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STATE OF THE FIELD

What Have We Learned about Ethnonational Identities in Ukraine?

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Abstract
Among various features of Ukrainian society that the world has started paying more attention to since the beginning of Russia's full-blown invasion in February 2022, many commentators have pointed to a surprisingly strong and encompassing national identity. However, scholars of Ukrainian language and identity matters had for years demonstrated an increased civic attachment of Ukrainian citizens, including Russian speakers, and its greater salience compared with ethnic, linguistic, and regional identifications. This article seeks to highlight the main accomplishments and challenges of research on Ukrainian ethnic and national identity. It focuses on a gradual shift from the essentialist understanding of ethnicity as embodied in bounded groups to the interest in individuals' contextually determined identifications by categories with a changing meaning. Another prominent part of the analysis is the relationship between Ukrainian ethnic and national identity and the amalgamation of these two apparently distinct phenomena into what I propose to call ethnonational identity.

Keywords: Ukraine; ethnic identity; national identity; identity change; nation building

Among various features of Ukrainian society that the world has started paying more attention to since the beginning of Russia's full-blown invasion in February 2022, many commentators have pointed to a surprisingly strong and encompassing national identity. The successful resistance to invaders became possible due to millions of Ukrainian citizens' attachment to their country, which for many was so strong that it urged them to take up arms and risk their lives. Even more surprising to most foreign observers was the fact that many of the people fighting against Russia on the battlefield or supporting the resistance by other means were people of Russian descent and/or speaking primarily Russian in everyday life. Scholars of Ukrainian language and identity matters were not much surprised, however, as they had for years demonstrated an increased civic attachment of Ukrainian citizens, including Russian speakers, and its greater salience compared with ethnic, linguistic, and regional identifications. The war-induced interest in Ukraine and its people is a good occasion to highlight the main accomplishments and challenges of research on Ukrainian ethnic and national identity and summarize what scholars have for three decades of Ukraine's independence learned about its ethnonational identities.

Seeking to tell a story of *learning*, I will structure the presentation of major research work on this broad topic chronologically while also grouping publications thematically in accordance with the authors' approaches and preoccupations at certain periods. Needless to say, I cannot discuss all relevant publications; thus, I will prioritize those that I consider novel in either research questions or methods employed to address them. I will focus on a gradual shift, however uneven and incomplete, from the essentialist understanding of ethnicity as embodied in bounded groups to the interest in

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individuals' contextually determined identifications by categories with a changing meaning. Another prominent part of this story will be the relationship between Ukrainian ethnic and national identity, the two concepts being understood here simply as a sense of belonging to a descent-based group and to the encompassing community of citizens of a certain state, respectively. Although analytically distinct, people's identification with the majority ethnic group and with the supposedly civic nation that is partly based on the majority culture is virtually inseparable in practice; thus, I propose to call this amalgam *ethnonational* identity. I will discuss how postimperial nation building has transformed Ukrainian identity from ethnic into ethnonational and how, accordingly, its traditional categories have acquired a new meaning.

Point of Departure: Essentialism

A wave of ethnonationalist mobilizations that shattered the multinational Soviet empire in the early 1990s drew the attention of the (Western) world to ethnic processes in its successor states and their repercussions for regional security, democracy, and human rights. Whereas scholars in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states were primarily interested in nation building, Western academics and policy analysts were more concerned with the treatment of minorities and their potentially destabilizing responses. Both in Ukraine and the West, scholarly analyses were in the early post-Soviet years negatively affected by an inadequate understanding of the very phenomenon of ethnicity, which did not differ much from the essentialist lay perception thereof as an individual's belonging to a certain "nationality," a category that had been implanted by the Soviet state and largely internalized by its citizens. Accordingly, most scholars perceived Ukrainian society as consisting of certain groups defined by that category and ethnic processes as "interethnic relations" between such groups. This perception was reflected in the inclusion of the question on the respondent's nationality into regular mass surveys by leading Ukrainian sociological organizations whose data, in turn, contributed to the persistence of thinking in terms of groups defined by nationality.

Of particular interest to Western scholars were the relations between the titular majority and the Russian minority, much more sizable than all other ethnic groups. In most studies, people of Russian nationality in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states were viewed as clear-cut groups with a distinct ethnic identity and strong attachment to their "ethnic homeland." Apart from the essentialist thinking with its reification of ethnic categories, such perception reflected the political reality of the early 1990s when the transformation of the USSR into 15 independent states was accompanied by large-scale protests of people of Russian nationality. Accordingly, the studies of the Russian "diaspora" focused on the potential for destabilizing protests, which was believed to be related to the size, demographic characteristics, and the degree of political organization of the group as well as to its treatment by the "host" state and the "ethnic homeland" (Kolstø and Edemsky 1995; King and Melvin 1998). This conflict-centered approach to the post-Soviet ethnopolitical processes received a boost in Rogers Brubaker's influential conceptualization of these processes as a triadic relationship between a particular "nationalizing" state, the Russian minority on its territory, and the Russian state supporting its ethnic "kin" across the border. Although arguing that the elements of the triad were "not fixed entities but variably configurated and continuously contested *political fields*" (Brubaker 1996, 60), Brubaker perceived these fields as narrow enough to exclude those actors who prioritize identities other than ethnic, which made the relations within the triad inherently conflictual (Kulyk 2001).

A shift in scholarly perceptions of would-be Russians' identities away from the essentialist view of a unified clear-cut group was facilitated by many authors' awareness of big regional differences in the social contexts members of this category found themselves in and the strategies they applied to deal with them. Most obviously, Russians' challenges and responses were very different in the west of Ukraine where they were a rather small minority and the eastern and southern regions where they constituted a considerable part of the population and their language clearly predominated. Already in 1994, Ian Bremmer demonstrated an impressive regional differentiation of the political and

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cultural preferences of "Russians" (still juxtaposed in a rather essentialist way with "Ukrainians"). In Lviv (predominantly Ukrainian and Ukrainian speaking) and Kyiv (largely Ukrainian ethnically but heavily Russified linguistically), most Russians seemed to opt for integration into the titular-dominated society. However, in Simferopol, the capital of the Russian-dominated Crimean autonomy, they sought to retain their accustomed linguistic environment and wanted political conditions that would ensure it (Bremmer 1994). Several years later, Jan Janmaat found similar differences in Russian-speakers' responses to the Ukrainianizing educational policies in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, and Donetsk (Janmaat 2000). David Meyer even pointed to considerable differences between collective responses of "Russians" in two east-southern regions, in both of which they enjoyed considerable political power and cultural privilege. Unlike the residents of the Donbas who sought to enhance their regional power and preserve political and cultural commonality between Ukraine and Russia, the Crimeans preferred an irredentist agenda and only abandoned it under a strong pressure from Kyiv (Meyer 1996).

The awareness of regional heterogeneity and social flux led Graham Smith and Andrew Wilson to explicitly problematize the validity of the essentialist view of Russian "diasporic community" in Ukraine and call for examination of diverse and complex identity choices of its putative members:

> We must be open to the possibility that new, subliminal identities exist or are in the making, which may or may not be synonymous with a sense of difference equatable with such categories as "local Russians," "the Russian homeland," or "the former Soviet Union." It may well be that a hybridity of identities predominates as individuals live out their sense of self in relation to complex urban life styles which, as Marx might have put it, means that I may feel a member of a persecuted ethnic minority in the morning, a Russian patriot in the afternoon and an industrial worker in the evening, without any sense of one such identity taking priority over another. (1997, 845)

At that time most scholars of Ukrainian identity matters were not inclined to admit that ethnic identity can be hybrid or situational, nor did they suspect that Ukraine's Russian speakers were more likely to feel Ukrainian patriots than Russian ones. But the shift away from essentialism continued.

Looking beyond Nationality

Starting in the mid-1990s, some scholars of Ukraine started questioning the role of nationality as a primary factor of ethnopolitical relations and popular attitudes. Their new perspective was informed by observations of the ethnolinguistic situation in Ukraine where the Soviet regime's ambiguous nationalities policies had led millions of people to embrace Russian as their main language of everyday use without abandoning their nationality self-designation as Ukrainians. Accordingly, there was a large discrepancy between nationality and language, meaning that the ethnic and linguistic boundaries between the two main groups did not coincide. Dominique Arel and Valeri Khmelko argued that Ukrainian society was better described as consisting not of two but of three groups: the Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, the Russian-speaking Ukrainians, and the (overwhelmingly Russian-speaking) Russians. Moreover, they demonstrated that the census data on "native language" greatly underestimated the discrepancy between ethnicity and language because many people arguably interpreted that question as pertaining to ethnic background or loyalty rather than linguistic practice. Therefore, these authors proposed a new measure of practice, the so-called language of convenience, defined as one the respondent chooses in communication with a supposedly bilingual and accommodating interviewer. It is this characteristic that they found to be highly correlated with the decisive vote in the presidential election of 1994 (Arel and Khmelko 1996, 81–82). It is worth noting that although suggesting new *criteria* for grouping, Arel and Khmelko did not question the very perception of society as consisting of stable ethnolinguistic

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groups. No less remarkably, they did not seem to suspect that their suggested measure of linguistic practice is not merely *elicited* by the interviewer from the respondent but *produced* in their interaction in a specific local context with certain expectations regarding language(s) of communication. Although this negligence of the social context of survey interviews evoked some criticism (Riabchouk 1998, 89), most scholars, particularly in the West, readily embraced the new measure and the new structure of Ukrainian society it suggested.

A more radical break with the traditional ethnic grouping was proposed by Paul Pirie, who argued that any categorization including an unambiguous designation of nationality was inadequate in a society where "inter-ethnic marriage, language usage and urbanisation are all factors which contribute to mixed self-identification" (1996, 1079). Therefore, many people identified with both Ukrainian and Russian nationalities or did not have a stable identification with any ethnic category, which often led to the preference for some pan-ethnic identity (in the 1990s usually Soviet). Such ambiguous and unstable identifications were particularly widespread in eastern and southern Ukraine with its high level of urbanization, widespread mixed marriages, and the predominant use of the Russian language by people of all nationalities. Pirie's argument found support in a longitudinal study of various social identities in Lviv and Donetsk, two cities with different historical trajectories, ethnolinguistic landscapes, and political preferences. It demonstrated both the great regional variation of people's hierarchy of identities and the considerable appeal of nonethnic identifications as an alternative to ethnic ones. The Donetsk residents were in the early years of independence more inclined to consider themselves Soviet people than Ukrainians or Russians, but first and foremost they thought of themselves as residents of their region and/or city. Although the attachment to the bygone Soviet homeland drastically decreased over the following decade, this did not result in a greater salience of Ukrainian identity, strengthening instead the self-designation in local terms. For the Lviv population, in contrast, Ukrainian and local identities were equally strong and Soviet one rather marginal already in the first years of independence (Hrytsak 2000, 2007).

Perhaps the most influential work on Ukrainian identity matters in the 1990s was David Laitin's comprehensive study of the Russian speakers in Ukraine and three other post-Soviet states that sought to assess their readiness to assimilate into the titular majority culture. He concluded that in Ukraine, Russian speakers expected no significant gains—whether in terms of social mobility or interpersonal relations—from linguistic assimilation, which, therefore, could not reach such a scale in society as to become irreversible. He argued that ethnic Russians and those titulars who had been assimilated into the Russian language under the USSR soon after its disintegration came "to see themselves—in conglomerate terms—as a 'Russian-speaking population'" (1998, 33). In a modification of Albert Hirschman's (1970) typology of individuals' choices of adaptation to a new social environment, Laitin believed that "the construction of a conglomerate identity is clearly an alternative strategy to that of assimilation (to the titular nationality), voice (to protect the rights and preserve the privileges of Russians), violent confrontation, and exit (to return to one's putative homeland)" (1998, 298). Although Laitin's analysis was informed by a nuanced understanding of identity and based on rich empirical data, it failed to admit that Russian speakers might seek to retain their accustomed language without making it a cornerstone of their identity (or that they might change their language behavior in some respects without "tipping" into full-fledged assimilation). Soon after the publication of his book, new data showed that most Russian speakers were making different choices than he predicted. In one study specifically designed to verify at the mass level Laitin's argument about the salience of Russian-speaking identity, Lowell Barrington (2001) found that among those people speaking Russian all or part of the time, the attachment to the designation "Russian speaker" was much weaker than to those defined by citizenship and nationality 2001).

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Census, Reidentification, and the Meaning of Categories

Viewing nationality as an "objective" and largely fixed characteristic, most Ukrainian survey takers in the first years of independence asked respondents what their nationality "is" rather than what they consider themselves to be by nationality or to what nationality they feel they belong. Over the years, surveys demonstrated a gradual increase in the share of thus-defined Ukrainians and the corresponding decrease in the share of Russians (Parashevin 2016, 541). However, it is only when the first post-Soviet census of 2001 showed a drastic decrease of the share of self-declared Russians in comparison with the last Soviet census of 1989 that scholars recognized the reality of a large-scale reidentification from Russians to Ukrainians by nationality (Kuzio 2003). Ihor Stebelsky's detailed analysis of the census results confirmed that the change in the shares of the two largest nationality groups had been due to reidentification rather than differences between the groups in net migration or net reproduction. He assumed that the reidentification involved primarily people of mixed ethnic origin because the declaration of Ukrainian identity by people without Ukrainian background "would represent either deception or a shift in concept from that of ethnic to state or civic national identity" (2009, 78). At the same time, Stebelsky reluctantly admitted that the latter shift was underway, not least because already a 1998 survey indicated the spread of a civic or "subjective" understanding of being Ukrainian. It is worth noting that the survey reported by Wilson asked, "[w] hat makes someone a Ukrainian?" without relating this identity to "nationality" and thus was likely understood by many respondents as inquiring about Ukrainian national rather than ethnic identity (2002, 44). However, both Wilson and Stebelsky believed that the inclusive perception of Ukrainiannesss would necessarily be extended to self-designation by the category traditionally viewed as purely ethnic.

No less important was Arel's examination of the *process* by which the census results on nationality and native language had been produced. In a radical break with the prevalent understanding of census taking, he argued that the choice of questions on ethnolinguistic identities and the allowed responses (identity categories) reflect "how states choose to represent themselves culturally" in a particular political context, and people's choice of categories is influenced by competing interpretations of the categories and the likely use of responses (2002, 215, 217). In the context of nation building and porous boundaries between language groups, the authorities sought to produce a clear Ukrainian majority in both ethnic and linguistic terms, which "called for the maintenance of separate categories of nationality and language, the use of a language category (*ridna mova*) connoting origins rather than current use, and the recoding of unrecognized ethnonyms in the name of science" (2002, 244). The strategy proved successful in that it allowed them to present the picture of a large—and increasing—titular majority in terms of both nationality and native language. Although the former increase resulted from the above-mentioned shift in perception of Ukrainian identity from ethnic to civic, particularly among people of non-Ukrainian descent, the latter, Arel argued, reflected many Russian-speaking Ukrainian's "asserting that the Ukrainian language is, nonetheless, at the root of their identity" (2002, 244).

Although public discussions around the census and its results on nationality and native language increased the scholarly awareness of the contested nature of these two categories, scholars of Ukrainian identity matters inquired for a long time only about the meaning of the latter but not the former. One can assume that these inquiries were informed by the growing realization since the late Soviet decades of the inadequacy of native language as a measure of language practice, which was demonstrated by the much greater prevalence of the Russian language in Ukraine and other non-Russian republics than the data on native language indicated (Kulyk 2014). Already in 1994, a survey by Ukrainian sociologists included a question on the meaning the respondents attach to the notion of native language. As Larysa Aza (1995) reported, people most frequently saw native language as the language either of their thinking or of their nationality, with the interpretation as the main language of everyday use lagging far behind. Fifteen years later, a new survey found a similar parity of preferences for the interpretations of native language as that of thinking/

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fluency and that of nationality but with an increased share of those relating this notion to language practice of their parents (Shul'ga 2011). In both surveys, people of Ukrainian nationality were rather evenly divided between the two most popular interpretations, whereas most Russians viewed native language as pertaining to their thinking and practice. The fact that the meanings attached to the concept of native language were presented in these publications in breakdown by the respondents' nationality clearly demonstrated the authors' belief in the objective existence of groups defined by the latter category. In turn, such existence meant that the meaning of this category was quite clear, so these and other scholars did not deem it necessary to inquire about popular interpretations thereof.

It is only in 2013 that a study by Volodymyr Kulyk included questions on the meanings of *both* native language and nationality, with the lists of alternatives supplemented by the civic interpretation that earlier work suggested. In response to the questions on how they determine their nationality and why they consider the reported language native (these questions were asked as follow ups to those on nationality and native language, respectively), the large majority of respondents said that it was the nationality and native language of their parents or one of the parents. These responses clearly demonstrate the influence of primordialist thinking positing the hereditary nature of ethnic and linguistic identities that thus appear to be determined biologically rather than socially. At the same time, some respondents reported that they determine their nationality and native language by the language they usually speak, and many more said their choice is based on the country they live in (Kulyk 2013). The latter response is particularly remarkable, as it confirms that the shift from ethnic toward civic perception of Ukrainian identity has indeed been extended to the categorization by nationality and native language. This demonstrates that these categories, which were traditionally perceived as ethnic, have now acquired a national component and should thus be considered *ethnonational*.

The processes of reidentification from Russian to Ukrainian categories and the concomitant change in the meaning of the latter was also explored in several ethnographic studies in different parts of Ukraine. Abel Polese and Anna Wylegala observed the embrace of a Ukrainian identity among Russian-speakers in Lviv and Odesa. They found that young people of Russian descent who grew up in the predominantly Ukrainian environment of Lviv, although classified by others as Russians, increasingly perceived themselves as Ukrainians. In contrast to the traditional ethnolinguistic definition of nationality, such "new Ukrainians" saw the Ukrainian nation "rather as a civic community of compatriots, based on common feelings of belonging to the nation, land and loyalty to the state" (2008, 798). In the multiethnic but predominantly Russian-speaking Odesa, most people used to think of themselves as Russian but now many felt also, or even primarily, Ukrainian. Although in Lviv "new Ukrainians" increasingly relied on the majority language outside of their minority circle, in Odesa it sufficed "to have a sort of respect towards the language" (804). Debra Friedman's study set in a bilingual town of central Ukraine found that teachers in Ukrainian-language schools routinely referred to Ukrainian as "our native language," a practice that "both presupposed children's membership in an imagined national community of Ukrainian speakers and endeavored to socialize them into identifying themselves in this way" (2016, 168). While accepting the notion of Ukrainian as their native language, most children in interviews with the researcher sought to interpret it in such a way as not to delegitimize their primary reliance on Russian outside of classroom, a stance that indicated the mainly civic meaning of native language. Beyond the Ukrainian–Russian dichotomy, Karolina Koziura's observations of everyday ethnicity in the western city of Chernivtsi, the center of a region with a large Romanian/Moldovan minority, led her to conclude that "after more than 20 years of Ukraine's independence 'Ukrainianess' has become for ordinary people an unmarked, taken for granted and almost obvious category of their everyday life, visible, reused and reconstructed in a number of social situations. As such, other minority expressions are closed in the narrow circle of national institutions and serve particular instrumental goals of individuals" (2014, 2).

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National Identity and Nation Building

While some authors refined scholarly understanding of Ukrainian citizens' *ethnic* identities, others have examined since the late 1990s the construction of a unifying *national* identity that was to supplement or even surpass identifications with the constituent ethnic, linguistic, and regional groups. Although these authors understood a close relationship between ethnic and national identities, most of them analyzed these identities as attachments of different kinds and did not seem to comprehend that Ukrainian identity necessarily combines attachments to the majority ethnic group and to the eponymous civic nation.

One group of texts examined elite propositions of national identity (or "national idea" as it was usually called in Ukraine in the first decade of independence) and their implementation in the practice of nation building. Taras Kuzio and Kataryna Wolczuk showed how the Ukrainian leadership's discourse of national identity and practice of nation building, particularly during the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, sought to find a middle ground between Ukrainian nationalists' calls for clear predominance of the Ukrainian ethnic nation seeking integration with Europe and the leftist and Russian nationalist preference for a biethnic (Ukrainian–Russian) or pan-ethnic (East Slavic) nation preserving political and cultural ties with Russia (Kuzio 1998; Wolczuk 2000). Kuzio also examined the articulations of national identity by major political forces to demonstrate radical differences in their definition of the "Other": whether it should be Russia or Europe and whether othering Russia should extend to Ukraine's ethnic Russians (Kuzio 2001). In a more sophisticated analysis, Wilson examined competing representations of the Ukrainian nation and its constituent ethnolinguistic groups by actors claiming to speak for those groups, arguing in a constructivist way that "it is precisely the processes through which each 'group' represents the other that are likely to define group boundaries and shape inter-group relations in the future" (Smith et al. 1998, 120). Unfortunately, Wilson partly undermined the value of his analysis by examining discourses of ethnopolitical actors *within* the major ethnolinguistic groups, which thereby appeared to be already established. While these studies mainly analyzed public discourse (and, in some cases, policy making), a later article by Karina Korostelina examined perceptions of national identity by political and intellectual elites as revealed in interviews with the author that were structured around certain supposedly definitive issues. She identified five coherent identity narratives that differed in their positions on these issues (2013). Although Korostelina presented counts reflecting the popularity of the narratives among her interviewees, there was no way of knowing how widespread they were among the respective elite strata, let alone among the entire population.

It is with the question of the spread of different versions of national identity among the general population and particular demographic categories that a second group of studies was preoccupied. Wilson discussed several possible "models" of national identity and then used survey data to assess potential support for these models among the population. He found that clearly ethnic (ethnonationalist) Ukrainian and Russian models only appealed to minorities within the respective nationality categories and thus concluded that the remaining "'60 percent' whose identity is allegedly up for grabs do not have any strong weight of cultural baggage, so could easily be pulled in either direction" (2002, 50). In a more comprehensive later study, Mykola Riabchuk (2019) posited a split of Ukrainian national identity into two main versions based on (Ukrainian) ethnocultural and (post-Soviet) institutional foundations, respectively, and examined their promotion by state policies and support by various segments of the population. He argued that although Ukrainian citizens' attachment to their country was rather strong, the dichotomous split of values associated with it hindered Ukraine's post-communist transformation and weakened its response to Russian aggression of 2014. Stephen Shulman (2004) conducted a systematic analysis of the popularity of civic and ethnic understandings of Ukrainian national identity and of two different varieties of the latter, which he called the Ethnic Ukrainian and Eastern Slavic "complexes." Both varieties wanted the Ukrainian national community to be primarily based on ethnocultural rather than civic values but differed in their views of what these values should be, particularly the type of relationship

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between the Ukrainian and Russian cultures, histories, and peoples and, therefore, appropriate foreign policy orientations and policies in the language domain. Shulman's analysis showed that, on one hand, the civic view of the nation had a stronger appeal in all categories of the population than did the ethnic view and, on the other, on most of his measures the Eastern Slavic complex was more popular than the Ethnic Ukrainian one.

In another study, Shulman (2005) analyzed the influence of Ukrainian citizens' national identity preferences on their support for political and economic reforms, an important issue in view of the prominent place of reforms on the political agenda in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries. Using a regression analysis, he found that national identity preference was a strong predictor of attitudes toward the reforms and that the Ethnic Ukrainian version was more conducive to liberal views than the Eastern Slavic one. Holley Hansen and Vicki Hesli (2009) were also interested in how different types of national identity affect support for democracy and free market, but they went beyond the civic–ethnic dichotomy and proposed a four-category typology of identities—civic, ethnic, hybrid, and atomized—based on out-group tolerance and in-group attachment. Remarkably, this was one of the very few survey-based studies with a sample representative not of the entire Ukrainian population but of several different nationality categories, thus allowing an examination of differences between members of these categories but, at the same time, contributing to the reification of the categories as distinct social groups. A decade later, Lowell Barrington (2021) asked a question about the importance of different types of identity based on citizenship, ethnicity, everyday language, and region, respectively, and found that national identity was the most important of all, followed by ethnic and linguistic ones. Moreover, his analysis showed that the preferred type of identity significantly affects respondents' views of Russia and the Russian language.

Influence of Identities on Political Attitudes

The texts discussed in the previous paragraph were part of a rather large body of studies examining the influence of ethnic and national identities on a wide range of political attitudes and behaviors. Although most of such studies merely used ethnicity and language variables among many others, some focused precisely on ethnonational identities and even discussed the benefits of using different measures thereof. Rather than simply presenting the frequencies of responses for certain identity categories, the latter studies employed more sophisticated techniques for evaluating the relationship between respondent's identification with these categories and their political attitudes such as analysis of means, factor analysis, and, above all, regressions.

As argued above, one of the first challenges to the assumption about the primary role of nationality as a measure of ethnic identity and a driver of political attitudes came from Arel and Khmelko, who substantiated their preference for the "language of convenience" measure by its strong correlation with the decisive vote in the 1994 presidential election. This vote was strongly polarized between the predominantly Ukrainian-speaking western and central part of the country and the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern and southern part. Arel and Khmelko's (1996) analysis revealed that the influence of language preference on electoral choice was due to the former variable's strong influence on the responses to the questions about the appropriate status of the Russian language and Ukraine's relations with Russia, on which the Ukrainian population was then divided more than on any others. At the same time, they also found significant differences in attitudes within the Russian-speaking population depending on respondents' identification by nationality (whether Russian or Ukrainian); thus, they argued that both language and nationality variables were important predictors of attitudes. In all its surveys since the early 1990s, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology directed by Khmelko instructed their bilingual interviewers to elicit the respondents' preferred language for this interaction; thus, data on the thus-defined language of convenience was available to many Western scholars commissioning survey questions from this reputed institute, so they widely used this variable in studies of political attitudes. To be

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sure, some studies relied instead on the respondent's self-reported (rather than elicited by the interviewer) language of everyday use in general or communication at home in particular (Munro 2007; Barrington and Faranda 2009). Whatever their specific variable, most Western studies of political attitudes in Ukraine since the late 1990s included as predictors in their regressions not only the self-reported nationality (still treated as an adequate measure of ethnicity) but also some characteristic of language use.

In several single-author and coauthored studies published in the 2000s (Barrington 2002; Barrington and Herron 2004; Barrington and Faranda 2009), Barrington insisted that the list of predictors should be supplemented by another variable, the region of residence, whose influence on both foreign policy orientations and domestic political support was arguably stronger than that of nationality and language use. He rejected the so-called ethnolinguistic composition theory positing that the effect of the region is merely the aggregate product of individual characteristics of its residents. When region was included on the list of predictors together with nationality, language, and standard demographic characteristics, its effect turned out to be larger than that of any other variables. Barrington thus subscribed to the "regional culture" approach, which argued that different historical experiences, economic infrastructures, and other particular features "lead to regionally differentiated patterns of thought" (Barrington 2002, 460). The effect of region turned out to be particularly strong when the country was delimited in a large number of regions, which made each of them smaller and more homogenous, thus reducing intraregional differences that otherwise muddied regional distinctions. Different delimitations in scholarly analyses reflected the lack of established regional division in Ukraine (other than the division into 25 administrative units, way too many to differentiate in studies based on regular surveys with a sample of 2000), which led John O'Loughlin (2001) to argue that the region effect resulting from any particular macroregional delimitation might be "bogus." Nevertheless, most survey-based studies came to include in their regressions several binary variables pertaining to particular macroregions. Another contextual variable on most studies' lists of predictors was the size of locality (usually a scale stretching from villages to large cities). It was intended to account for large intraregional differences between urban and rural localities that could not be reduced to their dissimilar demographic profiles.

Whatever their particular sets of predictors, most Western studies of the 2000s did not include native language, which the authors tended to consider irrelevant in view of its above-mentioned conceptual indeterminacy, whereas Ukrainian studies of the influence of ethnicity and language on political attitudes were usually limited to analysis of frequencies. The first study to analyze the influence of native language was that of Kulyk (2011), who conceptualized this characteristic as "language identity," distinct from both ethnic identity and language practice. When native language was added to the list of predictors together with nationality and everyday language (as well as region, size of locality, and standard demographic variables), its influence turned out to be no less than that of the latter and much greater than that of the former. Remarkably, native language was a strong predictor of attitudes not only pertaining to language politics but also to those dealing with other identity-related issues such foreign policy orientation and narratives of the past.

Seven years later, Olga Onuch and Henry Hale (2018) used Kulyk's insight in a comprehensive study of the influence of ethnicity on political attitudes and behaviors. Rather than treating native language as a separate kind of identity, however, they viewed this "ethnolinguistic identity" as one of four dimensions of ethnicity, together with nationality and two different measures of language use that they called "individual language preference" (as indicated in language preference for the survey interview) and "language embeddedness" (operationalized as the main language of work). Most importantly, by running multiple regressions with different lists of predictors, Onuch and Hale demonstrated that different dimensions of ethnic identity unequally affect different attitudes and behaviors. They thus concluded that

> indicators of ethnicity should not be arbitrarily chosen when studying ethnicity's effects. Even when different measures of ethnic identity are highly correlated, as they are in Ukraine, the

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> inclusion of one over another can dramatically alter our interpretation of the magnitude of ethnicity's effect on our dependent variable of interest or even whether a statistically significant effect is found at all. (2018, 101)

Arguing that it is important to examine the effects of a variable of interest with proper control variables, Onuch and Hale advised that other scholars also use all four dimensions of ethnic identity that they indicated, preferably operationalized by means of specific questions used in their study.

Identity Change

The cataclysmic events of 2014—namely, the victory of the Euromaidan revolution against the authoritarian and Russia-leaning regime and the subsequent Russian military intervention in Crimea and the Donbas disguised as the protection of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers—have strengthened Ukrainian citizen's identification with their country and its eponymous nation. Numerous political statements, journalistic accounts, and social media confessions portrayed a stronger attachment to Ukraine, greater embrace of Ukrainian as the national language, a more positive attitude toward Ukrainian nationalist fighters of the past, and so on (Kulyk 2016). Accordingly, many scholars sought to examine changes in national attachment and their reflection in identifications by the established ethnolinguistic categories. Some of these studies were so-called panel surveys with a core of respondents being the same persons asked the same questions at different times, but most studies compared the results of two or more cross-sectional surveys (with different nationally representative samples) from different years, usually before and after 2014.

The most common finding in both types of studies was a considerable growth of civic attachment to Ukraine, whatever the ways to measure it. Kulyk demonstrated an increased salience of Ukrainian civic/national identity ("citizen of Ukraine") vis-à-vis other territorially defined identifications, from local to global. He also showed that after Euromaidan and Russian aggression, Ukrainian citizens came to view more positively certain attributes of nationhood such as the anthem, flag, and the state language, the latter perceived "not only in legal terms, as the language of the state apparatus, but also in symbolic terms, as the national language" (2016, 600). In another study, Kulyk compared pre- and post-2014 patterns of identification by nationality and native language and detected a shift from Russian to Ukrainian categories (often via a temporary identification with both of them), which he interpreted as "a kind of bottom-up de-Russification, a popular drift away from Russianness" in response to Russian aggression (2018, 121). Remarkably, although the addition of people without Ukrainian descent or language skills to the Ukrainian categories of nationality and native language necessarily shifted the popular perception of these categories from purely ethnocultural toward civic, most respondents still reported that they merely adopted the nationality and native language of their parents, a clear sign of the enduring power of Soviet and post-Soviet official discourse presenting these categories as hereditary.

Nadiia Bureiko and Teodor Moga (2019) demonstrated an increase not only in identification with Ukrainian nationality and native language but also in Ukrainian identity expressed as agreement with the statements "I love Ukraine" and "I feel Ukrainian"—that is, not related to traditional ethnolinguistic categories. They also confirmed an earlier finding that such noncategorized Ukrainian identity is primarily perceived in civic rather than ethnic or linguistic terms. While the three above-mentioned studies compared surveys from before and after the 2014 cataclysm, Gwendolyn Sasse and Alice Lackner showed a considerable shift in identities over just one post-2014 year, the most pronounced being an increase in the salience of civic identification at the expense of ethnic Ukrainian one. They interpreted this finding as a sign of a "broader identity shift from a more ethnic to a more inclusive civic Ukrainian identity," quite surprising at a time of war when mainstream scholarship teaches us to expect the mobilization and polarization of *ethnic* identities (2019, 94).

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More ambitiously, Pop-Eleches and Robertson (2018) not only confirmed the post-2014 growth of identification with Ukraine as one's homeland but also took advantage of the panel design of their study to demonstrate that changes in identity were more likely to drive changes in political attitudes than the other way around. Most obviously, they demonstrated strong effects of home language on changes in preferences regarding language policy and foreign policy, thus indicating that the language people speak—and not only one they consider native—constitutes an important part of their identity. For their part, Kulyk and Hale (2022) analyzed the pooled data of two cross-sectional surveys to explore the changing influence of different measures of ethnic identity and their particular categories (Ukrainian and Russian) on various attitudes. They theorized that the unequal explanatory power of different identity measures and categories as predictors of attitudes reflects their unequal usefulness for boundary-making purposes which, moreover, can unevenly change in response to perceptible changes in social context. Their analysis found very different explanatory powers of the Ukrainian and Russian categories in each of the three identity measures they examined (nationality, native language, and everyday language) and, moreover, an increase in the power of the Ukrainian (but not Russian) categories in response to Euromaidan and the war.

Whereas all the studies discussed in this section explored the situational nature of ethnic identity by means of usual closed questions in two or more surveys, the two most recent studies within the framework of the collaborative project "Identity and Borders in Flux: The Case of Ukraine" (ibifukraine.com) took a step further and resorted to survey experiments. One study examined the effect of the interviewer's identity (as guessed by the respondent from their speech during the phone interview) on the identity declared by the respondent. By exploiting the random assignment of interlocutors with different ethnic identity traits across a nationally representative sample, Hale et al. (2020) detected statistically significant effects on the reported identity of respondents on all four identity dimensions suggested in the above-mentioned article by Onuch and Hale (2018). A second study focused on the influence of situational stimuli (the so-called primes) on the respondents' perceptions of the content of Ukrainian national identity—that is, their understanding of what is "most important for telling who is really a Ukrainian and who is not," with the list of alternatives including two ethnocultural criteria (descent and language) and two civic ones (citizenship and permanent residency in the country). The experiment demonstrated that although most respondents prefer the civic understanding of Ukrainianness, the reminder of the COVID-19 challenge to Ukraine leads some of them to switch to a more exclusive view of national belonging, and some others to reject the suggested alternatives altogether (Kulyk et al. 2021). These two experimental studies clearly showed that in Ukraine, like in other locations where such studies have been conducted, ethnonational identities can change in not only a matter of years but also within a particular situation of social interaction when people respond to cues and stimuli by adjusting their identifications and their perceptions of the identity categories.

Studies of Particular Groups

Most studies of Ukrainian identity matters have dealt with the entire Ukrainian population while distinguishing between ethnic, linguistic, and regional categories. At the same time, a number of publications have focused on particular categories, often viewing them as bounded groups. As mentioned above, in the early post-Soviet years the most actively researched category was ethnic Russians, widely perceived as part of the post-Soviet diaspora strongly attached to their ethnic homeland. Toward the end of the 1990s, the focus shifted toward Russian speakers who were seen as resisting the state's imposition of ethnic boundaries and asserting the primacy of language and culture as a central element of their identity, thus extending Russianness to people of Ukrainian and other descent who spoke primarily Russian in everyday life (Laitin 1998; Fournier 2002). In the following decades, studies of Russian speakers detected an increase in their civic identification, which became no less important than the linguistic one. Volodymyr Vasiutyns'kyi (2012) argued that in the 2000s, Russian speakers were still driven toward the Russian culture and Russian state in

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political sense but psychologically "their preferences are shifting toward the acceptance of Ukrainian attributes" (54). After Euromaidan and Russian aggression, Kulyk demonstrated that although Russian-speakers' ethnic and linguistic reidentification away from Russianness was not usually accompanied by the abandonment of Russian as the main language of everyday life, the continued reliance on that language was for most of them a less important part of identity than the attachment to the Ukrainian state and the inclusive Ukrainian nation (Kulyk 2019). Olena Nedozhogina's (2019) study of Russian speakers' identity narratives pictured a more complicated dynamics of the acceptance and rejection of the post-2014 solidification of borders between Ukraine and Russia, with many people accepting the political border and rejecting the cultural one, thereby contributing to the predominantly civic meaning of Ukrainian identity.

The Russian-instigated military conflict in the Donbas urged some scholars to focus on the patterns of identification and political attitudes among the population of that region and those people who left it (as well as the Russian-annexed Crimea) for other parts of Ukraine or abroad. Elise Giuliano, who analyzed survey data on political attitudes of Donbas residents, found that they "were not highly polarized across ethnic identity categories" and for most people, it was not ethnocultural identities but rather "local concerns entwined with feelings of abandonment by Kyiv that motivated support for separatism" (2018, 174, 175). Sasse and Lackner (2018) commissioned four interrelated surveys to examine the effect of war on identities of the residents of the Ukraine- and separatist-controlled parts of the Donbas as well as displaced persons from the region in Ukraine and Russia. Asking the respondents to assess their current identities compared with those before Euromaidan and the war, they found very different dynamics in the two parts of the Donbas and in the two countries of displacement, thus confirming a crucial role of the social context. Although there was an increase in Ukrainian identity under Ukrainian control and an increase in Russian identity under Russian/separatist control, a considerable share of respondents in all four samples reported feeling both more Ukrainian and more Russian, a remarkable demonstration of the tenacity of hybrid identities. Viktoriya Sereda focused on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Donbas and Crimea and examined their own sense of belonging to the national and the respective local communities as well as the perception of these two categories of IDPs by local populations in different parts of Ukraine. The use of a modified Bogardus social distance scale in a survey with an unusually large sample allowed her to discern fine regional distinctions in the readiness to accept IDPs and demonstrate that "the place of IDPs in hierarchies of belonging does not correspond to traditional macro-regional schemes of division or ethno-linguistic cleavages" (2020, 426). At the same time, in-depth interviews in different parts of Ukraine revealed different trajectories of self-identifications among IDPs themselves, with some of them embracing Ukrainian ethnonational identity in the face of Russian invasion and others asserting their civic identity when encountering problems with access to citizens' rights.

Most texts dealing with other ethnic categories have viewed their members as clear-cut groups and focused on their practices and attitudes, their relations with the Ukrainian majority, and their treatment by the state. At the same time, several ethnographic studies have adopted constructivist frameworks to explore the dynamics of ethnocultural identifications and group boundaries in various parts of Ukraine. For example, Ismail Aydıngün and Ayşegül Aydıngün (2007) concluded that the interaction of Crimean Tatars with members of other groups during the deportation in Central Asia and upon return to Crimea resulted in a hybrid cultural identity but a strengthened ethnic identity, as most Crimean Tatars perceived the influence of other groups as dangerous for their ethnic distinction and thus sought to maintain clear group boundaries. In a rural context of the Transcarpathia region with several sizable minority groups, Jessica Allina-Pisano demonstrated a paradoxical effect of the opening of a border crossing between two Hungarian-majority villages in Ukraine and Slovakia on language and identity of residents on the Ukrainian side. Although the opening was intended to benefit the long-separated Hungarians, it actually resulted in a drastic increase in transborder tourism and trade, which urged the locals to accommodate the preferences of the Slavic majorities in the two countries. In accordance with the perception that "[i]dentity is not

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something people possess; it is something they do," Allina-Pisano interpreted the marginalization of the Hungarian language in the village as the dilution of their distinct identity (2009, 281). Unfortunately, these and other studies focusing on minorities other than Russian did not engage with the above-discussed literature on the Ukrainian–Russian core, nor were they used in studies of that core. However, they undoubtedly contribute to a better understanding of the complex dynamics of ethnonational identities in Ukraine.

Conclusion

The above discussion has demonstrated that the scholarly understanding of ethnic identities in Ukraine has radically changed for the three decades of the country's independence. Most obviously, many scholars have abandoned the essentialist view of Ukrainian society as consisting of certain bounded groups and have embraced the focus on individual identifications in particular social contexts. They have come to pay attention to hybrid identities, permeable group boundaries, and various meanings people can attach to the seemingly fixed categories. Some have accepted that the Soviet category "nationality" cannot be the only measure of ethnicity in today's Ukraine and that Ukrainian nationality pertains to a national identification no less than an ethnic one and should thus be called ethnonational identity. Last but by no means least, most scholars now understand that to many minority members, their attachment to the Ukrainian state and nation can matter more than their identification with a particular ethnic or linguistic group, meaning that people of Russian, Jewish, or Crimean Tatar origin can also feel Ukrainian and be ready to work and fight for Ukraine. At the same time, the scholarly rejection of primordialism and essentialism is far from total. Although few would deny that ethnic Russians can be attached to Ukraine, many more believe that this attachment does not make these people Ukrainian—that is, they still view ethnic identity as largely inherited and rather stable rather than developed in a particular context and thus inherently fluid. Although few still consider Ukrainian society as consisting of clear-cut nationality groups, many more continue using nationality as the only measure of ethnicity without admitting that ethnic identity can also be asserted in the attachment to a certain language as native or even in the use of a certain language in everyday life. Although many admit that there is large-scale reidentification of ethnic Russians, few studies of other minorities reveal the authors' understanding that their members' identities can be no less fluid and hybrid. There is still a lot of work to do.

As scholars of Ukraine move away from primordialism and essentialism toward constructivism and situationalism, they are moving closer to mainstream research on identities around the world that started undergoing such an evolution somewhat earlier. As studies of Ukrainian identity processes focus on fluid identities, discuss best ways to measure them, and use sophisticated techniques to analyze their influence on various attitudes and behaviors, research on Ukraine is becoming part of mainstream as reflected in an increasing number of publications in top-ranking journals. Some aspects of the Ukrainian identity situation make it particularly interesting for studies of identity matters in general and in postimperial societies in particular. For example, the transformation of Ukrainian identity from primarily ethnic to primarily civic can be a valuable case for research on the relationship between ethnic and national identities, and the changing influence and meaning of different identity categories can help scholars understand that such categories are often not what the state prescribes and what most people believe to be true. Scholars of Ukrainian identity matters have learned a lot, and they have something to teach to not only the public in Ukraine and foreign observers of Ukraine but also to scholars working on identity processes in various parts of the world. At the same time, Ukraine specialists should more actively engage in debates on theoretical and comparative questions, enriching them with their distinct perspective and discouraging the traditional perception of Ukrainian studies as a niche topic.

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