological tenets and moved to more inclusive slogans like 'Freedom to Ukraine, freedom to all enslaved nations'.

Vacillation between ethnic and civic models continued in post-war Ukraine. World War II radically changed the Ukrainian ethnic and social landscape. Hitler destroyed Jews, and Stalin deported Poles, so the two historically significant non-Ukrainian ethnic groups in Ukraine were turned into small minorities. The war hit most large cities: some lost up to 80% of the population. The losses were replaced by Ukrainian peasant youth from neighbouring villages. In the 1960s, Ukraine became a modern urban nation. Once Ukrainians seized an overwhelmingly rural society, it reduced their social distance from non-Ukrainians.

Finally – and very paradoxically – Stalin made the dreams of the Ukrainian nationalists come true: he united dispersed Ukrainian territories within common borders. In a sense, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was a state nation with its own Soviet but still Ukrainian administrative and cultural elite. The new status became essentially visible when, after Stalin's death, Ukrainians, for the first time, were appointed to ruling positions both in the republic and in the Union. This led to the rise of autonomic tendencies in the 1960s among local communist elites. Even though these tendencies were curbed in the 1970s, the spectre of Ukrainian national communism haunted the Soviet Union until the last years of its existence.

These changes might lead to a final shift from an ethnic to a civic concept of Ukrainian identity. It did not, however, happen. The primary trend was the Soviet assimilation of Ukrainians. Together with Georgians, Lithuanians, Yakuts, and other ethnic groups, Ukrainians were supposed to form a new historical entity – the Soviet nation. And being a Soviet citizen meant being a Russian speaker. There was a belief that French was the language of feudalism and English was the language of capitalism; communism should speak Russian. In 1958, Ukrainian lost its mandatory status in Ukrainian schools and was replaced by Russian. The Ukrainian language was mainly preserved among less educated and lower social strata. In post-war Soviet Ukraine, a significant part of the population and the majority in large cities and industrial centers were Russian speakers (Krawchenko 1985). The only exception was the least Sovietized and largely agrarian Western Ukraine, with its core being the former Austrian/Polish Galicia. The Ukrainian language was prevalent there, and the local population preserved memories of anti-Soviet military resistance. Still, the general impression was that Ukrainian identity was dying out, in line with the official principle that nations would disappear under communism.

A group of Ukrainian intellectuals – belonging to a new generation who moved to cities in the 1960s – refused to accept this scenario. Most of them were brought up as Soviet patriots and believed in the possibility of building communism with a 'human face'. Their faith did not stand the test of the Soviet reality, especially in nationalist politics. Many became dissidents and ended up in the Soviet camps (Bellezza 2019). On the one hand, they stood in defence of the Ukrainian language and national culture. On the other hand, the imprisonment provided them with opportunities to discuss mutual national grievances and to reach a reconciliation with dissidents of other nationalities, above all

Jews and Crimean Tatars. Many of them believed that in a free Ukraine, besides the rights of Ukrainians also the rights of Russians, Jews, Tatars, and other national groups would be respected.

The two Ukraines

By the moment when the Soviet Union was about to collapse, the general balance of various identities in Ukraine was unclear. The moment of truth came in during the December 1991 Ukrainian referendum, when 90% voted for the secession of the republic from the Soviet Union. This number exceeded the share of ethnic Ukrainians (73%) and Ukrainian speakers (43%). This seemed to show the victory of the civic concept of Ukrainian identity.

Still, this victory turned out to be problematic. The overwhelming support for Ukrainian independence was the result of an alliance of three improbable allies: Ukrainian-speaking Western Ukraine, former Communist leaders in Kyiv, and worker movements in the Russian-speaking Donbas (Wittkowsky 1998). This alliance broke apart in the early 1990s when independent Ukraine plummeted into deep economic and political crises. It led to the early 1994 presidential and parliamentary elections. They revealed deep political cleavages that coincided with linguistic divisions. The West of Ukraine supported the incumbent president, Leonid Kravchuk, and the East supported his rival, former Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma. In late 1993, the CIA predicted that Ukraine was headed for a civil war between the Ukrainian-speaking West and the Russian-speaking East that would make the Yugoslav wars of the time look like a harmless picnic (Williams and Smith 1994).

This prediction did not come true. Kravchuk lost the election and peacefully transferred power to Kuchma. After his victory, Kuchma unexpectedly made a U(Ukrainian)-turn – learned to speak Ukrainian and tried to keep a safe distance from Russia. In the next (1999) presidential election, he was challenged by the leader of Ukrainian communists, Petro Symonenko. At that time, Western Ukraine, Kyiv, and the Donbas supported Kuchma, defining a support base that looked like a reincarnation of the 1991 alliance.

The Kuchma years (1994–2004) were a period of relative stability but at a high cost: corruption skyrocketed, and the opposition was suppressed. In the winter of 2000–2001, a wave of protests 'Ukraine without Kuchma' swept through Kyiv. The authorities dispersed the protests by force. The first revolutionary situation emerged in Ukraine.

It seemed like the civic concept of Ukrainian identity could only be preserved by an authoritarian regime. It was even argued that the 'civic' concept was responsible for the failure of post-communist transformation in Ukraine, in contrast to more successful neighbours – such as Hungary, Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia – that were ethnic nations.

As with the defeat of the 1917–1920 Ukrainian revolution, the Ukrainian crises called for a further rethinking of Ukrainian identity. The most influential reconceptualization came from literary critic Mykola Riabchuk. He saw the main reason for Ukraine's failure in its belated and incomplete nation-building. Since the Ukrainian nation was arrested in its development by the Russian Empire and then by the Soviet Union, Ukraine never became a thoroughly homogenized cultural space. By this token, there is not one but two

Ukraines. The first Ukraine is less Russified and Sovietized, with fixed identities – Ukrainian language and national historical memory. Russian speakers represent the other Ukraine and have a hybrid and highly ambivalent Soviet-Russian-Ukrainian identity (Riabchuk 2000, 2002).

The theory of 'two Ukraines' was partially confirmed by later developments. By the end of his rule, Kuchma nominated the governor of the Donetsk region Viktor Yanukovych as his successor. The government's efforts to manipulate the 2004 presidential elections backfired and sparked the Orange Revolution in Kyiv – or, as it was colloquially called, Maidan. The Revolution led to a sharp division of Ukraine into two parts along linguistic lines, like in 1994. There were, however, two crucial differences. In the first turn and in contrast with 1994, the Ukrainian West extended to the territory in the former 'East', reaching the Russian-Ukrainian border. Secondly, the 2004 Maidan was bilingual and protesters included a broad spectrum of groups, from Ukrainian nationalists to Russian-speaking communists (Hrytsak 2005).

Later, Ukrainian developments led to a further rivalry between two different concepts. President Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010), who came to power due to the victorious Orange revolution, embarked on promoting the ethnic concept. He focused on the status of the Ukrainian language and national memory politics. He also awarded Bandera the status of 'Hero of Ukraine'. The Orange government ended in a fiasco. Yushchenko and his team never delivered radical economic reforms they promised to overcome poverty and corruption. The ruling coalition was split by his personal conflict with Yulia Tymoshenko, who had been the second most prominent leader in the Orange Revolution behind him. They each tried to form coalitions with Yanukovych in order to defeat each other. Moreover, Yushchenko's term coincided with the global economic crisis of 2008, which deeply damaged Ukraine's economy, putting an end to almost a decade of improvement.

In 2010, Yanukovych won the elections and became Ukraine's new president. On the surface, it looked like a return to a civic concept. On the one hand, Yanukovych and his entourage deprived Bandera of hero status, and endowed Russian with the status of the second ('regional') official language. On the other hand, he learned to speak Ukrainian and consistently used it in his public speeches. Still, like under Kuchma, it was meant to be a civic nation without civil society. When Yanukovych came to power, he immediately imprisoned his political rivals, put parliament under his total control, and used his political power to enrich his family and closest milieu. The Kremlin was pleased with this direction. Putin openly supported Yanukovych and during the fraudulent 2004 elections, the Russian president even congratulated him twice. After Yanukovych's victory in 2010, talks of an alliance between Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine were renewed. Under these circumstances, a new formula of Ukrainian identity emerged.

The Kyiv-based Russian-speaking intellectual Mykhailo Dubynianski made its most concise formulation. He coined a formula of a 'golden mean' or 'Ukraine of the Center'. The 'Center' was understood both in geographical and political terms. Geographically, it was between two opposite poles of Western and Eastern Ukraine; politically, it should be equally distanced from both Ukrainian nationalists and Russian-speaking anti-democrats. To overcome inner divides and simultaneously save Ukraine from authoritarian rule,

Dubynianski called for a new civic opposition free of ethno-cultural markers. Such an opposition would criticize the current government not for Russophilia but for corruption and incompetence. Ukrainian national democrats should replace hackneyed verbal labels like 'Slavic Unity' or 'Ukrainianess' with the inclusive term 'citizens' (Dubynianskyi 2010). This formulation echoed the words of Roman Szporluk, professor of Ukrainian history at Harvard. At the beginning of the 2000s, he suggested that apart from 'Two Ukraines', there was a 'Third Ukraine' representing the central Kyiv – which spoke like Eastern Ukraine but voted like Western Ukraine. In his view, the Ukrainian capital might be showing the future of Ukraine (Szporluk 2002).

A new civic identification

The 2013–2014 Euromaidan may be regarded as a fulfilment of the 'Third Ukraine' formula. In 2013, Yanukovych surprised everyone by announcing that Ukraine would move towards European integration. But finally, he refused to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. Yanukovych's reversal provoked mass protests in Kyiv. At that time, the Afghan-born Ukrainian journalist Mustafa Nayem called for protests; among the three first victims who were killed by government forces – Yuri Verbitsky, Serhiy Nigoyan, and Mikhail Zhiznevsky – two were not Ukrainians (Nigoyan came from an Armenian family, and Zhiznevsky was Belarusian). In Euromaidan, also Ukrainian nationalists were present and especially active in clashes with the government forces. It provided the Kremlin with reasons to paint the Euromaidan revolution as an outburst of ethnic nationalism. In reality, the protests included a broad swath of Ukrainian society. The Euromaidan also witnessed a large group of ethnic Jews who identified themselves as Ukrainians. The Kremlin propaganda slurred them as 'Jewish Banderites' (literally '*zhydobanderivtsi*') – and they adopted this self-ironic moniker as a badge of honour.

Once the Euromaidan front succeeded, Russian forces immediately invaded Crimea. It was not a spontaneous decision. It was based on a military strategy towards Ukraine adopted by the Kremlin already in 2008 (Litvinenko and Gorbulin 2009). Accordingly, if Ukraine kept on moving towards the West, it should be defeated by a Russian military aggression. The defeat would lead to the dismemberment of the state. The Russian-speaking East, Crimea, and the entire Black Sea coast were to be annexed to Russia. Western Ukraine, as a territory with anti-Russian solid sentiments, could go to hell. The rest of Ukraine would be reduced to a minor vassal and predominantly rural state with a puppet government in Kyiv.

These plans presumed that once the Russian army entered Ukraine, it would provoke a wave of anti-Ukrainian uprisings and seizures of power in Russian-speaking cities. In 2022, this did not happen. The Russian-speaking Dnipro in the East became one of the strongest centers of Ukrainian resistance to Russian aggression (Hrytsak 2019b; Habel, 2009). A failure of the Russian plans proved the vitality of a new Ukrainian civic identity, as it can also be seen in the fact that the two Ukrainian presidents who were elected during the war in Donbas, Petro Poroshenko in 2014 and Volodymyr Zelensky in 2019, won majorities across the country and not just in the East or the West.

In a longer perspective, there is a stable growth of civic identification in Ukraine. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the share of the Ukrainian population who identify primarily as 'citizens of Ukraine' has almost doubled from 45.6% in 1992 to 84.6% in 2022. Ethnic identity can hardly stand any comparison: in 2022, only 3.3% chose it as the first choice (Indicators 2022); it does not mean, however, that civic identity has replaced ethnic identity; The two concepts actually coexist. When interviewees were provided with a wide choice, the two most popular responses in 2019 were 'citizen of Ukraine' (49,2%) and 'ethnic Ukrainian' (46%) (Sasse and Lackner 2019).

The vitality of civic identity may be explained by the fact that, given 30 years of Ukrainian independence, the population of Ukraine perceives the Ukrainian state as a norm and, therefore, identifies with it. Still, civic identity was also forged from below: it intensified with revolutionary upheavals in 2004 and 2014. In this process, the Euromaidan was a turning point. It was then that the share of those who identified as citizens of Ukraine shifted from half (50.6% in 2013) to majority (64.4% in 2014; Indicators 2022).

The Euromaidan was called the 'revolution of values' or the 'revolution of dignity'. These wordings were not just lovely metaphors. They reflect new Ukrainian realities. A fundamental change is related to the emergence of a relatively large group with a new set of values. Social scientists called them self-expression values as opposed to survival values. A shift to self-expression values is likely to bring increasingly solid demands for democracy where it does not exist and for more responsive democracy where it does exist (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 115–120).

As with other historical phenomena, the emergence of such a group cannot be relegated to a single reason. It resulted from a confluence of several factors. One of them is economic: in the middle of the 2000s, Ukraine shifted from an industrial to a post-industrial economy. A major part of the national GPD was produced in the service sector, such as IT, mass media, education, and tourism. As mentioned above, in Eastern Europe, the industrial economy has been tightly related to and dependent on the state. The post-industrial economy, as a rule, grows from private initiative. As a result, a large sector emerged in Ukraine that is less dependent on the state and less affected by its corruption. To survive and compete successfully, those who work in the service economy need fair game rules, becoming potential agents of change.

Changes in the economy led to the transformation of Ukrainian regionalism. Even though the industrial East continued to play an important role, the Center and the West had superior growth dynamics – their economies are primarily service-based. Since 2000s, financial and human capital in Ukraine has migrated from the East to the West. The hybrid war that followed the annexation of Crimea and Donbas in 2014 has accelerated this process. Still, it started long ago and has a character of steady tendency (Ukraine. Urbanization Review 2015, xvi).

Regional divisions did not disappear but were replaced by other divisions (Hrytsak 2019b). One of them is generational division. Social analyses prove that the shift from survival to self-expression values is related mainly to the emergence of a new generation (the generation of independence): they were born either by the very end of the Soviet Union or right after its collapse and matured at the turn of the two centuries. There has been economic growth from the late 1990s until the 2008 crisis. During this period, the

middle class's share rose from 5–10% in the 1990s to 40–45% in the early 2010s – and the crucial change occurred in 2002–2008 (Middle 2014, 7, 12; Minich 2018).

We can draw historical parallels to understand this factor's importance. The shift to a post-industrial economy for the first time started in the West in the 1960s–1970s. There and then, it coincided with the emergence of a new generation with a new set of values. Ronald Inglehardt dubbed it 'a silent revolution'. In 1968, this turned into a noisy youth revolution. Something similar, even though not of that scale and character, occurred in the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Then and there emerged a group of young creative intellectuals who were not willing to stay in line with official propaganda. The Soviet regime managed to appease them either by repressions or by seduction. The generation of independent Ukraine was never suppressed. They were raised in a climate of relative political freedom. Correspondingly, they behave differently than their parents and grandparents.

A level of support for Euromaidan in social networks has indirectly testified to it. With two exceptions, Donbas and Crimea, most social network users in Russian-speaking cities are supported by Euromaidan (Nove 2014). Since most users at that time were younger people (Dynamika 2013) it may be safely assumed that this support had a generational character.

Social networks are global by definition. They destroyed the artificial isolation and provincialization that was imposed on Ukraine by Soviet leaders. Ukrainian dissidents were sometimes referred to as the intellectual Robinson Crusoe. They had to come to ideas articulated long ago outside the communist camp and in a pile of books (Rudnytsky 1987, 486). This is not the case with the generation of independent Ukraine. Young Ukrainians are not isolated from the outside world. They have access to a global network; many got their education abroad. Their education level made this generation very special. Overall proportion of tertiary qualification holders among people aged 30–34 years (58.0% in 2021) in Ukraine is higher than in the EU (41.0%) (European 2023). To be sure, the Ukrainian education system still leaves much to be desired. However, surveys show that in virtually every society, people with a university education emphasize self-expression more than the general public (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 37).

It must be clearly emphasized: the new urbanized middle class did not constitute the majority of the population in Ukraine. It is a minority, but it is a decisive minority that pushes the country on the path of change. A similar value shift occurred in neighbouring Belarus and Russia (Svitove 2020). There were mass protests in Moscow in 2012 and Minsk in 2020 against the victory in the rigged elections of Putin and Lukashenko. Still, they were crushed. For the value shift to be realized politically, a favourable climate is needed – there must be at least some modicum of democracy. In Ukraine, with its regular shifts of elites and two Maidans, young people had the opportunity to grow up in freedom. This is precisely what their peers in Belarus and Russia did not have.

Conclusion

There might also be a longer historical tradition at work that Ukrainian liberal thinkers stressed: a significant difference between Ukraine and Russia was not in language or religion but in a different type of relationship between the state and society. Otherwise, it

is tough to comprehend why, long before Euromaidan, in the early 1990s, Ukraine managed to launch a mechanism for the change of ruling elites through elections and Russia did not. As Russian historian Dmitry Furman wrote back then, Ukrainians had successfully passed the democracy test that the Russians failed, and Ukrainians passed that test 'on an empty stomach' because the economic situation in Ukraine at the time was much worse than in Russia (Furman 1995, 70).

To some extent, the war between Russia and Ukraine may be described as a conflict between two visions of nation, respectively, ethnic and civic models. Putin believes that a language defines a nation. And since many Ukrainians are Russian speakers, they are Russians. Nevertheless, Putin does not know and does not understand Ukraine. His perception of the country is anachronistic and based on the XIX version of Ukrainian identity. Putin has failed to notice Ukraine's radical transformation since it gained independence. The crucial question is to what extent this transformation will prove to be sustainable, especially under the current war conditions. The new middle class represents the core group of civic identity. Many of its representatives were the first to volunteer for the front, and the longer the war evolved, the higher their losses.

The second factor is the efficiency of Zelensky and his team during the war. During the first year of the conflict, their performance was very good, and Zelensky enjoyed enthusiastic support both in and outside of Ukraine. But now that military opposition drags on and turns into a war of attrition, his popularity starts vanishing. If the Ukrainian situation turns for the worse, it could lead to a new reconsideration of the Ukrainian identity, as it occurred during previous Ukrainian failures and crises. In any case, Ukrainian success or failure will not be just for Ukraine only. There is a long debate about whether nationalism is compatible with liberalism. The most recent Ukrainian experience proves that 'liberal nationalism' is not an oxymoron. If, in the eyes of some observers, 'Ukraine is our future' (Ash 2023), the fate of the Ukrainian civic identity may define the vitality of liberal democracy elsewhere in the world.

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