Ethno-Symbolism and Decommunization in the Post-Maidan Ukraine

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Abstract

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Ethno-Symbolism and Decommunization in the Post-Maidan Ukraine

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Laura Osterman

This paper closely examines trends surrounding Ukrainian nationalism following the events of the Maidan Revolution, and applies modernist nationalist thinking, including Benedict Anderson's theory of Imagined Communities and Anthony Smith's theory of Ethno-Symbolism, to explain how the Ukrainian Nation is fundamentally changing at a core level. Anderson's theory states that modern nations are defined by perceived shared connections between each individual member of a nation, and that these connections are often dictated by language, religion and other cultural icons. The Ukrainian nation has been under the control of Russia and the USSR for the better part of the last 1,000 years, and as a result what defines the Ukrainian nation in modern times is controversial even amongst Ukrainians. This controversy has been brought to its head by the annexation of Crimea as well as surging trends of Russian irredentism. The perceived existential threat posed to Ukraine by an uptick in Russian nationalism has acted as a catalyst driving the Maidan revolution. In short, the new Ukrainian nation is defined by a diminishing of Russian influence, and the removal of the vestiges of Ukraine's Russian past. The Ukrainian Rada has attempted to pass laws marginalizing the use of the Russian language, the Holodomor has been officially recognized as deliberate Soviet genocide of the Ukrainian people, Soviet-era statues glorifying Lenin and other Soviet leaders have been torn down in their thousands, Soviet era place names have been renamed to erase any vestiges of their Soviet legacy, and the image of the controversial nationalist Stepan Bandera is rapidly rising as the face of the new movement. Ethno-Symbolism is at the heart of these changes, and the Ukrainian Nation is moving to redefine itself as a new independent nation, distant from its Russian past.

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Table of Contents

Introduction **1**

Imagined Communities **6**

Defining the Ukrainian Nation **9**

Stepan Bandera **21**

Lenin Statues and Imagined Communities **25**

Counter-points **35**

Conclusion **37**

Works Cited **39**

Appendix 1: Other Figures **43**

List of Figures

FIGURES

Figure

1. Actions against Soviet monuments prior to the Maidan 28

2. Actions against Soviet monuments following the Maidan 28

3. Historical territorial additions to the Ukrainian nation 43

4. Results of the 2010 Ukrainian Elections by *Oblast'* 44

5. Ethno-Linguist Map of Ukraine..... 45

Introduction

In November of 2013 protests swept through the Maidan square in the heart of Kiev. Outwardly these protests were in direct opposition of the Yanukovych government's decision to abandon an EU association agreement in favor of closer economic ties with Russia. While economic issues were one of the main catalysts for the protests, underlying themes of ethnic nationalism and national identity soon hijacked the Maidan movement. Within several months the protests spread from being Kiev centric, to a nationwide movement. Yanukovych was forced from power and counter-protests in the south and east soon emerged. By May of 2014 Crimea had seceded and been annexed by the Russian Federation, and a civil war was raging in the east. While the events of the Maidan may seem distant and unrelated to people not directly involved in the conflict, Ukraine carries massive geopolitical significance in the "second cold war" between Russia and the west. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former secretary of state and a prominent American geostrategist, has referred to Ukraine as a geopolitical pivot:

> Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire (Brzezinski 1997, 46).

In short, he who controls Ukraine, also controls all of Eurasia. A major shift in Ukraine's political stance could have a massive impact on the geostrategic relations between Russia and the West. Ukraine has played a key role in shaping the formation of the Russian empire and her successor states, and in turn is central to contemporary Russian strategic thinking. It is difficult to quantify the importance Ukraine holds to the Russian federation, as there are numerous facets in play. There are strong cultural connections resulting from the idea that Ukraine is a historic member of the *russkiy mir*, as well as the strategic importance, both economically and militarily, that Ukraine plays in Russian nationalist thinking. Ukraine, via the Crimean peninsula, provides Russia with access to an ice free deep water port, which has historically been in critically short supply. The port of Sevastopol allows the Russian Navy to maintain a strong presence in the Black Sea, which in turn provides Russia direct access to the Mediterranean and numerous shipping lanes that dominate world trade. The Black Sea Fleet has also been active in supporting Russia's ongoing Syria campaign, which serves to demonstrate the strategic military advantages garnered from a strong Russian presence on the Crimean peninsula. If Russia were to lose its assets in Ukraine, it would be cut off from any direct economic and militaristic contact with all of southern Europe and the Middle East, which is not a loss the Russian leaders are willing to take lightly. How Ukraine falls politically could dictate the fate of Russia and NATO for years to come, and at the heart of Ukrainian politics is the convoluted topic of Ukrainian nationalism, which is undergoing a massive change catalyzed by the Maidan Revolution.

Prior to the break of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine's history of self rule has been very sparse, to say the least. While scholars of Ukrainian history will be quick to

point out the numerous ways in which Ukraine has continued to develop as a nation over this time, it has spent the majority of its history under foreign rule. Starting with the Mongol invasion in the early 13th century, followed by a stint under the rule of Poland Lithuania before finally being assimilated into the Russian empire and later the Soviet Union, Kiev has been under foreign domination for the better part of the last 800 years. As a result of this, the core foundations of the Ukrainian nation were often left to debate, and what actually constituted the Ukrainian nation could vary wildly depending on who was asked. As a result of this, the Ukrainian nation has often been defined based on its most unique core trait, its language. The events of the Maidan would prove to be a catalyst that would prompt an evolution of the Ukrainian nation. This nationalist shift has been brought about by efforts to distance Ukraine from its Russian dominated past, and in its stead present a new reimagined image of an independent Ukraine. The destruction of thousands of Ukraine's Lenin statues is a prominent reflection of this nationalist shift, and also proves to be a realization of Andersonian ideas of imagined communities and the postmodernist approach to nationalism. This change in Ukrainian nationalist thinking will play a massive role in shaping the future of Ukraine in the years to come, and will serve to heighten the differences between the two warring factions in the Civil War that is tearing Ukraine apart. In short, the main argument of this paper is that in the events following the Maidan movement, the Ukrainian nation has undergone a nationalist shift to reimagine Ukraine as an independent state, void of any Russian control or influence. In order to understand these current events in Ukraine, it is important to also understand the themes of nationalism that are driving the movement.

Background

To an outside observer, what constitutes Ukraine and the Ukrainian nation may seem relatively straightforward, but when one digs deeper the topic becomes ever more convoluted. As highlighted in great part by the actions of the Russian Federation and the numerous breakaway groups in the south and east of the country, what actually defines Ukraine, and by extension the Ukrainian people, is still up for some debate.

The concepts of nations and nationalism are not as straightforward as is often portrayed in the popular understanding. The term 'nation' is often falsely used interchangeably with the concept of 'state,' leading to nationalism often being confused with patriotism. In academic terms the definition of nation can be a convoluted subject, however, the term 'nation' generally refers to a group of people, rather than the state or institution the nation is part of. A state, on the other hand, is defined as an artificially constructed form of government. The concept of a nation state, meaning a state that consists of one nation, is theoretically possible, but does not exist in practice. When addressing nationalism it is important to understand the differences between a state and a nation, and furthermore the differences between nationalism and patriotism. Patriotism, for lack of a better term, is love of a state, while nationalism is love of a nation.

There are many different types of nationalism, and interpretations can vary drastically. There are two main schools of nationalistic thinking, primordialism and modernism (Flint and Taylor 2007). The primordialist view of nationalism is that nations have their origins in antiquity. Primordialist nationalism places a strong emphasis on

ethnicity and languages. Nations are viewed as being natural and ever evolving. The evolution of a modern German nation from a collection of ancient Germanic tribes is often given as evidence of primordialist nationalism in play (Flint and Taylor 2007, 195). Similar examples can be found in most European nations. Any number of factors, such as geographic determinism, can influence how nations have evolved over time. A contemporary example of primordialist nationalism in play can be found in the use of archeology in the Israel-Palestine conflict (Gori 2013). Both sides have adopted primordialist nationalistic thinking as justification for their respective side's position. Archeology is frequently used as evidence of each side's ancestral claim to the region, as well as historical justification for contemporary territorial claims.

The modernist approach to nationalism is that nations are a modern construction, only emerging in recent times. The concept of invented traditions is one of the hallmarks of this school of thought (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Perhaps the best example of this is the case of the Scottish kilt. Kilts have been adopted as a key tradition of the Scottish nation and are often portrayed in popular media, most notably by the movie *Braveheart*, as having a long running history. In reality the kilt did not appear in Scottish culture until the mid 19th century, and there are no historical records of Tartan patterns being used amongst the Scottish clans (Flint and Taylor 2007, 201; Doyle and Villela 2006, 34; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). This notion is at odds with primordialist thinking as rather than traditions evolving over time, they are artificially created (Gellner 1983). During the industrialization period of the 19th century many countries either gained independence or became unified for the first time. Italy and Germany are two prime examples of the latter. Prior to unification these countries were

a collection of city states with varying cultures and languages. While they shared many commonalities, there were still many significant differences between the varying regions. The creation of a unifying national identity would be crucial for the success of these newly unified states, and thus was imposed from the top down. Benedict Anderson took the modernist idea of an artificially created nation one step further with his theory on imagined communities.

Imagined Communities

Anderson's theory of imagined communities is a key sub-element of modernist nationalistic thinking, and is important in the understanding of current nationalistic trends in Ukraine. Fundamentally Anderson states that nations and nationalism are artificial constructs, created by the supposed nations themselves. In any given nation, it would be impossible for any one person to personally know everyone else. This forces the members of the nation to imagine that they hold some form of deep cultural connection to the multitudes of people they will never meet (Anderson 1991). The community, or nation, is not a real community in the general sense of the word, as it is simply far too large to act as one. A true community can only exist at the scale of experience, the smallest scale of geographic analysis. As the scale widens, increased assumptions are made about the other members of the imagined community. Anderson argues that in ancient times communities were largely defined by religion (Anderson

page 13). People who shared a common religion had a strong cultural connection, even if they had nothing else in common.

As Europe changed during the times of the enlightenment and industrial revolution, the religious commonality that defined nations ceased to exist, and the modern concept of nationalism came to the fore (Anderson 1991, 11). Anderson cautions against simplifying imagined communities as growing out of religion. Anderson posits that the two greatest factors in the creation of modern nation, are novels and newspapers (Anderson 1991, 22). Using Anderson's example, an American will never meet the (at the time he wrote) 240,000[1] million other Americans that he/she lives with, but by reading a newspaper he/she can be informed of the activity of his/her fellow community members (Anderson 1991, 26). In the same source Anderson also cites how Jose Rizal's novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, proved to be key element in the creation of Filipino nationalism by creating a common unifying factor for all Filipinos. There are several key takeaways from Anderson's theory of imagined communities. The first is that nations are arbitrary constructs that only exist in the imagination. This means that nations can easily be artificially created, changed and even destroyed. The second takeaway is the implication that nations are strongly tied to a state. With a few, mostly religious, exceptions, modern nations are all connected to a state. These two takeaways are crucial to understanding the role nationalism played in the current conflict in Ukraine.

The most glaring complication of Anderson's theories is the fact that Ukraine has never existed as an independent state, in the modern sense of the term, for any

[1] This number was taken directly from Anderson, and is no longer an accurate reflection of the current population of the United States

significant? length of time prior to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. H However, before this period there was clearly a pre-existing notion of a Ukrainian nation. There were multiple independence movements amongst Ukrainian nationalists, and by the 1920s, ironically Stalin of all people, would take a leading role in shaping the formation of the modern Ukrainian state with his policies of indigenization. During the times of the Imperial Russian Empire, the tsarist government attempted to erase any signs of an independent Ukrainian nation (Kuzio 1998, 1-27). Ukraine was known as “Little Russia” and the Ukrainian language was only considered to be a sub-dialect of Russian. It was not until Stalin took power in the mid 1920s that Ukraine was officially and publicly recognized as being an independent nation. However, the boost Stalin gave to Ukrainian nationalists was quickly taken away as by the 1930s he reversed many of his policies out of fear that the Ukrainian nationalist movement would undermine the stability of the Soviet state. While Stalin certainly helped lay the groundwork for the establishment of a modern Ukrainian state, ultimately, along with future leaders of the USSR, he would greatly hinder the growth of the Ukrainian nation in the long run. While the Ukrainian nation existed independently prior to formation of the Ukrainian state, the question being asked and addressed by the Maidan is, “what exactly constituted the Ukrainian nation?” This question in and of itself is far too complicated to concisely answer, although the topic has been addressed before in scholarly work.

Defining the Ukrainian Nation

With origins dating back over a thousand years to time of the Kievan Rus', the Ukrainian nation has a rich history from which modern nationalists can draw inspiration. From a Ukrainian nationalist perspective, it is unfortunate that the contemporary Russian nation also traces its roots back to the dawn of Kievan Rus', and Russian nationalists are doing everything in their power to blur the lines between Russian and Ukrainian history into a single unified entity. TThe Maidan nationalist movement has taken this as its core view as they attempt to establish Ukraine's credentials as an independent nation, while severing any ties it once had to the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. This goal is made incredibly difficult, however, by a resurgence of Russian irredentism.

One prevailing primordialist ideal amongst Russian nationalists is that of the *triedinyi russkii narod* (All-Russian nation). This irredentist ideal states that the true Russian nation consists of all the original territories and people that made up the original Rus'. These territories are inhabited by the Russians, Little Russians (Ukrainians) and White Russians (Belorussians). This extreme ideal goes so far as to state that Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are not members of a greater Slavic fraternity, but rather one and the same people. Concepts of Russian irredentism have already started to permeate the Russian blogosphere. One political scientist from the People's Diplomacy Foundation writes,

> Если же к постсоветским гражданам так и не придёт понимание того, что по отношению к великороссам жители Белоруссии и Донбасса никакие не «братские народы», а тот же самый народ, то Россия потеряет эти территории точно так же, как потеряла (к сожалению, видимо, уже навсегда) «братские» Киев, Полтаву и Чернигов (Minskiy 2017).

> If the post-Soviet citizens do not come to an understanding that, in relation to the Great Russians, the inhabitants of Belarus and the Donbas are not any "fraternal peoples" but the same people, Russia will lose these territories in the same way as it lost (unfortunately, apparently , already forever) "brotherly" Kiev, Poltava and Chernigov (Minskiy 2017).

While the words of just one blogger may seem inconsequential in the grander scheme of geopolitics, this sentiment is intensively re-enforced on a statewide level. High-ranking Russian government officials have gone on record referring to areas of Eastern Ukraine as historically Russian regions (Moore 2014), while Ukraine itself is often viewed as being “Russian lands” in the Russian media (Kashin 2014). In a 2008 meeting with George Bush, Putin himself is alleged to have said, “You need to understand, George, Ukraine is not even a state (Allenova et al 2008).” The narrative

driven by the Russian state has started to heavily influence the perceptions of the average Russians. This creates a positive feedback mechanism in which popular perception is dictated by state policy, but state policy in turn is empowered by a favorable popular perception. In order to understand the origins of modern Russian irredentism towards its former territories, Ukraine in particular, a deeper understanding of Ukrainian history is a must.

The core concept of Russian irredentism lies in the common origin of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples in Kievan Rus'. Before the rise of Muscovy and before the Mongol invasion, there was a time in which in there was only one Russian people. In his book, *Imperial Gamble*, Marvin Kalb chronicles the history of Ukraine, dating back to the times of the Kiev Rus'. It was only after the Mongol invasion that led to the fall of Kiev and in turn the eventual rise of Muscovy, that a major schism started to emerge between the various East Slavic peoples (Kalb 2015). The Mongol invasion proved to be a disaster for the Russian people as it subjected them to centuries of harsh foreign rule, setting them back technologically compared to Western Europe. Under the Mongol yoke, many of the Russian princes showed a reluctant willingness to work and cooperate with the Mongol invaders, and as long as they continued to pay tributes, they were rewarded with limited autonomy and the right to self-govern local affairs. After the Mongol yoke was finally overthrown, Muscovy stood strong as the center of Russian power, while Kiev was a mere shadow of its former glory. What ensued was nearly 500 years of a Moscow-centric domination over all the lands of greater Russia, including the territory of present-day Ukraine and Belarus. However, many Russian nationalists have not forgotten the importance of Kiev as the birthplace of the Russian peoples, and many

still consider it to be a fundamentally Russian city (Kamenskiy 2016). Russian nationalists don't stop at pointing to the common ancestry, but go even deeper into history in their attempts to portray Ukraine as an "artificial nation." One way in which they go about this is by portraying Ukraine as a "gifted state."

The concept of Ukraine as a gifted state refers to the idea that the territory of Ukraine is not naturally Ukrainian, but rather foreign lands gifted to the modern Ukrainian state so as to form an artificial state. A popular meme has surfaced, depicting a map of Ukraine broken down by how and when each piece of land was "gifted" to Ukraine (figure 3). The map claims that large swaths of Western Ukraine were taken from Poland and then given as a gift to Ukraine by Stalin. Similarly, the Donbass is depicted as a gift from Lenin, the Crimean peninsula is a gift from Khrushchev, and the entirety of central Ukraine was gifted at one point or another by the Russian tsars in the 17th and 18th centuries. This kind of rhetoric is meant to delegitimize the status of contemporary Ukraine. The message is that Ukraine consists of Russian lands and is inhabited by Russian people. The implication is that there is no need to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, because Ukraine had no territory to begin with. In fact, this very same logic was used in large part as justification for the annexation of Crimea. In 1954, Nikita Khrushchev administratively made Crimea a part of the Ukrainian SSR for purely bureaucratic reasons. At the time the decision did not garner much attention, as the Ukrainian SSR and Russian SFSR were both a part of the larger USSR, meaning the change was only felt at a bureaucratic level and had little to no impact on the local population. This would change after the breakup of the Soviet Union when Crimea found itself completely separated from Russia. In 1992, Russia condemned

Khrushchev's decision to administratively move Crimea, and the Russian Federal Assembly passed a bill declaring the move unconstitutional (Schmemann 1992). This law sets a very dangerous precedent. If the Russian government can retroactively take back the decision to gift Crimea to Ukraine, then where is the line drawn? The fear is that the same arguments could in turn be used as justification for the annexation of the Donbass, as well as other Ukrainian territories. Due to the potential threat posed to the modern Ukrainian state by Russian hyper-nationalism following the Maidan revolution, the need to establish what constitutes the Ukrainian nation has risen to the fore.

Amongst western scholars, a great emphasis has been placed on the role of language in the formation of the Ukrainian nation. One work done by Graham Smith and Peter Jackson looks extensively at a Ukrainian diaspora living in Bradford, England, and tries to determine how this group of people stayed connected to their Ukrainian roots despite being physically separated from their homeland. As described by a 2nd generation Ukrainian who was interviewed in the study,

> The Church also preserves the culture. It has the Ukrainian language, it retains the old calendar, the consecration of the Ukrainian Easter eggs at Easter, the food, the things that go on at Christmas, the masses and the various other . . . blessings that go with the Church, are all . . . have got at least a spiritual Ukrainianism in it, that every Ukrainian can experience, and therefore I think the Church is very, very important within that . . . within the community (Smith and Jackson 1999, 372).

For the diaspora in Bradford, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was one of the primary symbols of their nationhood, as it perceived a wide range of traits that the diaspora considered to be Ukrainian. It is also worth noting that in the same article, several people said they wanted their children to grow up speaking Ukrainian as a first language as a means to stay close to their roots. However, this can also complicate our understanding of the Ukrainian nation, as like with much of Ukraine's history, Ukrainian Orthodoxy is nearly indistinguishable from the Russian Orthodox Church. Prior to 1992 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was officially a part of the Russian Church, distinguished only by an administrative asterisk. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, a section of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church broke away from its Russian parent under the leadership of Patriarch Filaret, however, this was largely a political move and not reflective of any changes made to religious practices of the Church itself. A large section of the Ukrainian Church remained affiliated with Moscow, as a majority of Ukrainians remained members of the Moscow Patriarchate. However, following the events of the Maidan there has been a large shift, with numerous Ukrainians abandoning the Moscow Patriarchate in favor of the Kievan Patriarchate (Markovich 2016). If what it means to be Ukrainian is to be Orthodox, the line again has become blurred as Russian nationalists would contend that there is no difference between the two.

Another scholar, Ani Sargsyan, also placed great emphasis on the role of the language in the creation of the modern Ukrainian nation. Sargsyan posited that the Maidan revolution and resulting civil war was primarily driven by linguistic nationalism

(Sargsyan 2014). Sargsyan focused on the linguistic division of the country. Ukraine is an ethnically divided state, with large minorities of ethnic Russian speaking populations in the south and east of the country. The initial backlash to the Maidan protests largely came from the Russian speaking minority populations in the east of the country who were opposed to the removal of the Yanukovych government (Young 2015). Viktor Yanukovych had won the 2010 presidential elections leaning heavily on support from the eastern regions. As a result of this, the early revolutionary discourse was largely focused on ethnic and in turn linguistic grounds.

The development of language, and by extension a national literature, is crucial to the formation of the modern nations when looked at through the lens of Anderson's imagined communities. As was previously mentioned, Anderson specifically cites the works of Jose Rizal as playing a crucial role in the development of Filipino nationalism, and there are numerous other cases throughout history of authors playing a significant role in the creation of a national identity. However, when dealing with the topics pertaining to the Ukrainian nation, things can be far more complicated. Ukraine has produced its fair share of talented and notable individuals throughout its history, however, due to policies of Russianization, many of these figures have lost their Ukrainian identity. Perhaps the most notable example of such a figure is the author Nikolai Gogol. Nikolai Gogol is a topic of much contention between Russian and Ukrainian Nationalists. Born in a small Ukrainian Cossack village to Ukrainian parents, Gogol is ethnically Ukrainian in every sense of the word. That being said, during the time of Gogol's birth in the early 19th century Ukraine was firmly under the control of the Russian empire. Gogol's talents as a writer were in lesser demand in Ukraine, and it

was not until he moved to St. Petersburg that his career took off. Almost exclusively writing in Russian and living in St. Petersburg, Gogol's legacy is widely remembered as one of the great Russian writers. Gogol is perhaps the clearest example of a blurring of the lines of between the Ukrainian and Russian nations during the 19th century. In an essay on Ukrainian nationalism, Paul Robert Magocsi argues that during the early 19th century it was possible to be both Russian and Ukrainian at the same time (Magocsi 1989,51-52). Despite the fundamental differences between the Russia and Ukraine people at the time, they shared a common society and political hierarchy brought about by Russian domination of Ukraine. When translating this concept into contemporary politics things become far more challenging as Gogol is a symbol of both the Russian and Ukrainian nations. In a Maidan movement predominantly focused on establishing a new Ukrainian nation, independent from Russia, this can pose a problem, and as a result another prominent Ukrainian author has been brought to the fore.

While Nikolai Gogol's image as a Ukrainian writer has largely been superseded by his Russian legacy, the same cannot be said for Taras Shevchenko. Much akin to Nikolai Gogol, Shevchenko was born in a small Ukrainian village before moving to St. Petersburg to pursue his career as a writer. However, it was at this point where Taras Shevchenko's path diverged from Gogol. Shevchenko often wrote using Ukrainian, and was derided by the critic Vissarion Belinsky for his attempts to raise Ukrainian "peasant" language to the level of classical literature (Makarenko 2016). Shevchenko was an outspoken critic of the Russian treatment of Ukraine, and was imprisoned in 1847 by Tsar Nicholas the 1st. While there were almost certainly ulterior anti-Ukrainian motives behind Shevchenko's imprisonment, it is also important to understand the situation

surrounding the Tsar at the time. Nicholas I came to power in spite of the Decembrist revolution, and took a far more authoritarian approach to leadership than his predecessors, most notably in the form of strict censorship. Dozens of authors, foreign and Russian born alike were imprisoned for any criticism directed at the government. As a result of this it is difficult to quantify how much Shevchenko's imprisonment resulted from the Tsar's own paranoia, or an institutional bias against Ukraine. The fact that Shevchenko was released soon after the death of Nicholas I implies the former might have been a driving factor, but that does not discount all other possibilities. Shevchenko's legacy has proven to be crucial in the development of the modern Ukrainian nation. Being one of the first major authors to write in Ukrainian, he helped elevate the status of the language, and legitimized it in the eyes of many as being more than a mere dialect. Shevchenko's poetry was also heavily influenced by his experiences growing up and living in Ukrainian villages, and as a result it can be said that his poetry is a clear reflection of Ukrainian culture. While literature has very little to do outwardly with the Maidan movement, comparing and contrasting Gogol with Shevchenko raises numerous parallels with contemporary nationalist viewpoints. Shevchenko, as a pioneering champion of the Ukrainian language and arguably the first notable *Ukrainian* author, is a concise example of an Andersonian national poet. Shevchenko's literature is a central part of the media described by Anderson that acts as a central foundation for the imagined connections of the Ukrainian nation. Gogol, on the other hand, is a far more controversial figure, especially when looked at through a Russian irredentist perspective. Despite being born a Ukrainian, Gogol died effectively a Russian, which Russian irredentists would argue is living proof of the unity of the

Ukrainian and Russian nations. In order to establish credence as a nation in the face of potential Russian annexation, the Maidan movement has taken on the role of not just defining the Ukrainian nation, but also distancing Ukraine as much as possible from its Russian past, in part by finding evidence for a distinct Ukrainian language, culture and history.

The post-Euromaidan movement in Ukraine has seen extensive efforts to erase all Russian and communist influences from Ukraine's history. The reasoning behind this is multifaceted. Russia, Putin in particular, has taken on the role of being the villain in Euromaidan Ukraine. The Russian annexation of Crimea coupled with frequent government claims of Russian invasions in the east are the primary reasons for this. Additionally one of the primary goals of the initial Euromaidan movement was to move closer to western Europe, both culturally and economically (Burridge 2015). Russia was viewed as the status quo, and coupled with the corrupt Yanukovych government, as the main obstacle opposing the Maidan movement. This created an "us versus them" mentality in the revolutionary government in Kiev, which can be reflected in the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO). When counter-protest movements occupied government buildings in the south and east of Ukraine, the Ukrainian government sent in military personnel to oppose the protesters in what was known as the Anti-Terrorist Operation. The decision to label the Anti-Maidan protesters as "terrorists" and "Russian provocateurs" is a clear reflection of this mentality. While Russia certainly played an antagonizing role in the counter-Maidan movement, the majority of protesters were observed to be local residents who felt disenfranchised with the principles of the Maidan movement (Sakwa 2015, 155). In addition to Russian resentment, many areas of

western Ukraine harbored strong anti-Communist sentiments. Amongst some Ukrainians the Holodomor of the 1930's is viewed as a deliberate attempt at a Ukrainian genocide by the Soviet, and by extension Russian, state (Holodomor 2015). These sentiments came to the fore in the post-Maidan Ukraine, and were some of the primary driving factors behind the push to create a reimagined Ukrainian nation, separate from all Russian and communist legacies.

The Ukrainian government itself has been actively engaging in the push to create a strong national identity. Apart from the anti-Russian rhetoric, they have been actively pushing legislation designed to a create a stronger independent Ukrainian nation. Perhaps the most well-known instance was the supposed attempts to remove Russian as an official state language. The bill itself was very convoluted and never adopted, but took center stage in the propaganda war that was surrounding the conflict at the time. Many pro-Russian newspapers adopted the line that the removal of Russian as an official language was an attempt to repress the Russian speaking minority (RT 2014). Pro-Maidan press on the other hand insisted that bill was simply an attempt to reform an outdated and poorly written piece of legislation (Euromaidan Press 2016). In many ways the truth is less important than how the truth is perceived, and in this case the bill proved to be a very divisive issue. Coupled with statements attacking Russians made by prominent Ukrainian political figures (Gorshkov and Presse 2015), the language bill is widely cited as a significant catalyst for the tensions that would arise in the east. Contrary to popular perception, language in and of itself plays less of a role than ethnicity in defining policy positions of Ukrainians. Independent survey research has shown that there is little difference between Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians and

Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the governing of political opinions, instead the largest gap falls under ethnic lines (Toal and O'Loughlin 2015). This idea in and of itself raises questions of Ukrainian national identity, as ideas of a linguistic based Ukrainian nation have been blurred during Soviet times. Consisting of 15 different republics, and hundreds of unique ethnic groups with individual languages, the Soviet Union was an incredibly diverse state. In order to effectively govern, a lingua franca was created, and in is this case that language was to be Russian. The Soviet Government pursued policies of russification and russianization in an effort to create a strong central Soviet identity, as opposed to individual national identities held by the multitudes of ethnic groups. Russian was taught in all schools, and it soon became a must to speak Russian fluently in order to have any chance of advancing far politically. This phenomenon can be compared extensively to the idea of linguistic imperialism as coined by Robert Philipson, which looked at how English became such a dominant language (Philipson 2009). Some areas of Eastern Ukraine, the Donbass in particular, still harbor a strong Soviet identity. One of the most ambitious goals of the Soviet system was to create a strong sense of a Soviet identity, at the expense of ethnicity. These ideals are still held with some traction in the eastern areas of Ukraine. In the years after the Maidan revolution increased awareness about the subtle differences between language and ethnicity has been made, and there has been an increased effort to include Russian-speaking Ukrainians into the new Ukrainian nation. By doing so they are taking the foreign concept of Soviet identity, and attempting to make it their own by erasing all Russian stigma from the idea. As mentioned previously, the desire to

distance themselves from the idea of merely being a Russian puppet has been at the center of the new Ukrainian nationalist movement.

Ukrainian history can be a divisive topic: multiple interpretations mixed with modern politics has led to history taking an important role in Ukrainian nationalism. One of the key conflict points is the notion of the independence of the Ukrainian nation. A concept of Ukrainian history popular among Russian irredentists is the idea that Ukraine is not natural, and instead is a historic part of Russia that was only artificially created in recent times for bureaucratic reasons. As a response, perhaps out of a perceived notion for survival, in addition to efforts to create a more "western image," in Ukraine a strong effort has been made to distance Ukraine from Russia. One method of doing so is with history, and one of the most controversial aspects of Ukrainian history is that of Stepan Bandera.

Stepan Bandera

Stepan Bandera was a Ukrainian nationalist who lead a partisan group that fought against both the USSR and Germany during the Second World War. His legacy has been a contentious matter in contemporary Ukraine, and is not an issue unique to the post-Maidan scene. A series of laws, decrees and promises going back the breakup of the Soviet Union have both condemned Bandera as an anti-Semitic terrorist, and praised him as a Ukrainian national hero (Marples 2006). The debate in Ukraine is largely divided along east-west lines, with many cities in the west, L'viv in particular,

naming streets after him and building statues in his honor. In the east Bandera is viewed much more negatively. Bandera's grandson once said:

> …even now, 44 years after his assassination, the name ‘‘Bandera’’ is used to frighten people, particularly in Eastern Ukraine. There needs to be a public education campaign conducted throughout the country that will give people the full story of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists – Ukrainian Insurgent Army (OUN – UPA), not just the myths (Marples 2006, 556).

Bandera’s legacy has gained an aura of negativity amongst many in the east for his ultra nationalist views, anti-Semitic beliefs, and the fact that he fought against the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Bandera’s popularity in certain areas of Ukraine, especially in the west of the country, stems from a strictly nationalistic viewpoint. For many Bandera was a true Ukrainian patriot, and as a figure he serves to highlight the historical divide between Russians and Ukrainians. Bandera’s very name carries anti-Russian connotation, which is in part why he has posthumously played such an important role in the post-Maidan conflicts. Many of the far-right Ukrainian nationalist groups venerate him, and hold parades in his honor (AP 2016). On the flip side any glorification of Bandera is touted as “evidence” that the Maidan was nothing more than a fascist takeover by the anti-Maidan press. The pro-Maidan areas of Ukraine are frequently referred to as “Banderastan” by the opposition (The Saker 2014). This

debate serves to show how Ukrainian nationalism is trying to distance itself culturally and historically from its shared Russian past, and Bandera is central to that movement.

The origins of Bandera can be traced to the end of the First World War where Ukraine enjoyed a brief period of independence during the collapse of the Russian empire. This period, lasting for roughly four years between 1917 and 1921, was characterized by a bloody war between an emerging Ukrainian state and the Soviet Union. Ultimately the Ukrainian independence movement championed by Symon Petliura was put down, and Ukraine was re-assimilated into the Moscow lead Soviet state. This was a divisive period in Ukrainian history, as the country was torn asunder by numerous factions, each seeking to impose their will on the future of Ukraine. In 1917 and 1918 Ukraine was largely under the occupation of German Empire, who were more than happy to lend token support to the fledgling Ukrainian independence movement if it meant finding another ally in their war against the triple entente. However, 1918 brought about the German capitulation and the start of the Polish-Ukrainian war as the two countries fought heavily over the disputed border region of Galicia. The war eventually ended in a Polish victory, and Galicia was left under Polish control. Galicia, historically being a border region, has been a hotbed for nationalism, and would prove to be the birthplace of Bandera and the OUN (Organization for Ukrainian Nationalists). Bandera first gained notoriety for his role in planning the assassinations of the Polish minister of the interior, Bronisław Pieracki in the fall of 1930, followed up shortly with the assassination of a Soviet diplomat in 1933. The assassinations were done in retaliation for the Polish actions taken against Ukrainian nationalists in Galicia, and then later as retaliation for the Holodomor taking place in

Soviet controlled Ukraine (Plokhy 2015, 351). In addition to opposing Polish and Soviet rule over Ukraine, Bandera was a known anti-Semite who briefly collaborated with Germans during the first months of the Second World War. Bandera's motivations for working with the Nazis were misguided in the sense that he hoped to use the war as a vehicle for Ukrainian independence. However, it was soon revealed the Germans had other plans for Ukraine, and Bandera turned against his former partners. Bandera was imprisoned by the Germans in 1941, and spent the majority of the war in a concentration camp. While Bandera has been rightfully condemned as an extremist and an anti-Semite post-mortem, his role as a nationalist has been revered by many in the west of Ukraine, especially in modern times. While many Russians and eastern Ukrainians point first and foremost to the fact that Bandera collaborated, however briefly, with the Nazis, and label him as a traitor and criminal, the prevailing idea in the west of the country, especially in and around the areas of L'viv and Galicia, highlight the fact that Bandera eventually turned on the Germans, and was solely operating out of the desire to achieve independence.

Bandera's resurgence in popularity in the Maidan era can be explained by the parallels between the current Ukrainian nationalist movement, and the struggle undertaken by the OUN in the 30's. Bandera is symbolic for an independent Ukraine, one without Polish, Jewish and most importantly Russian influence. According to Anderson the defining characteristic of a nation is a shared common connection, and popular historical figures, and the memory and mythologization of them, can serve the purpose of establishing and maintaining that connection. However, Bandera also provides numerous complications to this ideal due in large part to the controversy

surrounding his name. In a 2014 poll, the Kyiv Post reported that roughly 76% of respondents in Western Ukraine viewed Bandera positively, while 79% of respondents from the Donbass held negative perceptions of him (Kyiv Post 2014). This extreme divide in opinion between Western and Eastern Ukraine is heavily mirrored by the 2010 election results. Viktor Yanukovych received upwards of 90% of the vote in the Donbass and Crimea, while receiving less than 10% of the vote in the far western oblasts (Figure 4). Furthermore, when comparing the voting patterns to a linguistic map of Ukraine, a clear correlation emerges where Russian speaking regions were more likely to vote for Yanukovych (Figure 5). When comparing the extreme differences between the east and west of the country, it becomes easy to understand why the results of the Maidan ended in civil war. Many of the core principles of the movement were heavily at odds with the eastern Ukrainian view of the nation, and a civil war was inevitable. Russian irredentist-driven interventionism certainly played a catalyzing role in the conflict, but the extreme differences between east and west Ukraine are plain to see. These differences are not just symbolic, but in many cases take on a physical manifestation, as I show in the following section.

Lenin Statues and Imagined Communities

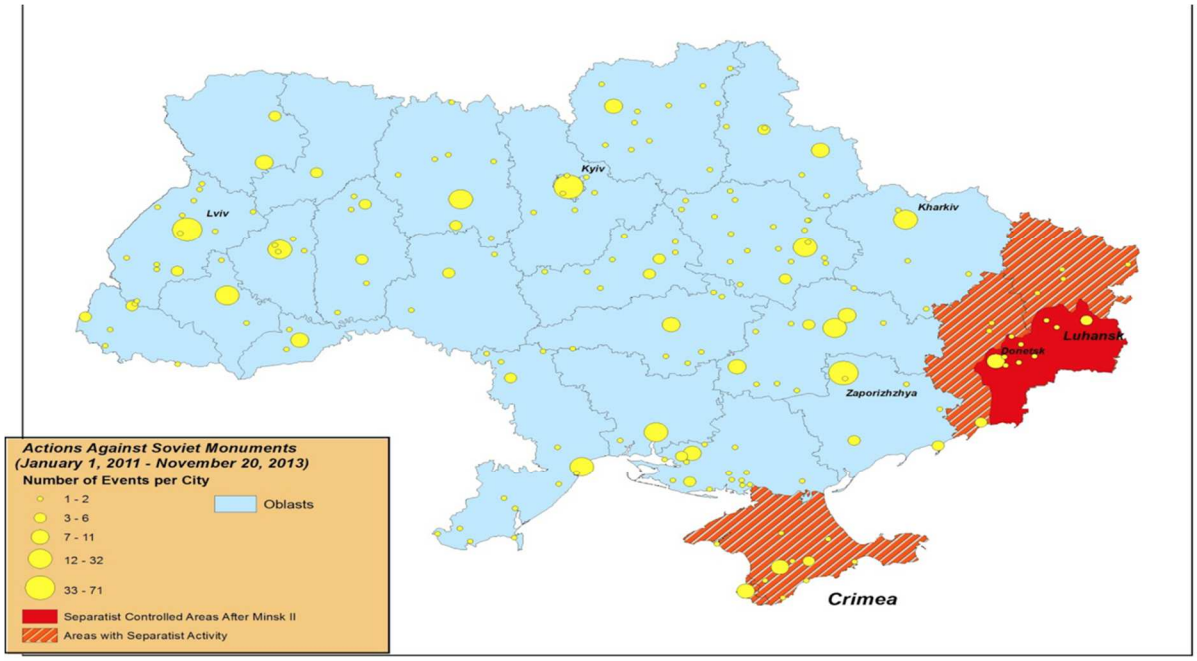
During the time of the Soviet Union, it was a common practice to place statues of prominent Soviet figures in every city, village or town. Vladimir Lenin was one of the most prominent Soviet figures, and as a result his legacy has lived on the longest, with thousands of Lenin statues dotting the landscape of the post-Soviet republics. In 1991,

the year that Ukraine gained full independence from the Soviet Union, there was estimated to be over 5,500 statues of Lenin in Ukraine (Ukrainian Week 2015). The role of Lenin statues, and national symbols as a whole, in the shaping of the Ukrainian nation is often understated in public discourse. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian nationalists immediately began tearing down Lenin statues across Ukraine. When coupled with Anderson's theory of imagined communities, this is a very symbolic act. While Anderson placed great emphasis on language, literature and religion, national symbols also have their role to play.

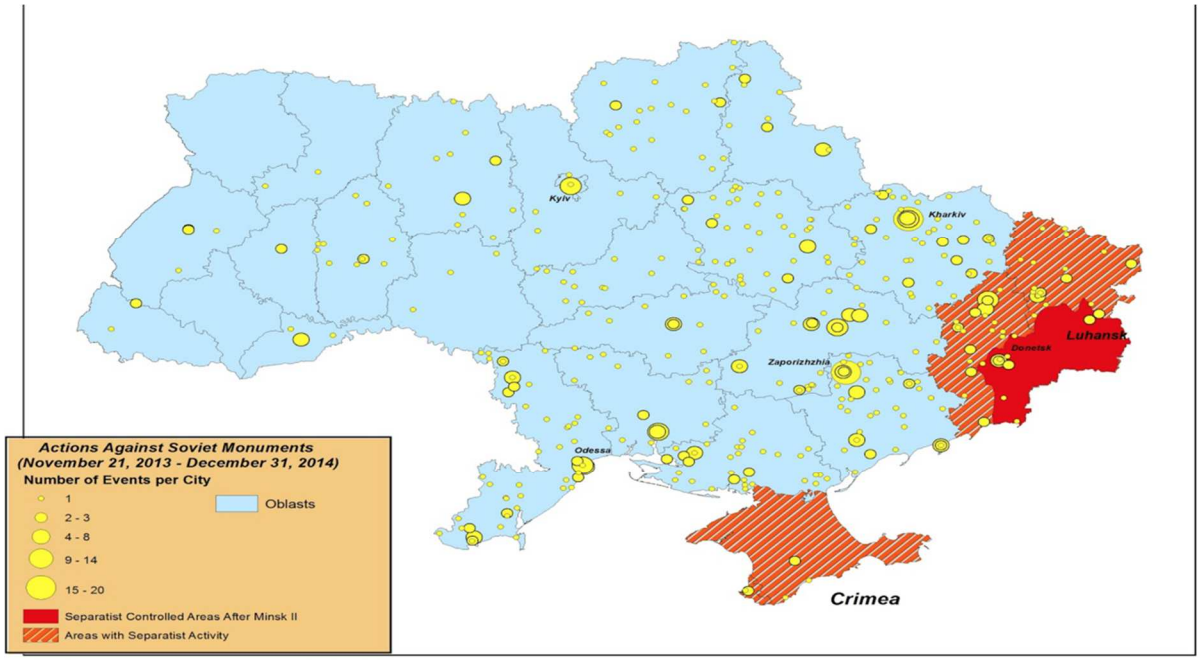
A statue can have an imposing presence on the area in which it's located. It towers over public places, and for many of the locals it is a part of their everyday lives as they pass by on the way to and from work. The statue serves to be a constant reminder of the values that it stands for, and as a result becomes integrated into society as a whole. Katherine Verdery has explored this topic further in her book, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (Verdery 2000). Verdery posited that in public discourse, a statue can take on the role of a living person, and strongly embodies the characters of the people they represent. At times, they are even treated with the same dignity and respect as the actual physical body of the person they represent. In short, even though they are simply inanimate objects, a statue has an immense influence on the surrounding areas. With over 5,000 statues in Ukraine, in 1991 Lenin was effectively still a Ukrainian national symbol and a strong reflection of Ukraine's soviet past. However, it was this Andersonian aspect of the Ukrainian nation that was fundamentally put on the chopping block during and after the events of the Maidan, and which was consequently at the heart of the Civil War.

The figurative removal of Lenin from the Ukrainian nation was not just reflective of Ukraine's desire to distance themselves from its Russian past, but also reflective of desires to form a new Ukrainian national identity. While Ukraine has historically been defined in large part by its linguistic roots, and while the civil war following the Maidan was largely spurred along by the ethnic divisions that split the country in two, the pattern of destroyed Lenin statues suggests that the Ukrainian nation is evolving significantly in a short time period.

Over the past few years I have been working with University of Colorado professor John O'Loughlin and Volodymyr Ishchenko of the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute to create a database of destroyed Lenin statues, as well as other Soviet era monuments, and in turn map the data points using ArcGIS. More advanced statistical analysis will need to be conducted before any concrete conclusions can be made, but it is still possible to get some use out of a visual analysis of the mapped data. When comparing the spread of data from before the time of the Maidan revolution...



to after the Maidan revolution….



a very clear pattern emerges.

Immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ethnically Ukrainian regions in the west of the country started tearing down Lenin statues (see figure 1 for ethno-linguistic map). The ethnically Russian areas of the east saw very little anti-Lenin backlash during this period. However, there was a drastic shift immediately following the Maidan, most notably visible by the large jump in anti-Lenin actions in ethnically Russian areas of Eastern Ukraine. This pattern suggests that the values of the Maidan have transcended ethnic lines, and that while a catalyst for the conflict, linguistic and ethnic divisions are no longer as important in driving the Maidan movement. In short, the result of the Maidan has been to evolve the Ukrainian nation past the stage of being a mere sub-branch of Russia, and into a fully-fledged culturally independent nation in its own right. By attempting to erase all connections to Ukraine's Soviet past, nationalists are trying to reimagine Ukraine as a completely separate and independent nation, with its own unique culture and national symbols.

The affect the Maidan revolution had on the number of Soviet statues in Ukraine appears to be quite strong. The Ukrainian government passed a series of decommunization laws in 2015, which resulted in a top down removal of all remaining Lenin and Soviet monuments in Maidan Ukraine. However, prior to May 2015, almost all instances of the removal of Soviet statues throughout Ukraine were authorized, if at all, at the local level. In our research, we observed hundreds of instances of grassroots efforts mounted against Soviet monuments. These ranged from simple protests demanding the removal of said monuments, to vandalization (often taking the forum of statues being spray-painted in the colors of the Ukrainian flag) and in extreme cases the

outright destruction of statues. In some instances the statues were removed under the democratic authority of the local government, but in many other cases they were not. The Ukrainian decommunization movement was finished by the government, but it was started at the local level. When looking at the grassroots efforts to remove Soviet monuments across Ukraine, perhaps the most important aspect is the spatial changes witnessed before and after the Maidan revolution. The fall of the Soviet Union caused great divisions in the Ukrainian national conscience. Areas in the east were less receptive of the idea of an independent Ukraine, especially with the closure of the Ukrainian-Russian boarder. The Donbass region in particular as the heartland of the Ukrainian coal industry, still maintained a Soviet take on nationalism: Soviet political figures were more popular there, and there were fewer observed anti-Russian or anti-Soviet protests. With a Russian speaking majority, and sizable ethnic Russian populations, the Donbass, along with the Crimea, were by far the most "pro-Russian" regions of Ukraine following the break-up of the Soviet Union. As a result of this the Donbass appears to be the tipping point as far as the influence of the Maidan is concerned. Rather than seeing an upsurge in the removal of Lenin statues like the rest of Eastern Ukraine, the Donbass instead chose to break away, aided in part by the support of the Russian government. The concept of a breaking point in Ukraine, a line drawn on a map to divide the country between the areas willing to follow the Maidan and those that aren't, is an interesting one, albeit an idea corrupted by the start of the Anti-Terrorist Operation. Immediately following the proposal of the infamous language law and the annexation of Crimea, widespread protests broke out throughout eastern Ukraine, Odessa in particular was the scene of incredible violence as hundreds were

killed in the Odessa Trade Union fire. The start of the ATO marked the beginnings of a Civil War, and by extension the end of the grass roots movement to determine the direction of the Ukrainian nation. The Donbass was well and truly gone while the areas of Eastern Ukraine under the control of the Ukrainian military, aided extensively by volunteer militia groups such as the Asov Battalion, had no choice but to rally round the flag and accept the Maidan.

As a direct counterpart to the removal of Lenin statues in the east of the country, there has been a concerted effort to raise statues of Bandera in the west. While it would be disingenuous to claim the Maidan was spearheaded by the far right, numerous pro-Bandera groups, such as the Svoboda Party and the Right Sector, rode the wave of hyper nationalism generated from the Maidan Revolution into prominence. Support for Bandera has always resided in the Galicia region of Western Ukraine, with the first statues of Bandera being raised in the west as early as 1991 (Liebich & Myshlovska 2014), however it was not until the Maidan revolution that the issue of Bandera reached such widespread public prominence. Bandera has always been a controversial figure in the east of the country, however, prior to the Maidan revolution there was very little existential fears surrounding Bandera. Yanukovych was in power, relations with Russia were at a high, and the thought of a nationwide western driven nationalist movement hardly seemed a possibility. The direction of Ukrainian politics following the breakup of the Soviet Union had been very much like a roller coaster, with Ukraine alternating between pro-Russian and Pro-western leaders. There had been past attempts to move the country in a more western direction, most notably in the form of the 2004 Orange Revolution, however, none of these movements gained anywhere near the same

traction as the Maidan. The Orange Revolution of 2004 was largely an internal affair concerning itself with the immediate domestic politics of the time. Unlike the 2013 Maidan revolution, the question of Ukraine's place in the international community, the EU in particular, as well as questions pertaining to Ukraine's long term political stance, were not asked. In a sense the Maidan movement took a far more drastic approach to change, and the presence of right wing groups touting imagery of Bandera stood in stark contrast to the values of the east of the country. The symbols of the Maidan paint a clear contrast between the values of the two sides. Between statues of Lenin in the east and statues of Bandera in the west, as well as the contrast between the hammer and sickle in the east and the wolfsangel in the west, post-Maidan ethno-symbolism in Ukraine is strongly divided. Controversy even arose stemming from the popular symbols used to honor the fallen heroes of the Second World War. In the East of the country the Russian Saint George ribbon is traditionally associated with Victory Day and honoring fallen veterans, however, following the Maidan the Ukrainian government has pushing the use of the poppy flower, commonly used in Western European countries (Radio Free Europe 2015). In a similar vein, throughout Ukraine there have been increased celebrations of Victory Day on May 8th, as is common in Western tradition, rather than the Russian practice of celebrating victory day on May 9th. While it is far from accurate to portray the Maidan revolution in a black and white manner, east versus west, Lenin versus Bandera, the St. George ribbon vs the poppy, the Russian Federation versus the European Union, at the macro level ethno-symbolism and imagery is the most visible form of nationalism, and dominates the public discourse.

The importance of ethno-symbolism in describing current Ukrainian nationalist trends cannot be overstated, and the work of Anthony Smith is relevant to the discussion on hand. Anthony Smith's theories of ethno-symbolism in particular bare striking resemblance to present trends in post-Maidan nationalism. Much like with Anderson, Smith's theory revolves around a series of core factors to hold the nation together, and perhaps the most relevant of those factors is that of national myths. The concept of a national myth is very broad and can manifest itself in a wide range of potential variables. Smith writes,

> But perhaps the most potent source of sanctity lies in the tombs of communal heroes and heroines, and more especially of 'our ancestors'. To be sure, the cenotaphs and cemeteries of the many soldiers who fell in battle defending the homeland possess an additional aura of sanctity and, as we saw, are commemorated in public ceremonies (Smith 2009, 95).

If we relate Smith's theory of nationalism to Katherine Verdery's idea of the living significance of statues, it becomes apparent how Soviet era monuments, statues of Lenin in particular, can be associated as national myths. The events of the Maidan have not just stopped at the destruction of Lenin statues however, as there are numerous other actions of the Maidan that can relate to directly to Smith's theory. There were numerous instances of protests against war memorials and the graves of fallen Soviet soldiers of the Second World War. In one instance a group of people were observed frying eggs over an eternal flame honoring fallen veterans, showing disrespect

and making a mockery of the tradition of the eternal flame. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a series of torchlight parades held in Kyiv to honor Bandera is further evidence to support the idea that the Maidan movement is changing the ancestral myths that define the Ukrainian nation.

The Maidan movement has not just stopped with the removal of Soviet era monuments, but has also pursued a widespread policy of "decommunization." In April of 2015, nearing the one-year anniversary of the start of the ATO, the Ukrainian government passed a series of laws banning the use of communist and Nazi symbols (Hyde 2015). The government didn't stop there, as a concerted effort was made to erase any evidence of Ukraine's Soviet legacy. In addition to the state-sponsored removal of the few remaining Lenin statues, thousands of place names, streets, villages, cities and even entire oblasts were officially renamed. Perhaps the most notable example is the renaming of Ukraine's fourth largest city, Dnipropetrovsk and the entire oblast' that shared its namesake. In 2016 Dnipropetrovsk, named after former communist leader Grigory Petrovsky, was renamed to Dnipro as part of the policy of decommunization. This particular example was not just notable due to the size of the city and region involved, but also due to the symbolical connections. Grigory Petrovsky was one of the driving factors behind collectivization in Ukraine, and as a result one of the key figures behind the Holodomor, which the Ukrainian government classifies as a deliberate genocide against the Ukrainian people (Rada 2006). Despite being communist, Grigory Petrovsky was also Ukrainian by birth. The modern decision to label him as a *persona non grata* is clear indication of the progress the Maidan movement has made towards creating a new nation. It has moved beyond the

primordialist ideals of nationhood by blood, and has laid clear the cultural connections that make up the new post-Maidan Ukraine. According to the proponents of this view, communism and Sovietism have no place in the new modern Ukraine, and any supporters of those ideals are by extension not Ukrainian. This idea has major implications for the future of the Civil war raging in Ukraine. As Maidan Ukraine continues to evolve and change over time, the breakaway republics in the East of the country have remained far more static, if not regressed towards a more Soviet mentality. As the two sides move fundamentally farther apart, so too does any realistic hope of a peaceful reconciliation. The Maidan moved the country in a direction the east was not willing to follow, and eventually the divisive nature of Ukrainian demographics drew a line in the sand. Russian intervention most certainly played a role as a catalyst in the conflict, but the current civil war in Ukraine is primarily driven by the radically diverging paths the pro- and anti-Maidan movements have taken.

Counter-points

While there is evidence to support the application of modernist theories of nationalism, Anderson's in particular, in Ukraine, there are many people who would disagree with this idea. The very nature of Anderson's theory is very much open for debate. Many prominent scholars feel that the notion of the modernist approach to nationalism holds no basis in reality. In 1981 a prominent primordial-nationalist thinker, Pier van den Berghe, published a book titled *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (Van den Berghe

1987). Van den Berghe argues that ethnic nepotism is a fundamentally biological concept. The main idea is that people of common ethnic origin are inclined to group together; the extension of this idea is that nations are strictly formed around ethnic and racial ties. Juxtaposed to modernist thinking, Van den Berghe argues that shared literature and culture stems from a shared nation, and not the other way around as argued by modernists. When coupled with research suggesting that ethnicity in Ukraine plays a more important role than actual language (Toal and O'Loughlin 2015), one could make the argument that Ukrainian nationalism is primarily primordial in nature, and that Anderson's theory holds no grounds. However, there are several major issues with this idea.

The most glaring issue with primordialist Ukrainian nationalism, is that Ukraine and Russia share a common ancestry dating back to the days of the Kievan Rus'. However, as should be made quite clear by the events of the Maidan and recent history of Ukrainian nationalism as a whole, Ukraine no longer views itself as a part of Russia. The entire movement in fact has been predicated on disproving the notion that Ukraine is a mere extension of Russia. Most notably, work done by Andrew Wilson has shown that Ukraine has existed as a separate entity from Russia long before it had gained independence (Wilson 1995, A Minority Faith; Wilson 1995, *The Donbas between Ukraine and Russia)*. This is where the primordialist theory of nationalism falls flat: despite sharing a common ancestry and despite being a unified state for the better part of the last 1,000 years, the Ukrainian and Russian nations have quite clearly split sometime during that period. If the theory of primordialist nationalism were applicable, one would have expected the Russian and Ukrainian nations to have grown closer over

time, rather than drift farther apart. This gives credence to the idea that nations are as much culturally defined as they are ethnically. Culturally, Ukraine has steadily been taking steps away from Russia over the past 500 years, and the Maidan is simply the next giant leap in this process.

Conclusion

If the Maidan continues along its current path, what does this mean going forward? Clearly, there is no going back. The Maidan movement has fundamentally altered the Ukrainian national conscience, and in turn will shape the future of Ukraine in the years to come. Unfortunately for Ukraine, the surge of nationalism has come at a price. Ukraine has committed to a path of westernization and staked nearly everything on integration with the EU, unfortunately this is looking to be an increasingly unlikely outcome. The Maidan's desire to join the EU has created a paradox. The pro-western nationalist movement alienated vast areas of the south and east of the country, which in turn led to a civil war. As a result of this Ukraine has very little chance of joining the EU until it can stabilize the situation on the home front, as the western European states will be very hesitant to admit a country embroiled in civil war. However, stabilizing the situation on the home front is easier said than done, as the fundamental changes made to the Ukrainian nation by the Maidan movement have not influenced the separatist areas in the east, which with each passing day are growing ideologically further apart from the west of the country. This makes the chance of a peaceful reunification of

Ukraine extremely unlikely. When international politics are factored into the equation, the Russian Federation's support of the breakaway eastern republics has effectively tied the hands of the west, leaving Ukraine on its own lest the risk of a nuclear war between Russia and NATO become a reality.

Moving forward it is important for Ukraine to come to terms with the fact that it has figuratively become a new nation, and that reunification is no longer a likely outcome. The breakaway republics in the east are not going to be a part of Ukraine's future, and civil war is only serving to further destabilize Ukraine. With ever growing worries about the stability of the EU following Brexit and anti-EU populist movements emerging in numerous western European countries, the least Ukraine can do is to put an end to its civil war, and hope its efforts to westernize have not been in vain.

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Appendix 1: Other Figures

Figure 3:

Figure 4:

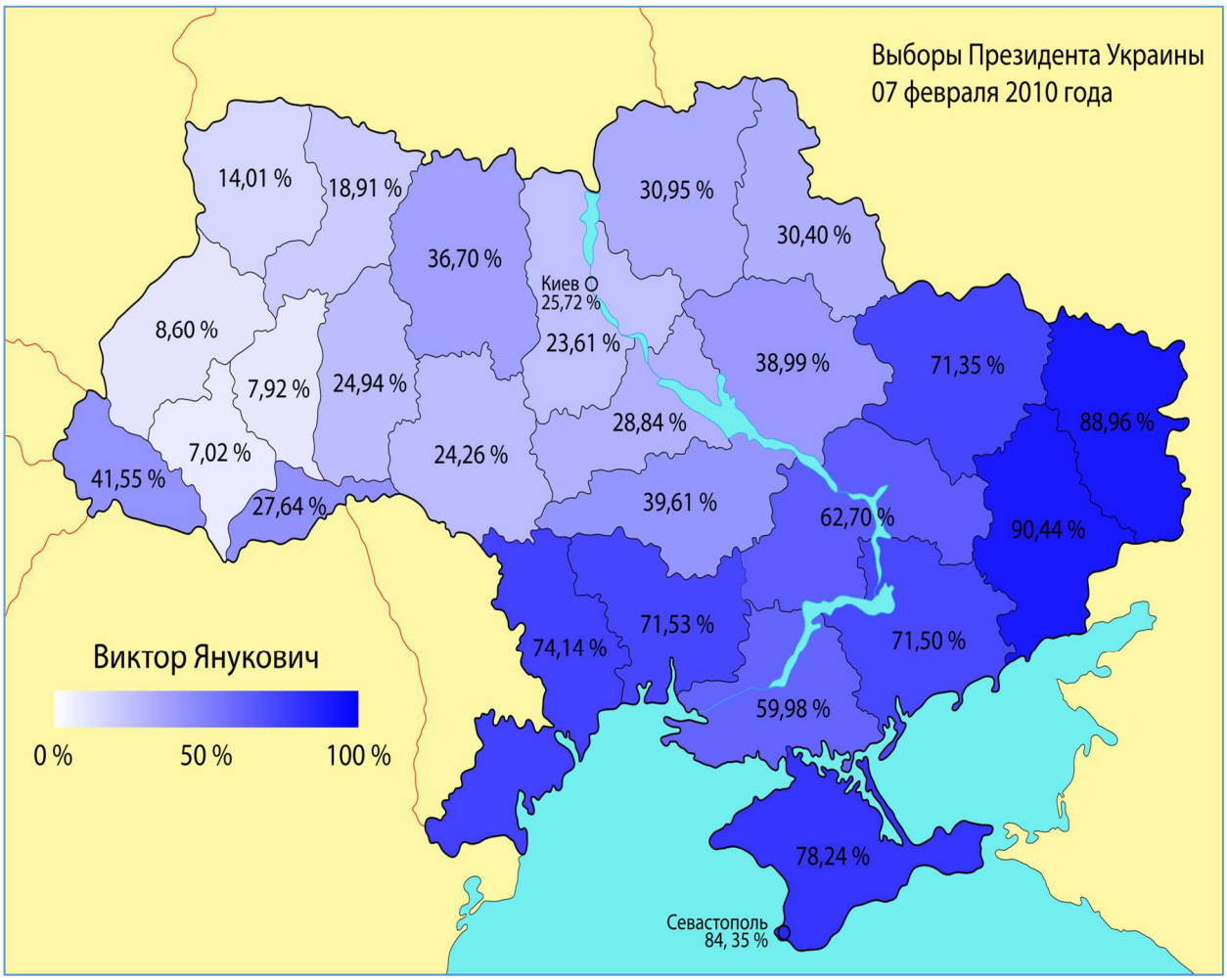
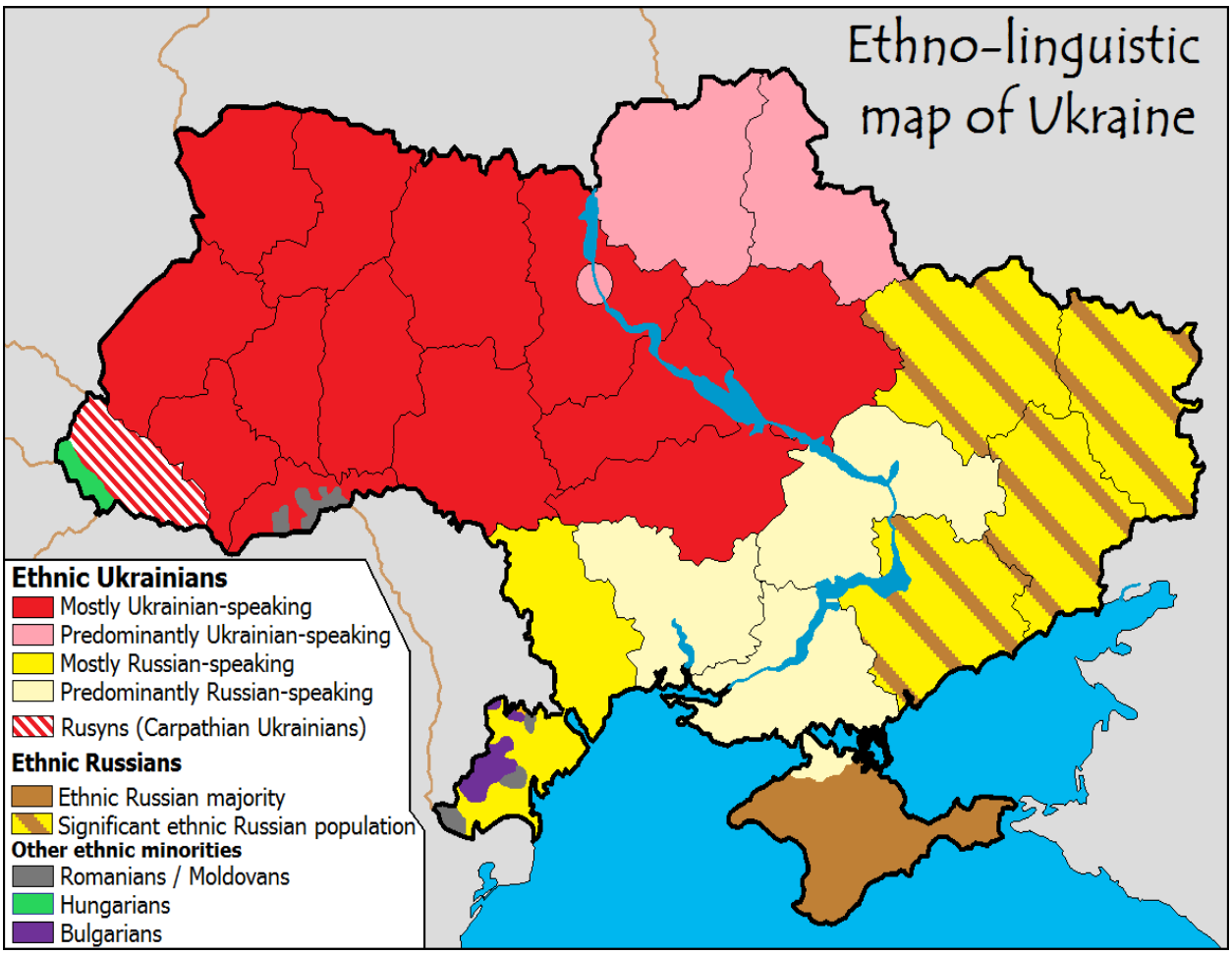

Выборы Президента Украины
07 февраля 2010 года
14,01 %
18,91 %
36,70 %
30,95 %
30,40 %
Киев О
25,72 %
8,60 %
23,61 %
38,99 %
71,35 %
88,96 %
7,92 %
24,94 %
28,84 %
7,02 %
24,26 %
41,55 %
27,64 %
39,61 %
62,70 %
90,44 %
71,53 %
74,14 %
71,50 %
59,98 %
78,24 %
Севастополь
84, 35 %
Виктор Янукович
0 %
50 %
100 %

Figure 5:


Ethno-linguistic map of Ukraine
Ethnic Ukrainians
Mostly Ukrainian-speaking
Predominantly Ukrainian-speaking
Mostly Russian-speaking
Predominantly Russian-speaking
Rusyns (Carpathian Ukrainians)
Ethnic Russians
Ethnic Russian majority
Significant ethnic Russian population
Other ethnic minorities
Romanians / Moldovans
Hungarians
Bulgarians