The cultural and geopolitical dimensions of nation-building in the Ukraine

Attila Virág

PhD student, Corvinus University of Budapest, Doctoral School of Political Science

E-mail: viragattila@t-online.hu

Ukraine belongs among those young countries where the beginnings of democratisation and nation-building approximately coincided. While the development of nation states in Central Europe was usually preceded by the development of nations, the biggest dilemma in the Ukraine is whether a nation-state programme – parallel to the aim of state-building – is able to bring unfinished nation-building to completion. Ukraine sways between the EU and Russia with enormous amplitude. The alternating orientation between the West and the East can be ascribed to superpower ambitions reaching beyond Ukraine. Eventually, internal and external determinants are intertwined and mutually interact with one another. The aim of the paper is to explain the dilemmas arising from identity problems behind the Ukraine's internal and external orientation.

1. Introduction

After achieving its independence, the Ukraine was standing at a crossroads. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the question arose: what kind of dynamics can be expected in the political, economic and social transition of this Eastern-European country? Will it be its Western or Eastern areas that take centre stage from a regional point of view? In the Ukraine, the dilemma of geopolitical orientation also emerged in terms of whether the state wanted to open up to the West or to the East.

In connection with all these factors, the country also had to cope with a special burden: the problem of nation-building. The existence or lack of a coherent national identity has a fundamental effect on the nature, quality and dynamics of transition and self-definition in the international space.

The aim of the paper is to explain the dilemmas arising from identity problems behind the internal and external orientation of the Ukraine. I argue that Ukrainian national self-

identification is closely connected with the Ukrainian nation's differentiation from others and with its orientations, but the problem of Ukrainian nation-building is manifold:

1. The cultural ideas stemming from markedly different historical roots in the Eastern and Western parts of the country militate against each other.

2. The economic elite – taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the cultural cleavage – has an interest in perpetuating division in order to obtain/maintain state support.

3. There is no national concept in politics seeking to achieve national reconciliation and rise above differences in sight.

4. The myths on which the identities of the two opposing blocks are based are less crystallised, which has a conflict-mitigating effect.

To investigate these hypotheses, in the first part of the paper I will examine the historical predecessors of Ukrainian nation-building. Afterwards I will present the cultural aspects of nation-building. I will analyse the confronting cultural ideas and the economic and political causes of persistent diversity and discuss the conflict-mitigating effect of less pure identities in a separate subsection. In the second half of the paper I will focus on the Ukraine's endeavours in terms of international orientation with regard to the European Union and Russia.

2. Conceptional and methodological framework

I find it important to define the notion of nation-building, as several studies dealing with international politics fail to define the set of concepts they are working with and what they mean by nation-building.

When it comes to nation-building many experts analyse the problems of homogeneity, using the American terminology (theories and models of assimilation and modernisation),[1] whereby the main aim is to establish a common identity of different nations. Others are of the view that it must not be prescribed; instead, a coexistence of people must be organised despite their

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[1] In case of Daniel Lerner's model of communication and modernisation or Robert Park's theory of ethnic assimilation, the key to nation-building is a society of maximum homogeneity, which is defined by the number of shared features of different social groups. Both models find desirable the elimination of differences (arising from ethnicity, cognitive thinking and social manifestations) in order to establish a cohesive, productive, fair and rich society (Shah 2003).

differences. In such a case the process of nation-building may entail the dissolution of old states and the emergence of new ones (Ottaway 2002).

Many experts do not differentiate between nation-building and state-building, whereas they only overlap in part and refer to different processes. The mixing of these notions can lead to serious confusion in interpretation. The process of re-building a state is considered nation-building by many (Talentino 2002). By definition, the state is the totality of supreme public authorities and bodies; it possesses supreme power in a particular country, i.e. it is a territorial entity. Contrary to this, a nation is a constructed community whose identity is linked to a common historical area, culture, national economy and legal system.

In the paper I consider only the union by some kind of common link of different ethnic, religious and cultural groups as nation-building. In looking at Ukrainian nation-building I will analyse the strength and cognitive features of psychological relations existing within a society, i.e. the homogeneity of the social perspective. I will use the category system of Linz and Stepan (1996) to judge what chances Ukraine as a multinational state has of deepening democratisation and preserving its own territorial unity via its nation-building efforts. In their view, the more diverse a state is from the aspect of language, nationality, religion and culture, the more complex politics should be to lay the foundations for democracy.[2] They examine the 'interconnection' between the state, the nation(s) and democratisation. They form six categories based on the "degree of presence of other 'nations' besides the titular nation in the territory of the state".

After the first part of the paper I will also use the Linz – Stepan model to evaluate nation-building in Ukraine. I will seek an answer to where the Ukraine can be placed in the category system of Linz and Stepan based on the presence of different nationalities. Based on that we may find an answer to whether Ukraine is on the road towards solidifying a multinational state, or whether there is a realistic chance of territorial separation, an issue often covered by the media.

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[2] Although it does not mean that in a multinational and multicultural state democracy cannot be stabilised; significant political steps are necessary.

Table 1. Possibilities for democracy and nation-states depending on the existence of other nations and state policies

Degree of presence of other 'nations' besides the titular nation within state territory	Policies and actions of state leaders of the 'Titular Nation'				
	Drives towards the goal of nation-state	Extends some recognition to the legitimacy of cultural diversity	Crafts some federal or quasi-federal institutions and/or quasi-consociational practices	Accepts in principle the possibility of peaceful and democratic negotiated secession	No clear, or extremely weak state leaders
No other nation exists and there is little cultural and/or ethnic differentiation	Democratic nation-state can easily consolidate and be strong.		Mononational democratic state can easily exist.		
No other nation exists but extensive cultural diversity		Democratic state-nation can easily exist.	Mononational democratic state can easily exist.		
Other nation(s) present but not awakened	Democratic nation-state possible.	Democratic state-nation can easily exist			
Other nation(s) present and awakened	Generates conflict, making democracy difficult but not impossible.	Democratic state-nation can exist but will be under pressure to move toward	Multinational state is only democratic possibility. If crafted carefully, democracy can be consolidated.	If a clearly demarcated territorial base exists, peaceful secession is possible with democracy in both new states.	
Other nation(s) present and militant	Generates so much conflict or repression that democratic consolidation is highly implausible.	Democratic state-nation can exist but difficult to consolidate.	Multinational state is only democratic possibility but prospect for consolidation difficult.	If no territorial base exists, 'velvet divorce' is impossible and if militancy persists democracy cannot be consolidated.	
No group has sufficient cohesion and identity to be a nation-builder					No state possible so democracy is impossible

Source: Linz – Stepan (1996).

3. Nation-building – A historical background

During democratic transition, societies are faced by the greatest challenges in those countries where the establishment of state institutions was not preceded by the process of nation-building (Dawisha – Parrott 1997). In this case the majority society may have the opportunity to politically marginalise other nationalities in order to accelerate the development of common national identity. This problem often arises in the case of new states that are merged from several old states or formed by separation from an old state. In the Ukraine we can see both cases.[3] The political and cultural ideas and the foundations of identity-building existing in the Western and Eastern parts of the Ukraine are extremely different; furthermore, they slow down the dynamics of transition and hinder the crystallisation of orientations. Division has a number of dimensions, which can largely be attributed to historical grounds.

In his work entitled 'The Russian Empire from 1801-1917', Watson (1967) names two historical nodes, which are of utmost importance from the point of view of Ukrainian national development. One of them is connected with the Kievan Rus, the other with the Hmelnicky-movement. In the case of the former, the existence of fundamental cultural differences between the Eastern Slavic nations is questionable to prove. The most debated historical period of the topic coincides with the establishment of the Kievan Rus and the Moscow state. In the case of the latter Watson concludes that in the middle of the 17th century we can already find endeavours which can be a precursor of Ukraine's vision of independence.

Although by the 18th century the desire for independence and the nostalgia for the Hmelnicky-movement were largely intertwined among the Ukrainian elite, judgement of the movement and the orientation of Ukrainian areas already show a high degree of polarisation in this period. Its cause can be understood more easily if we know the geopolitical situation of the area in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1667, Poland and Russia divided up areas on the right and left banks of the Dnieper River. During the first division of Poland in 1772, the Galician areas populated by Ukrainians became part of the Habsburg Empire; during the third division in 1795, more parts of Ukraine were annexed to the Russian Empire, where the absolutist

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[3] During the Soviet Union, the Ukraine was created from territories formerly under Polish-Habsburg influence and parts of the former Russian Empire. In 1991 the Ukraine separated from the Soviet Union to become independent.

system of tzarism was in operation. In Galicia, nationalities had greater room for movement.[4] The price of diverging paths of development in the Eastern and Western areas was the impossibility for the concept of a united and independent Ukrainian state to strengthen, or even to form.

From the second half of the 19th century, the period of Ukrainian enlightenment, the interaction between Ukrainian versus Great Russian (later Soviet) identity became dominant. Of the two significantly different historical perceptions one represented the Ukrainian national line, which considered accession to Russia to be dictated by necessity. The other clearly supported 'reunification' ignoring specific Ukrainian national characteristics altogether and, as opposed to Ukrainian autonomy, considered the area part of the empire.

Thus it can be concluded that the precursors of national identity as counter-effects of Habsburg and Polish authorities already appeared in the 17th century in the Western part of modern Ukraine. These were later gradually strengthened from the East by repeated Russian and Soviet strivings for homogenisation. From the point of view of national identity, the situation of what is today's Central and Eastern Ukraine was completely different, where a special identity could develop as part of the former Russian Empire. In the East, the penetration of Ukrainian national movements and nationalism was less typical. As a political and cultural result of all this, loyalty towards the Soviet system and the spread of the Russian language and culture were much more typical here than in the Western areas.

4. The cultural aspects of nation-building
4.1. Opposing cultural ideas

The national identity of the Ukrainian population is extremely fragmented geographically. A quasi-ethnic type of cleavage makes confrontation between markedly different ideas in the Western and Eastern parts of Ukraine the easiest to capture. Although a number of

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[4] In the period of the Habsburg Monarchy, autonomy also existed for a while, though it benefited the Polish nobility living in Ukrainian territories rather than the Ukrainians. In other words, Ukrainians lived in dual serfdom – under the reign of the Habsburg Empire on the one hand, and under the Polish nobility, on the other. But a local parliament existed and Ukrainians could also delegate representatives to the empire's parliament.

nationalities can be found in the country,[5] the most significant cultural confrontation can be experienced between the Russian and Ukrainian community.

Most of Ukraine's population is of Ukrainian nationality, they constitute 77.8 per cent of a population of approximately 46 million. They are followed by the Russian minority of 8.3 million making up 17.3 per cent of the population. They live mostly in the areas of Luhansk, Harkiv, Sumi and Doneck counties and in the southern parts of Mikolajiv Herson and Odessa county (Jevtuh 2009).

With regards to identity, it can be concluded that monoethnic Ukrainians make up more than half of the population and monoethnic Russians only come after biethnic (Russian-Ukrainian, Ukrainian-Russian) groups in number. A different regional distribution is also observable: the number of monoethnic Ukrainians grows towards the West, while that of biethnic Ukrainians increases towards the East.

After 1991 we also have to consider a so-called reidentification process: Soviet identity was replaced by a new Ukrainian identity, which was not a smooth process. The dominant Russian ethnicity became a national minority, a diaspora. While in a political, economic and geographical sense they are part of the Ukrainian nation, from an ethnic point of view they still consider themselves Russian. Yet in the past one and a half to two decades more and more people of Russian ethnicity have come to consider themselves as Ukrainian citizens. However, parallel to the reidentification process the Russians' sense of insecurity and vulnerability has grown as well (Arbenina 2009).

Still, the ethnic type of division between the population of Russian and Ukrainian identity cannot be interpreted narrowly as a conflict between nationalities, because the former does not consider itself a minority. The problem of different identities observable in the Western and Eastern parts of the country cannot be resolved by using the concepts and solution options based on the paradigm of a minority-majority conflict.

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[5] For example, ethnic Hungarians in Carpathian Ukraine, Greek and Bulgarian minorities in Southern Ukraine, Moldavians, Romanians and Poles from Galicia, whose areas were annexed to modern Ukraine mostly in the Soviet era.

The most remarkable examples of quasi-ethnic and cultural division are linguistic differences. Before 1991, the Ukrainian language was discriminated, while Russian was favoured. Although the situation has changed much since then, Russian continues to have a significant role in every area of communication, which the forces coming to power in the Orange Revolution have not been able to change even in the past half decade.

In Ukraine, three large linguistic-ethnic groups co-exist: Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Russian-speaking Russians. In 2007, in an opinion poll based on a sample of 1,800 respondents, the Institute of Sociology of the Ukrainian National Academy of Science examined the linguistic-ethnic situation of the above groups; the results were summarised by Aza (2009). The survey results suggest that 85.2 per cent of Ukrainian people consider Ukrainian as their mother tongue, contrary to 67.5 per cent of the total population of the country. 29.6 per cent of the population consider Russian as their mother tongue, which is much higher than the 17.3 per cent ratio of Russian ethnicity in the overall population (Aza 2009). Although the data show that the Ukrainian language does not function as a state language in all areas of life or in all regions of the country, the strengthening of its positions besides the significant role of the Russian language is also observable.

Historical memory and ethnic division have also generated a quasi-communist – anticommunist conflict. Western nation-builders consider Russian as an expression of nostalgia for the Soviet system, pan-slavism and the desire for reunion with Russia. By contrast, the 'anti-Soviet' Western interpretation of history does not have many followers among the Eastern Russian-speaking population. In the case of linguistic differences, the main problem is not that of verbatim non-understanding, but cultural conflicts behind the languages, which are rooted in the common historical past.

The significantly different Eastern and Western types of cultural ideas have produced national myths fighting against each other. Such a crucial contrast is the conflicting interpretation of the Soviet past, especially with regards to the period of World War 2, when the Western and Eastern areas often fought against each other.[6]

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[6] The Western Ukrainian areas fought both against the Nazis and the Russian army to achieve the national liberation of Ukraine. By contrast, the Eastern areas fought against the Nazis with the Russians for the liberation of Soviet-Ukraine. After World War 2, Eastern-Ukrainians, as opposed to the Western areas, did not suffer from direct Russian oppression, so history's Soviet type of narrative is much more widespread.

Similar, but not so significant conflicts can be experienced in the area of religion, too, where besides the confrontation between the patriarchates of Moscow and Kiev a conflict going back for centuries between the Unitus and Ortodox churches is becoming increasingly politicised. These issues are also inescapable because the role of religion has clearly increased in Ukraine since the beginning of the 1990s. 'Traditional Christian churches have become closely interconnected with national and cultural identity, and thus they can have a role in reconsidering the historical past, exploring the idea of nation, developing new identities, and even choosing the political trend of the country' (Vasrova 2009: 283).

In today's Ukraine, the Pravoslav church is considered to be dominant. However, this does not mean that society would be monolithic from a religious point of view. The Pravoslav church shows an extremely differentiated picture in different regions of Ukraine, as certain modern Ukrainian areas used to be under the influence of different church organisations throughout history. The Ukrainian Autocephalous Pravoslav Church (autocephalous[7] UPC) and the Ukrainian Pravoslav Church were reformed as the Ukrainian exarchate of the Russian Pravoslav church (UPC of Moscow). The Ukrainian Pravoslav Church of the Patriarchate of Kiev (UPC of Kiev) was established in 1992, which is in second place with regards to the number of church communities. None of the churches have equal influence in all regions of the country. The unification of still fragmented Ukrainian Pravoslavia can be solved by the establishment of a national Ukrainian church. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) could play a major role in this process.[8]

4.2. The economic and political reasons for the perpetuation of cultural division

Ukrainian cultural division is also underpinned by economic interests. According to Tamás (2007), two large and a marginal capitalist group can be distinguished, which follow significantly different strategies. The first one is composed of industry leaders, an Eastern-Ukrainian oligarchy of Russian identity, who are interested in increasing exports and would

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[7] Churches not depending on other churches in an administrative sense are called autocephalous by Pravoslav believers.

[8] The religious formation was born from the Union of Brest in 1596 as a unitus, or Greek-Catholic church. In the course of history, the Russian Orthodox Church sought to destroy and assimilate it mostly with the state's help. Although the church was dissolved in 1946, it continued its operation. Eventually, the reorganisation of the UGCC started in 1989. Today it is seen as the third biggest congregation in the Ukraine. It has a monopoly position in the Western areas of the country, where it is part of national identity, but today the denomination can be found in all regions of Ukraine.

like to achieve increasingly strong positions in the international markets. Their main export sector is metallurgy concentrated in the Eastern side of the country. The other major economic interest group is more interested in the commercial, financial and food industry sector connected with international capital. As for their identity, they are Ukrainians who – contrary to the first group – mainly support growth in imports. Their natural allies are foreign producers exporting to the Ukraine, multinational companies and the population with purchasing power to consume.[9]

These two main economic interest groups are extremely vulnerable because of their special industrial commitments. The global economic crisis reveals the weaknesses of the economic sphere to a large extent.[10] Although the above-described economic interest groups follow a diametrically different strategy, they are similar in one feature. Both seek to gain economic policy support from the state. Thus both interest groups support a political regime with a left-wing economic policy programme.

Before the global economic crisis, policy-making along a cultural faultline became the major identifying label for the alliance of parties presenting similar economic programmes. That is what brings us from the economic elite's economic value system basically independent of cultural rifts to the perpetuation of national identity debates in mainstream politics. The Ukrainian nationalist political elite primarily supports interest groups interested in imports, while those involved in heavy industry are helped by the representatives of the Eastern-Ukrainian Russian-speaking or simply Russian-identity political side. So cultural ideas and economic interests are reversed. The culturally right-wing political elite helps globalist economic interests, while the government – supporting the mostly Russian-speaking population and otherwise considered unpatriotic by the former – supports heavy industry, which is seen as a national economic mainstay, concentrated in the East.

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[9] The third one is a mid-entrepreneur class, which is interested in changing the existing status quo, thus winning a growth opportunity and economic space for itself.

[10] Before the onset of the crisis, metallurgy was seen as the most successful export industry of the country, but due to its enormous energy needs it was very much dependent on Russian energy sources. Ukraine's accession to the World Trade Organization caused further problems to the indutry, since the industrial facilities of the country were exposed to fierce competitition in the global markets. Exporters wanted to gain time to adjust to new circumstances. Contrary to heavy industry, importers were interested in the complete opening up of national markets. But the crisis radically reduced the purchasing power of the population in Ukraine; the credit crunch led to reduced output in the West.

The present Ukrainian elite therefore makes use of the existing cultural division to achieve their political goals, using it as a mobilising factor. In the referendum on independence held on the 1st of December 1991, more than 90 per cent of participants voted for the complete independence of the country. The majority of the Eastern-Ukrainian population of Russian identity also voted for the independence of Ukraine (Sz. Bíró 2009). This result was also seen as a positive development by the political elite of the time, because the Ukrainian legislature had already voted for the independence of Ukraine in August 1991. However, the national alternative was not united but emerged by two opposing opinions. Thus independence could not be coupled with unification.

Problems became perceptible right after 1991. In order 'to sell the new world abroad, culture was left to the care of previously half- or quarter-opposition literarians and philosophers from the countryside. Those people happened to be Galicians, i.e. they came from the North-Western part of the country and their programme was centred around the national language, and they were extremely impatient towards any other cultural programme' (Tamás 2007: 7). However, the Ukrainian national programme outlined this way was seen as strange by many, especially in the Eastern and Southern ends of the country.

From the mid-1990s, economic clans organised on a regional basis started to emerge, for example in the Doneck basin in the East and in the region of Dnepropetrovsk in the South-East. Regional attachments started to spread across the party system too. Business pervaded politics and the lack of advanced market institutions led to the concentration of assets in the hands of the few who had political ties. "Redistribution coalitions" (Olson 1965) and the processes of "state capture" (Hellman et al. 2000) were quick to emerge.

Thus the concentration of cultural and economic interests increased. By this time, obvious economic interests had been permeated by elements of national cultural identity. Cultural features became more important than belonging to the left wing or the right wing in the economic sense. The extreme social polarisation and ideological division also generated by the political and economic elite peaked during the 2004 presidential elections. However, during the campaign 'slogans aiming for division were driven by perceived social orientation, rather than ideology: European Union vs. Single Economic Space; joining NATO vs. military alliance with Russia; granting Russian the status of state language vs. rejecting it; Ukrainian

nationalism vs. double cultural identity; rejecting vs. accepting the Soviet era of Ukrainian history' (Fedinec 2007: 94).

According to this view, the Orange Revolution turned out to be a cultural-ethnic revolution; the factor of *historical identity* also played a key role in voter dividedness and its deepening. The latter category was worked out by Lemberg-based sociologist Victoria Sereda and gives a kind of explanation of Ukraine's "East-West" divided (Sereda 2002).

After the Orange Revolution, the victory of Western-oriented groups and radical nationals seemed to be potentially long-lasting but that did not come to pass. In February 2010, Viktor Yanukovych won the second round of the Ukrainian presidential elections, thus ending the reign of the powers considered Western by many after the Orange Revolution. Although the contrasts arising from national identity seem to be calming down, this cannot be explained by the emergence of a unifying national idea but rather by the onset of the global economic crisis and the Orange Revolution's becoming a spent force.

4.3. The conflict-mitigating effect of less crystallised identities

While the foundation of most Central European states was preceded by the birth of nations, in the Ukraine the development of national consciousness is based on unfinished and extremely polarised ideas, which are also perpetuated by the prevailing political and economic elite of the day. These existing polarised identities are less crystallised.

The commitment of Western-type Ukrainian nationalism to the 'West' is not considered to be unproblematic at all. "The nationalists criticised liberal democracies for neglecting the national issue and collaborating with the communists and the Soviet power. For Ukrainian nationalism, political identification with the 'West' became possible only with the Cold War and the radical polarisation of the two political systems and ideologies. And only after the fall of the Berlin Wall was Ukrainian national identity reconstructed by the intellectual elites as 'European', or rather 'Euroatlantic'" (Zhurzhenko 2002: 7). The national and nationalist perception originating from Western-Ukraine is not based on a crystallised system of ideas. In a cultural sense, Ukrainian national identity and the current endeavours for Western orientation much rather feed on the protest-driven perception of the Soviet-type regime and the economic, social and political transitions taking place at the turn of 1980s and 1990s.

The debate about the perception of the Ukrainian famine (Holodomor) between April 1932 and October 1933 is a good example of recalling tragedies afflicting the nation 'from the outside'. In one of the most shocking chapters of Ukrainian history several million people died of starvation. Former Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko, an emblematic figure of the 2004 Orange Revolution, initiated a widespread campaign to make Holodomor accepted as genocide tantamount to a holocaust committed against the Ukrainian nation.[11]

The national orientation of the Eastern part of the country does not have appropriate symbolic ammunition to forge a single national identity either. Soviet-type imperial ideology is out-of-date and thus less presentable. The older generations' loyalty to the Soviets does not outlive long that of young persons. Ethno-nationalists aiming for the equal status of the language do not have a substantive social base either. Ethnic Russians do not have a relevant political organisation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the number of ethnic Russians decreased by 3 million, or 26 per cent, between 1989 and 2001; meanwhile, Russian retained its high social status in independent Ukraine, too. In respect of higher-education degrees, they outnumber the Ukrainian population. Russian people living in the city earn higher wages, live in better equipped households and fill more managerial positions and are more highly qualified. Meanwhile, these differences have decreased since 1991; so there is no ethnic differentiation in this sense. On the whole, there is little prejudice against Russians and a high degree of acceptance between the two ethnicities even as a duality of ethnic self-awareness exists (Arbenina 2009). This seems to be guaranteed by the fact that there are very few people within the Russian-identity population who were raised in a purely Russian family; they mostly live in mixed families.

So-called Russification, or Russian cultural influence, did not cease to exist in Ukraine after it becoming independent in 1991; it remains an integral part of everyday life. In case of radio and television, Aza's research about media consumption pointed out that 61 per cent of the Russian population listen to news only in their mother tongue. Among Ukrainians this value is only 24.5 per cent. The survey has found that the ratio of Russian language in case of reading (newspapers and literature) is similarly high (Aza 2009). It can be concluded that the

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[11] Many Ukrainians quoting historical sources claim that at Stalin's command the Soviet government wanted to root out Ukrainian national self-identity by starvation. In 2008 Valentin Nalivaychenko, leader of the Ukrainian Security Service (USS) demanded legal proceedings in the case. On the other hand, according to Russia no targeted genocide took place, which they say is also proved by archive data. In their opinion the great famine struck not only Ukraine, but the area of the whole Soviet Union.

Ukrainian public is informed from the Ukrainian and the Russian media to a similar extent. In politics, business, education and daily conversations the Russian language is still dominant. It means that Russian continues to function as a kind of intermediary language in the country.

4.4. The category system of Linz and Stepan and Ukrainian nation-building

After the cultural aspects of nation-building I use the category system of Linz and Stepan (1996) to judge what chances Ukraine as a multinational state has of deepening democratisation and preserving its own territorial unity via its nation-building efforts. Linz and Stepan created 6 categories based on the degree of the presence of other nations besides the titular nation within the state territory (table 1). In the Ukraine there are other nations and major cultural and ethnic differentiations and cultural diversity. Thus the first category is by definition excluded. Of the nationalities to be found in the country at least two, the Russian and Ukrainian ethnic groups, are far from vegetating and have sufficient cohesion and identity to be a nation-builder. Therefore categories number 3 and 6 can also be excluded. Ukraine is situated on the boundary of categories number 4 and 5. Although there are conflicts between ethnicities in case of category number 4 the establishment of democracy is not impossible, but in case of the significant lines of demarcation between the ethnicities, the possibility of peaceful separation also exists. By contrast, in case of category number 5 the stabilisation of democracy is almost impossible because of the high number of conflicts. Unless the conflicts have a well-defined territorial boundary, the tension remains continuous and democracy cannot be stabilised.

It is doubtful to what extent the self-conscious Russian and Ukrainian ethnicities considered by many to be treated as fellow nations are 'awakened' or 'militant', or whether the possibility for these two communities to live together despite their differences exists. Another crucial issue shading the model of Linz and Stepan is whether Ukraine's 'Eastern' or 'Western' foreign political orientations become dominant. I think that the relevant question is not who Ukrainians consider themselves to be but how they feel about where and to whom they belong.

5. The geopolitical aspects of nation-building

In the history of Ukraine foreign policy factors have had an effect on both nation-building and state-building, which did not change much when the Cold War and the bipolar world order ended. In analysing the foreign policy aspects of Ukrainian national identity, the relevant

question is not who Ukrainians consider themselves to be but how they feel about where and to whom they belong.[12] The choice of the Ukraine's foreign policy directions depends on many external factors and on the will of many uncircumventable geopolitical actors. From the West it is the ever expanding European Union, the United States and NATO, while from the East it is Russia, the regional superpower surviving the problems of the 1990s and still considering the republics of the former Soviet Union as parts of its sphere of interest, have an effect on Ukraine's orientation strivings.

5.1. The Ukraine's foreign policy motivations and changing orientation

Reaching independence in 1991 created the possibility of democratic transition and the development of a market economy, and thus political and economic integration towards the West for Ukraine. However, in the 1990s it became evident that Ukraine's efforts in state- and nation-building did not have as much momentum as it could be expected at the moment of seceding from the Soviet Union, and thus in its democratisation and switching to a market economy it also lagged well behind Central and Eastern European states. The Ukraine's political elite was continuously balancing between West and East, between the European Union and Russia.

The essence of this 'multivectoral' foreign policy, a term used by Ukrainians to describe it, is to extract the greatest possible commercial and economic advantage from the EU without having to start the radical transformation of the social and political system (with special regard to the network of political and business interest groups developed after reaching independence) and endangering the relationship with Russia.

During the second free election after becoming independent in 1991, Leonid Kuchma won the presidential elections with a Russian-friendly programme, counting on the votes of those being disappointed in the years after gaining independence, when the state was moving too far away from Russia. Before his re-election in 1999 'due to the internal political and economic problems becoming ever more serious and recurring corruption scandals he had also changed his foreign policy orientation: he had given up the pro-Russian course. He initiated a Western programme and won' (Sz. Bíró 2009: 10). In the 1997 autumn session of the Ukrainian

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[12] Certainly, Ukrainian foreign policy orientations are dominant not only in a cultural sense, but also in respect of international economic and political dependence and interactions and the commitment of potential partners, which is reflected mostly by the support or rejection of Ukrainian endeavours.

parliament, the Verhovna Rada, the detailed EU integration programme of the country was accepted. In June 1998, a presidential decree laid down the European integration strategy of the country, the major aim of which was full membership through associate membership.

But the scandals surrounding Kuchma did not diminish in his second term of office; on the contrary, they intensified. Meanwhile the goal of accession to the EU continued to exist. According to the presidential strategy presented in the Parliament in June 2002, Ukraine would be able to meet the criteria of associate membership by 2011. In the same year a parliamentary European integration committee was established. But the EU was not a partner in these efforts.[13] Probably this also contributed to the fact that in the spring of 2003 Ukraine co-signed a convention with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan about the establishment of a so-called Common Economic Space.

Before the 2004 elections yet another change in orientation took place, whereby the Ukraine turned against Russia again. Kuchma did not take part in the elections at the end of October, but he supported the campaign of Yanukovych also backed up by Moscow, who in the end lost to pro-Western Yushchenko in the election repeated because of the Orange Revolution. The obvious aim of the new president was to join the West as soon as possible,[14] and thus met with Moscow's disapproval. This could be seen inter alia in the permanent conflicts surrounding the energy transit. The determined presidential efforts were not very successful either. It can be mostly attributed to the increasingly tense relations within the Orange coalition, a drastic decrease in public support of Yushchenko and the politics of pro-Russian forces during the presidential term.

In the end, the presidential elections in February 2010 were won by Victor Yanukovych followed by Yulia Tymoshenko, which resulted in another change in direction. The new president now broke with the dominating Western orientation of the Orange forces and engaged in more balanced politics between the European Union and Russia. Ukraine now

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[13] According to Clement and Vincentz (2005) Ukraine's convergence will take 20 years in a best-case scenario, and at least 60 years in a worst-case scenario, as integration would generate far more disadvantages than benefits to an economically weak country.

[14] At the January 2005 session of the European Council's Parliamentary Assembly, Viktor Yushchenko committed himself to the European integration of Ukraine, which also received a positive feedback from the EU. Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission welcomed 'Ukraine's return to the European family'.

tries to preserve its good relationships with Brussels while significantly opening up to Moscow politically and economically.[15] This is not a smooth process however.[16]

5.2. The West and Ukraine

Although the dialogue with the Ukraine has been continuous, the European Union and its member states have stimulated its endeavours for integration only at the level of declarations. The former Western member states of the Soviet Union – except for the Baltic states – are important security policy factors for the European Union. Thus during the 1990s different kinds of aid was provided for economic and political stabilisation, democratisation, humanitarian affairs and – especially because of the experience with Chernobyl – nuclear safety.

The European Union considered the former socialist states to be candidates for membership, but this did not include the states of the former Soviet Union. A major reason for this was that the areas still largely depended on Moscow, belonged to its decisive sphere of interests, moreover they had not existed as sovereign and independent European countries before. The lag in nation-building and state-building also had a negative effect on democratisation. Besides, in the 1990s Ukraine did not belong to the immediate neighbourhood of the then EU15. This problem was placed on the agenda during the Eastern enlargement of the European Union. At the 1999 Helsinki summit, a four-year Ukraine strategy was adopted, which urged a much more unified action by the member states of the Union towards the Eastern-European country, especially in the areas of economic transition, democratisation and home and justice cooperation. In case of the latter, we find mostly security policy considerations in the background.

In December 2003, when the enlargement of the EU15 and thus the immediate neighbourhood with countries belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was to be taken

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[15] Following his election, Yanukovych stated that the Ukraine wishes to act as a stabilising power between the East and the West. The first foreign trip of the Ukrainian president lead to Brussels before Moscow, where he named European integration a major foreign policy aim of the country, but he did not want to tighten his relations with NATO. The Russian Black Sea fleet's stay at Sevastopol was extended; in return Russia would decrease the price of Russian natural gas transported to the Ukraine by 30 per cent for 10 years.

[16] There is a feud between the two parties regarding the gas agreement of January 2009, the unification of Naftogaz and Gazprom, and the accession of Ukraine to the Russian-Belorussian-Kazakh customs union. Besides, disagreements occured because of maneuvers in the Black Sea and the appearance of the USS Monterey rocket cruiser in the Black Sea.

for granted, a Strategy Paper on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) based on the 'wider Europe' concept was born, which concerned the Southern, Eastern and later Caucasian neighbourhood of the EU (Commission of the European Communities 2004).

The ENP offers political and economic cooperation in case of the fulfillment of a detailed set of conditions. The main aim of the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy is the stabilisation of the countries in the region through democratisation. However, it must be pointed out that the ENP did not constitute an independent chapter in the budgetary policy of the EU until 2007. Although the 2007-2013 financial perspective does now contain an independent chapter for the purposes of the ENP (the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)), the programme has several weaknesses. First, the biggest weakness of the neighbourhood policy was that the EU as a whole was not able to intervene effectively in favourable or unfavourable processes taking place in its neighbourhood; in the former case let us remember the 2004 Ukrainian Orange Revolution or, in the latter case, the Russian-Ukrainian gas crises taking place during the turn of 2005-2006 and 2008-2009,[17] which caused serious supply problems in the Eastern part of the European Union.

Second, it did not offer a final goal to the participants in a political sense and did not establish institutions jointly operated by the Union and its partners, and thus the ENP remains extremely vulnerable because of the different preferences of the EU member states' neighbourhood policies.

Further, the effectiveness of the programme is weakened by the fact that it does not have a single perception among the member states of the Union, one of the reasons being different perceptions of bilateral relations with Russia, the other being different perspectives and directions of the integration.

The difficulties surrounding the reconciliation of foreign policy interests were explained by many factors on the EU's part, including the weakness of the European Union's foreign policy. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) hardly showed any kind of integration. Many people expected serious changes from the Lisbon Treaty in the area of

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[17] Let us just think about the 4 January 2009 position of the Czech Republic holding the EU's rotating presidency, according to which the Union did not have to intervene as an intermediary, since the EU's energy supplyt was not seriously threatened.

Common Foreign and Security Policy, still no profound reforms came to be adopted. 'Although the pillar system and the accompanying strong fragmentation ceases to exist, the common foreign policy based on the Lisbon Treaty will maintain its fundamentally intergovernmental feature with separate rules for decision-making and operation' (Horváth – Ódor 2010: 300).

The Eastern Partnership serves the deepening of relationships between the European Union and the member states of the former Soviet Union. The project launched by the EU entered into force in Prague on 7 May 2009. The aim of the programme is to tighten the economic and political relationship between the EU and six countries, namely Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. The EU is planning to spend 600 million Euros on the Eastern Partnership Programme until 2013, under which it wishes to stimulate the democratisation process and economic reforms. The ratified document pledged closer political and security policy cooperation in the future, with special regard to the area of energy. In return for reform, Brussels promised to finance the undertakings included in the programme (Council of the European Union 2009). In connection with the programme, Russia is concerned that the European Union is seeking to exclude it from its own sphere of interest, and thus during the ratification of the treaty Moscow expressed its concerns with regards to the Eastern Partnership.

One of the crucial points of Western orientation could be accession to NATO, which many see as the anteroom for EU membership. The formal framework of cooperation was provided by the NATO-Ukraine Charter of Distinguished Partnership, which was created in 1997. This was followed by the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan in 2002 and, as an enhancement, the Intensive Dialogue of 2005. Although accession to the organisation came closer than ever before in the 2008 April summit by opening up the possibility of Ukraine's full membership,[18] the process of integration came to a halt since no membership warranties were given to the country. As a result of the 2008 year-end decision, Ukraine could not cross the threshold of a critical stage, and thus the outlines of Western orientation perspectives seem to fade.

5.3. Russia and Ukraine

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[18] The corresponding document stated that membership depended on the will of the Ukrainian nation.

Russia has a major interest in keeping the countries of the CIS within its own sphere of interest or at least slowing down their moving away. This is not different in the case of Ukraine, either. Russia's national security strategy published in May 2009 mentions close cooperation with the above-mentioned states as the most important priority of Russian foreign policy. 'Russia – 2020' sees economic cooperation with CIS countries on a bilateral and multilateral level as one of the key aims of Russian foreign economic policy. The foreign policy orientation of the Ukraine is influenced by Russia's foreign policy to a great extent. Kiev is dependent on Russia in several respects.

Economically, Russian economic growth starting from 1999 also had a positive effect on the Ukraine. At the beginning of the 2000s there was double-digit GDP growth for a few years, but following the 2004 Orange Revolution the economic upswing slowed down. It could also be attributed to weakening relationships with Russia in the period before the crisis. In the area of politics we can also mention a number of occasions where there was an obvious intervention in Ukrainian politics. In the area of information, the pressure from the Russian media is also significant.

Ukraine is seen by Russia as a key foreign policy actor from two aspects: (1) in a security policy sense, the country is still seen as a buffer zone separating Russia from the West; (2) Ukraine is a significant export transit country for Russia towards the West.

A crucial element of Ukrainian-Russian relationships is the status of the Crimean Peninsula. The area was given away to the then Ukrainian SSR by Khrushchev in 1954 as a 'token of the Russian nation's friendship', in memory of the Treaty of Pereyaslav of 1654. It resulted in serious debates after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The area is important to the Russians not only because of ethnic relationships, but also because of its strategic position. After the Ukraine gained independence, years went by until some sort of settlement was reached on the area. Following a long and tedious procedure the Crimean constitution entered into force in 1998. This strengthened the status of the peninsula as an integral part of the Ukraine and delegated independent powers to the region on a number of issues, but the status of the native Crimean Tatar minority was not addressed.[19]

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[19] The Crimean Tatars live in extremely miserable economic conditions. 60 per cent of them are unemployed, 50 per cent of them are not provided with housing, a quarter of the 291 Crimean Tatar towns lack electricity, 70 per

The status of the former Soviet fleet stationing in the Crimean Peninsula is also a source of conflict between the Ukraine and Russia. Under the Yeltsin-Kuchma agreement of 9 June 1995 first the personnel stationing in Crimea was halved between the two countries. The base could stay in Sevastopol and Moscow is paying a rent for its use. Under the treaty, the Russian fleet could have stationed in the city until 2017, but in 2010 it was extended until 2042.

Besides the problems of the Crimean Peninsula, the most critical policy issue of Ukrainian-Russian relationships is energy, especially the gas industry. The main task and aim of Russia's energy strategy is to secure demand and use revenues generated from ensuring supply for different political and/or economic aims. At the moment Europe is seen as Russia's main gas purchaser and this situation is expected to remain unchanged for a long time to come. Almost three quarters of Russian natural gas is sold in Europe (Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation 2010). This means that the safety of gas trade to Europe is a fundamental interest of Russia, but this is also extremely true for the European Union in respect of imports. [20]

The European Union and Russia are separated from each other by a number of gatekeeper states, the most important of which being the Ukraine, considering that 80-85 per cent of the Russian gas export arrives to Europe flowing through the country. Due to this, the Ukraine is also an uncircumventable factor in the EU's gas import. Thus we can conclude that in the area of energy a number of EU member states, Moscow and Kiev depend on each other to a great extent. The recurring gas crises have shown the serious consequences of the fact that in the Ukraine the same gas-pricing system that is applied in the member states of the European Union did not function while trade took place through intermediary firms with obscure ownership. Although the treaty entering into force on 19 January 2009 seems to resolve both problems, whereby the parties have now switched to a quarterly settlement system similar to that of the member states of the EU and the intermediary role of RosUkrEnergo in gas trade will end, the debate can not be considered concluded at all. The parties most probably entered

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cent do not access to water, 90 per cent have no asphalt roads, 96 per cent have no gas installed and they do not have a sewer system, either. For more details see Sevel (2009).

[20] More details in Virág (2009).

into an agreement which puts an extraordinary burden on the Ukrainian budget and economy, already facing a tough situation while transparency still leaves a lot to be desired.

6. Conclusion

Ukrainian identity-consciousness shows an Eastern-Western duality well-defined in space. Cultural ideas originating from the past militate against one another. The situation is made complicated by the fact that the existing national myths show a less crystallised picture, and the political elite grown close to the economic elite also seems to be interested in the perpetuation of contrasts.

The Ukraine belongs to those young countries, where democratisation and nation-building started approximately at the same time. While in Central Europe the development of nation states was usually preceded by the development of nations, the biggest dilemma in the Ukraine is whether a nation state programme – parallel to the aim of state-building – is able to bring an unfinished nation-building to completion. The question is given: How can the two processes of democratisation and nation-building be aligned with each other? Ukraine fell into a serious trap from the point of view of nation-building since groups of different identitites living in the country and the elite protecting their own interests have diverging ideas about the way it should be done.

According to Linz and Stepan (1996) 'the greater the ratio of the people in a given territorial unit who feel they do not want to be members of the given territorial unit, the harder it will be to strengthen democracy within the unit.' Although many people see the possibility of a peaceful divide in Ukraine, it requires the existence of clear demarcation lines. Although the existence of an Eastern-Western division because of historical and ethnic reasons is clearly visible within the country, in the shorter term, other than further polarisation, we cannot expect the country to be divided into two parts due to the quasi-associate nature of Ukrainian and Russian-identity communities, their similarities and the economic interdependence of the two cultures, i. e. the inherent internal characteristics of the country.

Ukraine sways with enormous amplitude between the EU and Russia. The alternating orientation between the West and the East can be traced back to the superpower ambitions reaching beyond Ukraine. Eventually, internal and external determinants are intertwined and mutually interact with one another.

The Ukraine is still at the stage of putting its national interests into words. But the establishment of a well-described national interest system is hardly achievable without coherent a national identity. However, it means that beyond the occasional agreements emerging on the level of the economic and political elite we can find mostly clan interests rather than national goals. One of the most important factors behind what seems to be the prevailing political elite's unfledged geopolitical strategy and wavering diplomacy is precisely the uncertainty and lacking clarity about national interests and national identity. Thus the fundamental international players have serious thematising power regarding the external orientation of Ukraine.

The most fundamental ones are the United States, the European Union and Russia. Among them recently Russia seems to be the most dominant, trying to bind Ukraine with direct political, economic, historical and information tools to itself. After the 2004 Orange Revolution it managed to keep the Ukraine within its sphere of interest, i.e. by making use of the foreign policy division within the EU and the international involvement of the United States.

Based on this it can be concluded that the four hypotheses determined in the introduction were verified. The cultural ideas stemming from markedly different historical roots in the Eastern and Western parts of Ukraine militate against each other. The economic elite – taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the cultural cleavage – has an interest in perpetuating division in order to obtain/maintain state support. There is no national concept in politics seeking to achieve national reconciliation and rise above differences in sight. The myths on which the identities of the two opposing blocks are based are less crystallised, which has a conflict-mitigating effect.

In my opinion, parallel to the economic crisis reaching Ukraine cultural conflicts will be gradually replaced by economy-related issues. Thus the problems relating to national identity will not be solved, but instead of internal orientations the presence of issues related to stability and security will increase, thus external orientations can become much more practice-oriented. It can be concluded that no civil war-like ethnic conflicts or any serious internal tensile tests will stem from the Ukraine's internal traits alone. The question remains however: What will global politics do about the country?

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