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**The Effect of NATO Partnership with  
Ukraine on Inter-Ethnic Relations within  
the Country**

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## **Introduction**

Changing security environment in Europe creates considerable challenges for every state trying to claim its own place in the new system of international relations and to design suitable military strategies to deal with the pressures of a changing world. Establishing of an appropriate military doctrine and asserting themselves in a new security environment are vital tasks newly independent states have encountered. This task is however not an easy one to achieve bearing in mind a number of constrains these states have to deal with. Realist school claims that the main principles underpinning the selection of a foreign policy are national interests and the existing power structures in the world. This approach tends to overestimate the importance of the factors related to the 'outside' world in the designing of a foreign policy, to establish international environment as a major source of influences on the process of selecting the priorities. However, external factors are not necessary the only determinants in the foreign policy making - there might be a number of variables restricting the choice of priorities in international relations, such as political layout of the state, ethnic or social make-up etc. International policy is simply the continuation of an internal one and it is impossible to separate one from another. The strength of internal factors may result in complete redesigning of country's foreign policy and make tremendous effect on the evolution of security strategies.

Ukraine is a country that faces a challenging problem of identifying its priorities in foreign policy and in doing this, it has to take into account not only considerations related to the international environment, but also those resulting from its domestic peculiarities. Large ethnic minority culturally linked to Russia and having considerable levers on Ukrainian policy making has been regarded as one of the most obvious internal constrains Ukraine has to cope with. The current paper will attempt to analyse some aspects of this problem and to determine the strength of its influence on the foreign policy making as well as to identify what changes might occur to this issue in the near future. An important aim of this paper is to show the internal sources of

foreign policy and to demonstrate a clear linkage between changes in ethnic identity and the evolution of international policy.

This paper aims to contribute not only to the general debate about the future place of Ukraine in the international system and development of Ukrainian foreign policy, but also to the broad debate on the interrelation between the foreign policy and national identity. It is widely accepted that external actors play particularly important part in identity-formation and foreign policy is a vital mechanisms of identity building shaping people's attitudes to other countries and international organisations. The process is, however, reciprocal and identity of the groups a state consists of places considerable constrains on the development of foreign policy restricting government in defining goals and selecting partners. As Ilya Prizel<sup>1</sup> pointed out, relations between national identity and foreign policy are dialectical and dynamic. "Nationalism and national identity, like all living intellectual trends, are subject to constant redefinition"<sup>2</sup>. Being institutionalised and formulated within the limits set by both international and internal realities, foreign policy even slightly deviating from the established pattern affects these realities. As far as national identity is concerned, evolving foreign policy can seriously alter (or even produce) some symbols to which this identity is linked, thus gradually changing the very foundation of this identity.

The problem of identity-foreign policy interaction is not very well developed in literature and apart from the Prizel's book (mentioned above) there are not many items published on this topic. The current paper will attempt to address several issues related to the foreign policy based mechanisms of changes in national identity and to look how two phenomena interact.

Ukrainian foreign policy has been remarkable for its vagueness and lack of clearly defined priorities. The role Ukraine aims to play in the international system has remained unclear for international analysts and Ukrainian government has done very little to make this issue clearer. However, it seems to be evident that Ukrainian foreign policy has undergone serious evolution

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<sup>1</sup> Prizel I. National identity and foreign policy. Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 12.

and it gradually moves to defining much clearer vision of a country's future. It might be argued that serious internal ethnopolitical constraints have limited Ukrainian government's ability to manoeuvre, thus resulting in loose foreign policy definitions. However, development of Ukraine as an independent state and, in particular, the evolution of diverse system of international relations have produced considerable changes in national identity, which in its turn allowed much greater freedom to Ukrainian government to decide on its foreign policy.

There has been considerable debate over the question how Ukraine should assert itself in the new European security environment - should it align with Russia and tie with CIS military structures or should it (following the examples of Poland and other Central European states) move quicker to the West, developing and enhancing relations with NATO, EU, USA and Western European states? The answer to this question has important implications not only for Ukraine, but for the whole security arrangements in Europe, for the relations with Russia and the balance of power in Central Europe. A number of publications trying to answer this question has been recently produced by scholars from both East and West. Two trends in this literature are represented by recent books published in 1999 by A. Lieven<sup>3</sup> and Y. Bilinsky<sup>4</sup>. The Lieven's arguments rest on the assumption that Russia and Ukraine are historically too close (in terms of culture, language, tradition) and linkages between two countries are too complex to break up. This assumption leads to a conclusion that attempts to distance Ukraine from, not to mention to set against Russia will be grave mistakes for any outside power. The future of Ukraine is seen by Lieven as independent state closely co-operating with Russia, which apparently excludes an option of joining NATO or any other military alliance with the USA or Western Europe. Entirely opposite line of arguments is presented by Yaroslav Bilinsky, who in his book "Endgame in NATO Enlargement: The Baltic States and Ukraine", calls for speeding up the process of NATO expansion to include four states from Russia's western

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<sup>2</sup> Prizel I. National identity and foreign policy. Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Lieven A. Ukraine and Russia. A Fraternal Rivalry. Washington, USIP, 1999.

frontier (Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), arguing that this will produce much safer security environment and will seriously strengthen stability in Eastern and Central Europe. Approach advocated by Bilinsky is finding much greater support within academic community studying aspects of future Ukraine's international standing - most scholars writing on NATO-Ukraine relations uphold the pro-western stance. As an example, one may mention the renown British scholar Taras Kuzio<sup>5</sup>, who outlines the dangers Ukraine is likely to encounter if it chooses to enter into closer relations with Russia. Kuzio points out that by engaging into close alliances with Russia, Ukraine risks to cease to exist as an independent state - merger between the current Russian leadership (then under the Eltsin's administration) and nationalist/communist groups aims "not to build a nation state, which has never existed in its history, but to create a confederation as a stepping stone to a new Eurasian Union"<sup>6</sup>.

Obviously such a dichotomy in approaches has resulted from the peculiarities of Ukrainian domestic situation and historical experience. Centuries of being a part of the Russian empire and then of the Soviet Union did produce important ramifications for the country and contributed to the controversies over its future place in the international system. Trying to understand to what extent cultural and historical linkages suffice to judge on the prospects of foreign policy development, one should be clear what sort of cleavages Ukraine has to deal with. Hence, it would be appropriate to have a quick glance at the nature and depth of the lines dividing Ukraine.

### ***Dividing Lines***

Ukraine is often regarded as a divided society with strong pro-Russian community comprised of both Russian minority and Russian-speakers among Ukrainians. The main dividing line is probably based not on ethnicity, but on the territorial division - the split between Eastern and Western Ukraine.

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<sup>4</sup> Bilinsky Y. Endgame in NATO's enlargement: the Baltic States and Ukraine. Westport, Conn. : Praeger, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> See for example: Kuzio T. Ukraine under Kuchma: Political Reform , Economic Transformation and Security Policy in Independent Ukraine. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Kuzio T. Ukraine under Kuchma: Political Reform , Economic Transformation and Security Policy in Independent Ukraine. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997, p.197.

However, most scholars writing on ethnic issues in Ukraine consider this line only as a one element in the complex structure of ethnic, territorial, religious and other cleavages. The whole problem of the origins of regional polarisation is too complex to investigate here in great details and there is extensive literature (Khmelko & Arel, Wilson, Kuzio etc) on this topic. For the sake of convenience, it will be expedient only to make a point that regional polarisation of Ukraine and pro-Russian sentiments in the Eastern parts may be considered as historically rooted and been developed throughout centuries of being exposed to influxes coming from neighbours. Eastern Ukraine has had a long period of being part of first Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, whereas most of Western Ukraine joined the USSR only after the Second World War.

It will be certainly misleading to consider ethnicity as a main cause for internal division, thus disregarding a complex system of linguistic and regional cleavages. Most researchers<sup>7</sup> agree that ethnicity is by no means the dominant dividing lines and focusing on it will result in a clearly distorted picture of existing cleavages. All in all, Russian minority in Ukraine is not as substantial as, for example, in Estonia or Latvia. It constitutes roughly 20% of population (see Appendix 1), scattered on a large territory and internally disintegrated. However, it is supplemented by the considerably numerous group of Ukrainians who claim Russian as their mother-tongue. It is very difficult to calculate the overall number of Russian-speakers in Ukraine - various studies come up with different estimations. Arel and Khmelko argued that in the Eastern Ukraine 81,5% of population prefer to use Russian for communication at home (in Western Ukraine only 23%)<sup>8</sup>, which makes up about 55% of the nation-wide sample. Another research by A.Wilson<sup>9</sup> divides the population of Ukraine into three communities (Russians, Russophone Ukrainians and Ukrainophone Ukrainians) with total number of those naming Russian as their first language equal to the two thirds of the entire population. Other researches are presenting different findings. The main conclusion one

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<sup>7</sup> These researchers are in particular A.Wilson, D.Arel, V.Khmelko, V.Hesli etc.

<sup>8</sup> Khmelko V. and Arel D. The Russian Factor and Territorial Polarisation in Ukraine. Harriman Institute Review, March 1996.

can draw from these considerations is that linguistic factor is the one of paramount importance in the understanding of the nature of the cleavages in Ukraine. This factor is, though, not a single one and linguistic groups do not necessarily constitute united and coherent communities. However, it seems legitimate to define the group in question as *Russian-speakers* rather than *Russians*, which might allow to avoid unjustified labelling.

### ***Hypotheses***

This paper argues that the answer to the question of how ethnic relations in Ukraine may be influenced by a certain foreign policy development greatly depends on the understanding of two sorts of dialectical relations - (1) between national identity and foreign policy and (2) between national identity and institutional change.

The factors that are important to analyse in order to answer the question of how Ukrainian partnership with NATO may be affected by the inter-ethnic relations can be divided into two clusters. The first one (*macro* factors) consists of elements not confined to Ukraine, but linked to the external world. Ukraine has limited control over but has to take account of them. These factors include the aptitude of the international actors, foreign countries Ukraine deal with as well as the structure of international economic system Ukraine is engaged in. This set of factors is extremely important for the proper understanding of the issues under study, however, this paper will not focus on it providing only concise explanation of how this set limited the range of options available for Ukrainian government and how the dynamics of it influenced the identity-redefinition process.

The second set affecting foreign policy making (*micro* factors) includes determinants rooted in the internal make-up of the country, its social, political and economic peculiarities. For the current project, it is important to single out two components of the micro set, which are identity composition and elite ability and willingness to capitalise on identity-related issues. The second part of this paper will investigate the composition of identity of the group in

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<sup>9</sup> Wilson A. *Ukrainian nationalism in the 1990s : a minority faith*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

question aiming to understand how this identity was constructed and what implications it may have for the foreign policy in general and relations with NATO in particular. It will be argued that despite there is a potential to challenge Ukrainian relations with NATO embedded in the symbols inherited from the Soviet Union, there are not enough evidences to classify Russian-speakers as one coherent group. Their identity, as it be shown, is remarkably vague, contested by some other ideological systems and the group itself is deeply fragmented.

The third part will look at the capabilities of 'ethnic entrepreneurs' to activate the symbols that might serve as a basis for the assembling the Russian-speakers in some kind of 'imagined community' and to convert the group's discontent into powerful collective action. This part will attempt to show that resources and capacity of Russian-speaking elites are rather limited due to a number of reasons - internal segmentation of the elite resulting from substantial differences in regional and economic interest combined with state policy aiming to accommodate and to control this elite impedes any possible attempt to mobilise Russian-speaking constituency. Political institutions that both provide a wide range of options to ensure political participation and elite inclusion and prevent unification of the elite for joint actions will be examined to come up with several suggestions on how political system in Ukraine may evolve in order to sustain the low probability of an ethnic conflict.

## Part 1. The Evolution of Ukrainian Foreign Policy.

As it has been already mentioned above, a number of internal and external restrictions has made the process of Ukrainian foreign policy formulation extremely delicate. Being a hostage of a strong pro-Russian opposition inside the country and economic pressure from Russia itself, even the most adamant supporters of the integration in Euro-Atlantic structures could not afford to declare this integration as a primary goal of Ukrainian government without considerable support from the Western European states and, above all, NATO itself. However, for quite a while (till mid 1990s) Ukraine was seen by the West through “Russian prism”<sup>10</sup> which led to an assumption that cultural links and economic ties connecting Ukraine with Russia would eventually force the country to align with its Eastern neighbour. This cautious approach entailed pretty limited attention to Ukraine from the Western states, which in its turn resulted in a lack of resources allocated to assist Ukraine in post-communist transition (especially when compared to Poland, Hungary and other Central European states). Lacking Western backing, Ukraine had to be extra cautious in formulating its international policy, weighting all possible factors and being able to afford only modest actions in any direction. Ukraine has often been blamed for inability to determine its foreign policy priorities opting to balance within the limits of the self-proclaimed *multi-vector policy*. In reality, Ukraine had probably little to choose from having mainly pro-Western government confronted with the powerful (and supported by Russia) opposition. This vagueness of Ukraine’s foreign policy has resulted in a number of conflicting statements that set effectively mutually exclusive tasks (like strengthening co-operation with Russia and deepening relations with the NATO).

Non-aligned status that became the underpinning principle of Ukrainian foreign policy from the very beginning owes a great deal to the peculiar conditions in which Ukrainian government found itself after 1991 - Western Europe and to an extent the USA tended to overlook Ukraine focusing almost

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<sup>10</sup> Albright D. and Apatov S. (eds) *Ukraine and European Security*. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1999, p.4.

entirely on Russia, economic ties to CIS countries were too strong and too difficult to break and finally a number of pro-Russian organisations generated popular discontent over the cooling relations with Russia. Looking at this policy of neutrality with the environment it has been designed in mind, one may actually praise Ukrainian government for adoption such a stance - in fact this was the most pro-Western policy possible under given conditions. Besides a clear lack of Western support that has been mentioned above, Ukraine was faced with a powerful pro-Russian sentiments of a large part of country's population and a tremendously strong pressure from Russia.

Russian government despite its interest in keeping friendly relations with the West has firmly opposed any extension of the NATO or US sphere of influence into what has been seen as Russia's traditional domain. The most vivid examples of this trend were harsh opposition to the inclusion of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary in NATO and reaction to NATO involvement in Kosovo. Ukraine was clearly seen in Moscow as an integral part of Russian sphere and independent status of Ukraine was often regarded as a temporary phenomenon. Pressure from Russia was coming from both political and economic channels and it was very difficult for Ukraine to withstand this pressure. Debates over the gas supply, trade relations, Black Sea Fleet, rights of Russian-speakers were usually incredibly intensive and Ukraine, unfortunately, had to rely on its own stamina and determination, since assistance from other international actors was rare and inconsistent. For Ukraine, therefore, it would be unwise to risk a complete deterioration of quite tense relations with the mighty neighbour without benefits exceeding prospective costs of this process. Since there was a clear lack of interest in Ukrainian affairs from the West<sup>11</sup> (with the notable exception of the USA), it was absolutely inconceivable for Ukraine to manifest determined pro-Western orientation. That's why initial position of Ukraine in many aspects coincided with the similar views of Russia and aimed to promote the idea broader international co-operation. In 1993, for example, Ukraine called to create some kind of stability zone in Eastern Europe - idea that immediately failed

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<sup>11</sup> Unlike clear support given to Central European applicants and the Baltic States.

due to a lack of support from both Western European states and countries of Central Europe.

Internally, Ukraine had to deal with a pro-Russian public opinion in many areas of industrial East and South, which were not only dominated by Russian-speakers but also suffered the most from the collapse of economic links with Russia and other former Soviet Republics. Opinion polls conducted at that time show the evident inclination towards renewing relations with Russia and other CIS countries. For example, study undertaken in 1993 indicated that cumulative percent of those who favoured relations either with Russia, or CIS, or within Slavic republics of the former USSR reached 50%<sup>12</sup>. The period preceded the presidential elections of 1994 was marked by intensive debate about who Ukraine should stick with, which was accompanied by a series of crises in relations with Russia, Russian-speaking groups in Crimea and Donbass. The conflict potential was so strong that Ukraine has been regarded as a prospective conflict area and OSCE decided to open its special mission in Crimea to handle the situation there. The climax of the growth of pro-Russian sentiments was reached in the summer of 1994, when Leonid Kuchma was elected for President building his popularity on the slogans calling for re-establishing economic and cultural ties with Russia.

It is remarkable, therefore, that Ukrainian government managed to promote the idea of neutral, non-nuclear state in such unfruitful environment. Despite the fact that pro-Russian attitudes were clearly dominant in the country, not many people favoured the institutionalisation of security arrangement and preferred non-alignment to any other foreign policy option. Even in 1993 about 40% of Ukrainians approved this option as the most beneficial for Ukraine.

Some people<sup>13</sup> argued that Ukrainian government under the presidency of Kravchuk opted to promote nationalism in a search for legitimacy to make up for the lack of economic reform. Developing a foreign policy, which balanced between Russia and the West but was underpinned by Ukrainian nationalism, Kravchuk managed to worsen relations with Russia quite considerably. Most

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<sup>12</sup> Golovakha E. Political Portrait of Ukraine: General Overview of Public Opinion. Democratic Initiatives Foundations, Kiev, 1993.

of the problems in relations between two countries originate from the period of 1991-94, when country was led by Kravchuk. Lack of grass-root support to nationalism-based policy has resulted in Kravchuk being ousted from the office. Nevertheless, the implications of his policy for the further development of Ukraine should be underestimated. Portraying Russia as a main source of instability and insecurity for Ukraine, Kravchuk not only generated strong opposition advocating closer links with Russia and other CIS countries, but built a foundation for new symbols that later on penetrated the identity of Russian-speakers. Leonid Kuchma, who succeeded Kravchuk did not change much of Ukrainian foreign policy and despite his alleged predisposition to Russian, remained loyal to nationalism-driven foreign policy.

At the same time, neglecting the problems of economic transformation entailed a problem that has become a priority for Ukrainians and overshadowed all other issues. Foreign policy issues and the question of a very existence of Ukrainian state as an independent entity seized to be at stake, which in a way eased a process of the self-assertion of Ukraine in the international system.

After 1994-95, Ukrainian government began to behave with much greater confidence and to assert itself in the international relations with a policy developed much more independently. Gradual turn towards open recognition of the necessity to reorient the country's foreign policy towards deeper co-operation with the Western institutions and alliances (including prospective entering of these organisations) became more evident. Unofficially, Ukrainian government always implied some interest in deeper integration with the NATO and the European Union, but it has never been officially acknowledged and even the most keen supporter of the Western vector Boris Tarasyuk (currently the Minister of Foreign Affairs) could only endorse official stance of a neutral and non-nuclear state. Gradual changes started to occur after Kuchma's election as a president and after the president himself underwent a remarkably rapid evolution from supporting closer ties with Russia to advocating intensive co-operation with the west.

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<sup>13</sup> Prizel I. National identity and foreign policy. Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Since 1995 Ukraine has begun to change its stance on prospects of entering Euro-Atlantic structures and to show greater interest in extended co-operation with NATO and EU. In 1995 then foreign minister of Ukraine Gennady Udovenko submitted a draft proposal of future co-operation agreement, which was called for “joint co-operation in non-proliferation, arms control, defence economy, environment and science and technology”<sup>14</sup> etc. Ukraine also became the first post-Soviet country to join the Partnership for Peace Programme and in May 1997 NATO Information Centre in Kiev was opened. The climax has been reached when Ukraine signed a Charter on Distinctive partnership with NATO during the Madrid Summit in July 1997. After that point relations with NATO are getting more and more intensive with more joint military exercises and other events organised regularly. Effectively, even crisis in Kosove that created a great deal of controversy among Ukrainian public did not seriously hamper relations between two partners and unlike Russia, Ukraine not only retained the full-scale relations with the alliance but even minor measures like suspension of the activities of the information centre were not taken.

Alongside these institutional arrangements, the entire rhetoric of Ukrainian leadership has changed and signs of desirability of moving towards West including joining the EU and enhancing links with the NATO became visible. After Kuchma’s re-election for the second term in November 1999, joining of the EU and greater integration with the West was declared the main priority of Ukraine. In March 2000, the regular meeting of the North Atlantic Council took place in Kiev, despite great disapproval of this step by Russia.

It is, therefore, evident that crucial changes took place in Ukraine foreign policy, which moved from a cautious attempts to establish co-operation with the West keeping at the same time good relations with Russia to a firm position aimed at entering EU and deepening co-operation with the west. This trend is indicative by itself of some changes that occurred in the overall situation that prevented Ukraine from choosing such a line before.

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<sup>14</sup> Larrabee S. Ukraine’s Balancing Act, *Survival*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1996, p. 146-147.

The apparent changes that happened in Ukrainian foreign policy, the formulation of well-articulated pro-Western stance may be linked to the changes that took place in national identity, in a way people position themselves towards the 'outside' world. These changes have been possible to an extent due to an effect made on national identity by the evolving foreign policy. Developing relations with a range of countries, establishing Ukraine as a rightful member of an international community and building Ukrainian state institutions has a number of important implications for the identity-building. People gradually stopped to question the notion of a very existence of Ukraine as an independent state and reoriented from Moscow to either Kiev or some local power-holding centre. Imposing nationalistic agenda, Ukrainian government managed to reduce the importance of Soviet based symbols and to plant seeds of distrust towards Russia and the CIS. Russia should also be given some credits since it did not present an example of dynamic economic growth (being in most terms virtually indistinguishable from Ukraine), but launched a senseless war in Chechnya and became renown for internal instability and unpredictability.

It will be obviously an exaggeration to say that changes are profound and irreversible, but they certainly allow Ukrainian government greater freedom in developing its foreign policy and to assert Ukraine in the world with far greater confidence.

## **Part 2. Russian-speakers: is there a community?**

Identity is profoundly important for understanding the probability of ethnic mobilisation. In the current context this importance is twofold - on the one hand it is essential to know whether one deals with a single homogeneous group, sharing the same symbols and realising its communality, and on the other how this identity relates to the practical question this project aims to answer - attitudes to NATO. This section will first attempt to identify the importance of NATO related issues in the domestic discourse and then try to draw a conclusion on how this affects the identity changes analysing the history, foundations and structure of Post-Soviet identity.

Apparently the reason for being uneasy about the possible ethnic tension as a result of enhanced co-operation with NATO is a division in opinions about the role of NATO and the outcomes of the co-operation for Ukraine. It has been said above that foreign policy related issues were gradually replaced in the list of top problems with the questions related to the economic development and personal well-being. Therefore, it can be expected that public opinion is not really concerned with the problems which are not directly relevant to the ordinary citizen, not discussed on the regular basis in the media and rarely addressed by prominent policy-makers. This, in its turn, implies that NATO as an element in the system of symbols and values bleaches and its importance as an identity anchor gradually diminishes. This assumption will be tested below.

The current section will argue that identity of the Russian-speakers is rather unclear and vaguely defined. It will first show that even such a potentially mobilising issue as the relations with NATO proves to be unable to assist in articulation of a common (shared by the vast majority) vision of the problem. Then, the vagueness of identity will be explained on the one hand by the legacy of the Soviet Union, when people constituting the group in question were the prime subjects to the peculiar Soviet ethnopolitics and on the other by the fact that multiple influxes during the period of post-Soviet transformation have contributed to the lack of cohesion and to the greater fragmentation of the group. It will be concluded that Russian-speakers should

not be considered as one community, though there are symbols that can be used for the creation of a sense of communality.

### **Ukrainian Public Opinion and NATO: The Awareness Questioned.**

It is normally assumed that there is an embedded opposition towards NATO among Russian-speaking part of Ukrainian population. This assumption is based on the prepositions that the group under study feels attached to Russia (which is renown for its negative stance on NATO) and that negative attitude to NATO inherited from the Soviet past remains very strong and is deeply embedded in the minds of people. However, such assumption does not seem to be supported with sufficient evidence and looking at the data from the recent empirical studies one can question the very fact of the existence of the opposition to NATO among Russian-speaking population of Ukraine. It may be said that despite widely shared opinion, Ukrainian population is not utterly opposed to NATO and the activities of this organisation are not treated suspiciously. People are rather totally unaware of what NATO stands for and what sort of policies it pursues. Survey data analysed in this study show that there is no clear opinion on issues related to NATO and on what results it might bring about for Ukraine. The development of Ukrainian foreign policy (as it was discussed above) is currently grossly overshadowed by other, more acute issues – economic welfare, unemployment etc. This project has investigated a number of surveys and other researches to figure out the degree of popular concern over the enhanced relations with NATO. Survey studies that addressed this question have come up with vague responses indicating that public seems to have little interest in and can not articulate a position on the problems related to NATO. Most opinion polls show that between 40% and 60% of population remain indifferent to whatever aspects of NATO Eastern policy or fail to present clear vision of it.

It has been established that only about 24% are determined to oppose NATO co-operation with Ukraine. This fact is confirmed by both answers to direct questions about desirability of Ukrainian entry into NATO (22% against) and responses to related questions about negative effects of NATO enlargement eastward in general (see Appendix 7).

Indicating the overall attitude towards NATO, this data, however, is not necessary consistent in all areas of Ukraine. It is evident that Western Ukraine is having much higher number of those supportive towards NATO enlargement, whereas Eastern regions and especially Crimea are rather less enthusiastic about the idea of joining NATO. The study carried out by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology discovered that nearly 50% of those residing in Crimea will not welcome Ukraine's effort to enter alliance and Eastern Ukraine showed very similar results. However, it should be noted that a number of people indifferent to the problem remains quite high all around Ukraine – with 41% in Eastern Ukraine and 35% in Crimea<sup>15</sup>. This fact, therefore, denies the assumption that people in Ukraine are naturally hostile towards NATO and are pre-determined to oppose this organisation.

Another possible clash worth looking at is the difference between ethnic groups in their attitudes to NATO. The same study of the Kiev International Institute of Sociology shows that people who identified themselves as Russians are much less supportive of the idea that Ukraine must join NATO. Some 41% of them indicated disagreement with such move, however 38% failed to produce any clear opinion on the problem<sup>16</sup>. Considering other nationalities, it has to be stressed that none declared full and unconditional support towards the idea of NATO enlargement – Jews favours such prospect more than any other ethnic group with 43% of them supporting Ukraine's membership in NATO. Ukrainians are quite cautious and only 28% of them welcome the idea of joining NATO. Again, though, overall indifference must be mentioned as all ethnic groups include large segments of people who did not state their opinion on the problem under consideration – 46% of Ukrainians, 38% of Russians 33% of Jews could not clearly articulate their views.

There are also some evidences allowing to detect the growing acceptance of the idea of Ukrainian membership in NATO and decrease of hostility towards alliance. Comparing data from 1996 and 1997, it is possible to detect that a

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<sup>15</sup> Bilinsky Y. Endgame in NATO's enlargement: the Baltic States and Ukraine. Westport, Conn. : Praeger, 1999, p.25

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.26

number of NATO supporters grew from 24<sup>17</sup> to 37<sup>18</sup> percents. Though it should be said that the pace of these changes is certainly uneven and Western Ukraine shows far greater dynamics than Eastern and Southern parts.

Comparing Ukraine with other Eastern European countries aspiring to join European and North-Atlantic institutions, it is remarkable that issues of membership in NATO or EU are not at all topical and very rarely discussed. Effective, unlike Poland or Baltic states, these issues are not present in everyday discourse and people have very little chances to develop an opinion regarding these problems. Moreover, researchers studying the problems of Ukrainians do not always include questions on possible admission to NATO or EU in their polls, which in some way reflects the state of this problem in Ukraine. People, when asked what are the most important priorities for Ukraine, very rarely refer to the issues of international relations, or co-operation with foreign partners. For example survey undertaken by the Lviv "Geneza" Centre for Political Research in 1997 showed that among the topics that concerned respondents were mainly welfare-based ones, such as protection of the economic interests of citizens (50,49% in Donetsk and 37,46% in Lviv), guaranteeing the economic prosperity of people (68,30% in Donetsk and 69,30% in Lviv) etc. At the same time participation in the international co-operation was considered to be important only by 9.98% in Donetsk and 7,61% in Lviv<sup>19</sup>. These results seem to be in sharp contrast to the public opinion polls from Poland, Estonia or even Czech Republic where issues of external relations, including membership in NATO and EU are widely discussed and always mentioned by respondents among the top priorities for their states. It is also important to say that the overall profile of NATO and EU related issues is quite low. Media coverage is rather modest and insufficient to create awareness or general interest. Understanding the remoteness of the membership prospects, Ukrainian elite is also not very keen on addressing these issues thus keeping public fairly ignorant.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 22

<sup>18</sup> UNIAN News Agency, May 6, 1997

<sup>19</sup> Stavropigion, 1998/1 p.171

To conclude the previous point, it is necessary to emphasise that all areas of Ukraine and all ethnic groups show similar degree of interest in the problems under consideration. Both Russian-speakers and Ukrainian-speakers do not rate the importance of co-operation with NATO as well as with any other external actor particularly high, naming economic and welfare problems as the most acute ones<sup>20</sup>.

Finally, it is possible to establish several important facts about the public attitudes towards NATO. First of all, areas of Ukraine with numerous Russian and Russian-speaking communities are suspicious about the possible Ukrainian membership in NATO and do not support this. This allows us to claim that certain cleavage between ethno-linguistic areas exists, especially taking into account the fact that Western Ukraine and to large extent Central Ukraine of the country demonstrate clearly more positive stance towards possible inclusion of Ukraine in NATO. However, the second evident conclusion is that clear opinion on NATO does not exist in either area of the country. People all around the country demonstrate remarkable indifference and ignorance about NATO, which certainly allows one to conclude that relative hostility some areas possesses cannot be considered as an insurmountable hurdle. Finally, another conclusion from the analysis of public opinion polls states that ethnic background does play some role in determining people's attitude towards the alliance, those who identify themselves as Russians are more likely to oppose the very idea of NATO coming to Ukraine.

However, it should be stressed once again that unless people are directly asked to reflect on the prospects of NATO membership or on effects NATO activities are making on Ukraine, these issues are not usually mentioned. This fact indicates that interest to the problems related to NATO presence in Ukraine is virtually non-existent and the high percentage of those failing to give a definite answer to the question on attitude to alliance is another evidence to support this fact. It has been noted in several studies and during the field research for the current project that people even expressing some

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<sup>20</sup> This fact does not mean that there are no difference in preferences between areas of Ukraine and between ethnic groups, but these differences are related to the various issues of domestic policy such as

kind of a vision on NATO normally cannot justify their opinion. In fact even basic information about NATO remains unknown to the vast majority. In practical terms this means that opinions are articulated on the basis of old stereotypes or views advocated by legitimate authorities and sets up a task to investigate whether these opinions are deliberately promoted or they are simply remnants of the past destined to disappear.

It would be relevant also to remark that the lack of strong support by itself, however, does not seem to be sufficient to conclude that Ukraine's attempts to join NATO will be eventually stopped by public resentment. Comparing Ukraine's polls with the similar researches conducted in Czech Republic and Hungary on the eve of these countries becoming NATO members, one can easily spot that situation there was almost the same. In March 1997, only 40% of Czechs supported the idea of NATO membership with 29% of respondents opposed and 31 undecided<sup>21</sup>. This means that dealing with societies divided over such topical issue, one should primarily assess the depth of the cleavage and its potential to be transformed into collective action.

### ***Soviet Ethnopolitics and Post-Soviet Identity***

If one agrees that hostility towards NATO is not really deep-rooted in Ukraine it becomes vital to investigate what might be the sources of potential opposition and whether there is any unveiled potential embedded inside the structure of identity. This apparently raises the question of an identity architecture of Russian-speaking minorities in Ukraine and symbols it is anchored to. It will be argued that identity of Russian-speakers in Ukraine (as well as in other post-Soviet states) has been distinctively developed on the basis of political ideology and deeply linked with the Soviet Union rather than with Russia. Therefore, despite personal identification as Russians or people feeling close to Russian culture, Russian-speakers in Ukraine share different system of symbols and values, which makes enormous effect on their attitudes to the problems Ukrainian state is currently facing. Another point that

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the development of Ukrainian Nation or ecological problems.

<sup>21</sup> Washington Post, June 18, 1997.

will be made below is the evident lack of a feeling of boundedness among Russian-speakers.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian-speaking diaspora in the Soviet successor states became an important topic in both academic studies and domestic policies of those countries. Considerations of whether Russian-speakers can constitute a “fifth column” naturally loyal to Russia and Russian foreign interests have been discussed quite widely and implications of this diaspora’s presence have been actively considered. However, the key to the understanding of the complex problems of inter-ethnic relations in the post-Soviet space lies in the legacy of the Soviet ethnopolitics. This section will attempt to analyse how identities of ethnic groups in the Soviet successor states are shaped by what used to be Soviet nationality policy and what are the implications of Soviet legacy for the new identity architecture. Below, there will be also explained why it is misleading to label the people speaking Russian language in the countries of the former USSR as ‘Russians’.

### **Institutionalised Nationhood**

Quick glance at the Soviet nationality policy unveils that in reality Soviet Union cultivated rather than tried to destroy ethnic groups. Ethnic groups could enjoy relative freedom of cultural development in their enclaves that were often institutionalised as quasi-state entities. Vernacular languages were allowed to be used really widely (significant step forward comparing with the Russian Empire), schools in union republics were often switched to local languages and local elite was encouraged to stimulate the development of ethnic cultures. As far as politics is concerned, ethnicity has also been acknowledged in practically every element of Soviet Political system. The very organisation of the state reflected ethnic structure of the USSR, making up the complex hierarchy of union republics, autonomous republics, autonomous areas etc, each of which was linked to particular ethnic group. Every state institution (Communist Party, Supreme Council, Ministries, KGB etc) had its equivalent in every ethnically-based autonomy, Politburo of the CPSU included leaders of local Communist Parties, and the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union consisted of two chambers, one of which was composed of

delegates equally representing national republics (it was called the Nationalities Council). It is necessary to say that all these institutional arrangements existed alongside the prosecution of national intelligentsia, repression against members of the local elite who disagreed with the official policies. Quite often these acts of the Soviet authority are seen as examples of policy aimed at reducing the national sentiments and destroying ethnic identities. However, it can be also seen as an illustration of competition between two visions of ethnic development. Lenin was pretty flexible to reconsider his stance to ethnic problems and after meeting serious resistance from nationally-minded representatives of nations that previously made up Russian Empire, Soviet nationality policy was adjusted with the immediate result of the creation of the Soviet federative state. The implications were however, far broader, since USSR acquired additional means to keep control over its territory and to convert potentially hostile ideology into political gains.

Soviet institutionalised nationality used to be fairly comprehensive policy. As Brubaker<sup>22</sup> pointed out complex and multidimensional system of Soviet ethnofederalism was complimented by “an equally elaborate and distinctive system of personal nationality... [which] divided the population of the state into an exhaustive and mutually exclusive set of national groups”. Each person was required to identify him/herself with one ethnic group and it was practically impossible to change once selected affiliation. The choice was also not entirely free, but dependent on the ethnic origins of person’s parents and apparently if both parents came from the same ethnic group, there was just one option available. Ethnic origin was written down in individual’s passports. This allows to conclude that Soviet Union was not really interested in eliminating ethnicity as irrelevant, but rather tried to redefine it in a way that would suit state’s long term objectives. Another arguments in favour of this view are apparent protectionism of local cultures if they agreed to embrace basic elements of communist ideology and were willing to praise Soviet Union or/and Communist Party. Consequently, local languages were heavily used in schools, universities, media, literature etc. Repression could be imposed only

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<sup>22</sup> Brubaker R, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationalism and the national question in the New Europe*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.30

in case in local intelligentsia began to advocate secession from the USSR or criticised basic principles underpinning Soviet state system.

Rogers Brubaker, who defined soviet nationality policy and “institutionalised nationhood”<sup>23</sup> pointed out two important aspects of this system, which fit very well in the line of arguments about ambiguity of Soviet ethnopolitics. Brubaker says<sup>24</sup> that USSR mixed two hardly compatible models – territorial-based national units and origin-based personal nationality. Official understanding of ‘nation’ as primordial construction was in clear conflict with the idea of ‘Soviet nation’ and territorial division of the USSR. Employment of both politico-territorial and cultural approach created confusion since congruence of republic borders and ethnic groups’ settlement were never achieved or even attempted to achieve. The problems of minorities in post-Soviet space to a large extent stem from this duality of Soviet ethnopolitics.

### **Economic Development and Ethnopolitics**

The evident ambiguity of Soviet ethnopolitics has been also reflected in a number of actions that allowed to launch a debate about a large-scale russification of national republics. Nationalist parties after the collapse of the USSR widely used the rhetoric of Russification to get publicity and they referred to the clear evidences of that process. There are really lots of proofs that Russian language enjoyed particularly favourable conditions in the former Soviet Union and Russians often got better access to important social resources. Clear trends towards the broadening of the scale of Russian language usage enables some researchers (Titma and Tuma<sup>25</sup>) to conclude that deliberate ethnically-motivated programme of russification has been designed in Kremlin and only lack of access to Soviet archives did not allow them to endorse their conclusions with the hard evidence. However, after the collapse of the USSR, the document, which researchers were sure existed, has never been found. It is almost certain that it actually never existed. However, melting pot rhetoric that Soviet leaders were often keen to popularise claimed that Soviet people would eventually merge in one entity

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.26

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.36

<sup>25</sup> Titma M. and Tuma N. Migration in the Soviet Union, 1992, p.44.

losing their ethnic distinctiveness. Despite the fact that Soviet Union never managed to develop a consistent strategy of prospective merger and Soviet leaders remarks about it remained rather prophetic, researchers were given a good argument to support the assumption of the deliberately designed destruction of nations comprising USSR. Though, some migration patterns in the Soviet Union could support this statement<sup>26</sup>, there is not enough evidence to conclude that USSR's migration policy was predominantly driven by the willingness to speed up nations' merger.

This however, still leaves to explain the reasons for the Soviet authority to promote Russian language, which is often regarded as another argument to prove the existence of policies aimed at establishing single Russian-centred nation instead of the ethnic diversity of the USSR. This paper argues that economical factors played crucial role in the process of Russian language adoption as Soviet-wide means of communication. Since the end of the Second World War, Soviet Union engaged in tough technological and industrial competition with the Western World and development of economy became the state's top priority. This, however, required a creation of the new class of highly qualified and mobile workers who would be willing to migrate to another part of the country to take part in the development of the industries Soviet Union needed most. Government encouraged this migration to the sites of emerging enterprises by providing competitive salaries, highly attractive compensation packages etc. New developments took place not only in the unexplored areas of Siberia, but in all union republics, including Baltic republics, Caucasus Republics, Ukraine etc. National republics usually lacked appropriate human resources to manage with the development of the industries on their own, which stimulated the influx of professionals from the industrially developed parts of the Union. Ethnic considerations were certainly taken into account as well, but perhaps not as one separate ones, but combined with security reasons. Some ethnic groups suspected in collaboration with Germans during the Second World War, or being viewed as unfavourable towards the Soviet Union or the Communist ideology were not

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<sup>26</sup> There is still a lack of consistency in migration of Russians in the Soviet Union. Migration patterns are deeply contradictory and there are examples to support the idea of ethnically-motivated migration as well as examples to deny this argument.

particularly trusted by the Soviet authority and every measure was taken to get assurance that representatives of these ethnic groups could not get access to sensitive or classified information. That resulted in large number of people being banned from taking jobs in many military-oriented industries, which apparently raised the demand to bring some workforce to substitute them. This exclusion, however, does not provide any evidence to support the argument about the Soviet Union trying to destroy nationalities, on the contrary this rather helped excluded groups to retain their distinctiveness and to avoid the prospects of assimilation. The reasons for the migration on the whole, it seems, were highly practical and motivated by security and economic interests but not by the irrational desire to stimulate the merger of all nationalities in the soviet Union.

At the same time, in order to make it practically feasible to develop industries and to build plants, Soviet Union had to create conditions for people to be easily adaptable to the setting they could be placed in. One of the pre-conditions was the ability to communicate in the same language. Russian language was an obvious alternative-free option. Most of those people that moved to the new development sites came from the territory of Russia, majority of the population of the USSR (and therefore greatest share of prospective employees) spoke Russian, and finally Soviet leadership used Russian more than any other language.

Extensive promotion of Russian as a compulsory school subject could pursue the aim to make people more mobile and more flexible in the conditions of rapidly developing market, and to use Russian as a sort of 'lingua franca' for the USSR. This process had definitely certain side-effects since it turned that local languages were not required in order to get competitive jobs and could be eventually replaced by Russian. Also arrival of a number of migrants from the other parts of the USSR made an effect on development of titular nationalities languages. These languages effectively did not develop vocabulary to cover a number of issue, especially related to the specific areas of industries or science, they were limited in public sphere which had to deal not only with the local residents but also with newcomers who were not able to communicate in local languages. No doubts, impact was strong and

impression of russification had been created. However, there is no evidence to say that these were the results that Soviet leadership aimed to achieve. On the contrary, one can argue that Russian nationalism was the only one Soviet Union did not develop. Anatol Lieven argues<sup>27</sup> that failure of Russians in the Soviet Successor states to create visible and effective secessionist movements, to organise themselves politically in a powerful organisation happened precisely because Russian national identity has never been fostered in the USSR. Russia was the only union republic that lacked many of those national institutions that other republics had in excess. There were Communist Parties of Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia etc, but no Communist Party of Russia. Russian history was not promoted as the history of Russia, but was taught as part of the History of the USSR. There are also other evidences to support this view. Soviet Union used symbols related to the history of Russian state and employed them for the benefits of the Communist ideology and tactical interests of the Soviet state, but these attempts again lacked consistency and were rarely linked with idea of promoting Russian nation. However, even being scattered and lacking clear structure, some of these elements managed to become a part of Soviet ideological rhetoric, which led to the emergence of two overlapping symbolic systems - Soviet and Russian. The result of this is a great confusion not only with the patterns of the Soviet ethnopolitics but also with the identity compositions of post-Soviet Russian-speakers.

Soviet Union was attempting to create an umbrella ideology which would suit everyone residing in the state and this ideology embraced some elements of Russian ethnic identity, such as Russian language and some events of Russian history. However these were not the key elements of the new ideology (in case of Russian language it was rather communicating tool), which also included such notions as equality, state centrality, welfare provisions, internationalism etc. This identity was also centred around symbols related to the Second World War history and to the Cold War contest. New identification was very much related to the glory and success of

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<sup>27</sup> Lieven A. The weakness of Russian nationalism. **Error! Bookmark not defined., Error! Bookmark not defined.**

the USSR as a nuclear superpower and this fact has made crucial effect on the development of post-Soviet identities in the areas where share of newcomers was substantial. This was probably the symbolic system that Soviet Union referred to as 'United Soviet nation' while discussion possible merger of nations in the USSR and definitely misled analysts to think that new national identity was to be created. In reality this was nothing more than simple umbrella style political identity comparable to the British Identity in the UK.

Despite this Soviet ideology was aimed at everyone in the Soviet Union, migrant Russian-speaking part of the population was particularly easy target. Being moved from their traditional places of residence, these people lost in many cases links with their traditional institutions. Family connections, church, local residential communities that provided individual with a strong sense of existential continuity became unavailable since local communities were not usually keen on accepting newcomers and some traditional institutions could not be possibly recreated. In addition, migrants had to cope with a new unknown environment, new community and to adapt to entirely new conditions of life. This made institutions capable of producing some community atmosphere tremendously important. However, the only available institutions were those organised and inspired by the state and the Communist Party and people had to use them to withstand the cultural shock and other pressures related to changing their place. Apparently, this increased the exposure to the symbols promoted by the communist party and the Soviet identity could compete with ethnic loyalties far more successfully than when it had to deal with identities endorsed by long-lasting institutions deeply rooted in local communities. People permanently residing in the areas where pace of industrial development and a number of incoming labour force were high, were also particularly exposed to the 'Soviet' ideology and despite they were not primarily targeted, stable communication with the incoming workers as well as exceptional proximity to the institutions transferring the symbols and values of the new identity made them especially vulnerable to the influence of this identity.

It can be concluded, therefore, that people who were engaged in the process of post-war migration, in development of industrial areas, in military were the

first to get affected by the newly developed umbrella identity. There are several reasons to explain this – this mobile stratum was effectively the only social group in the former USSR that entirely broke links with traditional communities, was used to changing environment and exposed to different cultural influences. It was also the one that most urgently needed some symbolic system to fill the gap that emerged after they separated from their traditional places of residences and settled in totally different cultural environment.

### **Post-Soviet Identity: attempts to explain**

There are three main approaches to explaining the identity of Russian-speaking minorities in the republics of the former USSR. The first one defines this minority in purely ethnic terms and categorises it as 'Russian' or any other ethnic group depending on the descent. This approach is particularly favoured by the Russian Federation's officials since it gives them ground to meddle in the affair of the states with substantial Russian minorities. This approach, shared by many Russian researchers (E.Payin<sup>28</sup>), simplifies situation quite a lot, assuming that identity composition of those living in the near abroad is basically the same as of Russian residing in Russian Federation. The origins of this approach derive from the understanding of nation as based on descent and predetermined by the parent's ethnicity. This view gets support and might be even favoured by some members of non-titular minorities, due to the fact that Russia currently cultivates its own identity, which includes vital elements of the identity previously I have referred to as 'Soviet' (which creates a bit misleading picture).

Another approach says that Russian and other non-titular nationals have much more in common between themselves than with their co-nationals from the places these migrants came from. This, therefore, allows to classify these migrants as one cultural group sharing roughly the same symbolic system

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<sup>28</sup> See Payin's sections in *The new Russian diaspora : Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics* (ed. by V. Shlapentokh, M. Sendich, and E. Payin) London : M.E. Sharpe, 1994.

based on language. D.Laitin defined them as newly emerging 'Russian-speaking nationality'<sup>29</sup>.

The third assumption suggests that non-titular population of newly emerging states lacks strong identity in general, is highly segmented, but already possesses some crucial elements that will eventually ensure the integration of this population in the local societies. It is said that Russian-speakers have some parts of their symbolic system mutually compatible with the one of titular nations. Some mass-media in Baltic states call Russian-speaking groups in soviet successor states 'Eurorussians'<sup>30</sup>, implying that they retaining some elements of old Soviet identity, nevertheless share important symbols common for identities major European nations.

The last two approaches can be merged since they have quite a lot in common. Both suggest that Russian-speaking population undergo serious identity crisis caused by the collapse of the symbolic system that have associated with before. Both also assume that groups are heavily fragmented internally and distanced from their former homeland both geographically and spiritually. The difference is in the way that might adopt new identity and the implications of this process. In the case of Laitin theory, common language should serve as a basis for new identity, whereas the third approach implies much broader ground embracing complex politically based identity.

### **Post-Soviet Identity: implications of the ambiguity**

Now it would be useful to summarise the arguments presented above and to outline the structure of Soviet identity and to determine the effect it makes on post-Soviet Russian-speaking Diaspora.

Most authors writing on identity problems of Russian-speakers agreed that the identity composition of this group is considerably different from the one of Russians in Russia proper and there is little evidence to say that these people share the same values and symbols as their counterparts in the Russian Federation. There is however, a disagreement over the issue of how their

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<sup>29</sup> Laitin D. Identity in formation : the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad. Ithaca ; London : Cornell University Press, 1998.

identity is constructed and what are the underpinning and unifying symbols of this group. The principal arguments in this debate have been outlined in the section above.

Post-Soviet identity of Russian-speakers is a result of inconsistent and ambiguous Soviet ethnopolitics. On the one hand, people were assigned to a specific ethnic group and various political structures reminded them of this imagined membership. At the same time people were exposed to several systems of symbols and values - connected either to the ideology promoted by the Soviet authority or to the cultural identity of an ethnic group person belonged to. However, cultural identity was not always supported by an institutions capable of reinforcing it, especially while considering migrant communities in industrialised areas of the USSR. Instead, institutions imposing values of the Soviet umbrella identity could gain upper hand and promote symbols relevant to it. As a result, people still perceived themselves as a part of some ethnic groups based solely on descent, but differences in symbols to which their identities were anchored were really dramatic. This produced a great number of problems for those communities after USSR collapsed. They were regarded by both titular ethnic groups and themselves as members of Russian community with which they, however, had very marginal links.

Therefore, it is perfectly justified to talk about a new community different from the Russian community in Russia. It has to be mentioned that some elements of two identities overlap which leads to even greater confusion, but fundamental principles are considerably different. At the same time, post-Soviet Russian-speaking communities do not share the same symbolic system in every post-Soviet country, because they were certainly exposed to different cultural influences (in larger countries like Ukraine this also entails regional differences in identity composition). Nevertheless, underpinning values normally coincide and the main uniting factor is the shared language.

Bearing in mind that institutions imposing this new identity were mainly Soviet sponsored it is logical to think that values these institutions promotes the most

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<sup>30</sup> I do not know who is the author of this definition, but I discovered in the papers by Eesti Paevaleht journalist V. Hohlov.

would be dominant in the structure of the identity of these people. Therefore, one can argue that state-centred and egalitarian values should dominate the identity architecture making these people pre-disposed towards welfare benefits, state run services and extensive security net guaranteed for everyone at a decent level. Another important point to make is the great flexibility of this community - people that constituted the most mobile part of the Soviet population and lived in a highly volatile environment managed to develop an ability to adapt to new conditions and to embrace new values much easier than those who remained strongly connected to traditional community-oriented institutions.

Coming to a point of how NATO is positioned in the identity of these people, it is vital to make several important remarks. First of all, being strongly determined welfare state adepts, Russian-speakers are likely to support left-wing parties or any other organisations that advocate values of equality and a state guaranteeing most of important provisions. Secondly, having symbols of identity linked to the Soviet past that included the Cold War period and being proud of what Soviet Union did then, Russian speakers might have developed a highly suspicious attitude towards the West and its initiatives (NATO included). Thirdly, due to an important role played by state institutions in the life of these people, especially during the toughest periods of adaptation to new environment and cultural settings, strong paternalistic attitudes have been developed. This attitude, it seems, has not been contained to the recognition of the ultimate role played by the state, but also became extended to any legitimate authority.

Finally, it would be relevant to make a point that in many respects the system of values and symbols embraced by the Russian-speakers has not been reinforced since the collapse of the USSR. Together with the adaptation abilities, this allows sufficient room for attempts to alter existing identity and to neutralise the strength of existing symbols. Reformulation of national identity is usually more dynamic process in a society undergoing some systemic change. "While the redefinition of national identities is generally a gradual process, under situation of persistent stress even well-established identities can change at a remarkable rate, and a people's collective memory can be re-

arranged quite quickly”<sup>31</sup>. Post-Soviet states, and Ukraine in particular are hence in a situation that allows considerable alterations to basic symbolic constructions especially those that reflect nation’s relations to the external world, to ‘the others’.

Advent of Russian-speakers in the Union republics was a process driven by mainly economic and security interests of the central government. Necessity to get sufficient labour force in some areas where key industries were being developed combined with the distrust Soviet authorities had in certain nationalities, produces migration of people into the areas of rapid economic development.

Identity of Russian speakers can, therefore, be defined as ‘Soviet’. Many researchers agreed that such identity indeed existed, though its symbols are still hard to define. It seems that this identity was mainly constructed around the symbols of Communist State which included the ideology and mythology of the USSR and loyalty was largely based on the glory and might of the nuclear superpower. Soviet ideology was trying to unite people around some common ideas and experiences that people could be proud of. Among those, the important role was allocated to the history of the Second World Wars in which Soviet Union won and the Cold War confrontation, which was seen by Soviet people as a fight for just causes. Another set of values, which is important to mention is egalitarian one. People got used to think in terms of state guaranteeing basic welfare to everyone and providing people with all important services. There was an apparent stress on equal access to resources and equal redistribution of national wealth among all members of society.

It is finally important to mention that despite having a number of symbols in common, Russian-speakers in Ukraine has never developed a sense of united community, which is absolutely vital for any collective action. Russian-speakers are deeply fragmented group scattered over a large territory and separated by differences in economic interests. Moreover, they are subjects to competing local identities - many of these people have lived in their

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<sup>31</sup> Prizel I. National identity and foreign policy. Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 8.

localities for generations and have strong attachments to their regions, towns and cities. The group defined here as Russian-speakers lacks even common history and it is composed of individuals some of whom have lived in their localities for ages, some arrived relatively recently etc. The idea of group's communality has never been promoted and, as it has been discussed above, people were obliged to select their nationality, which obviously resulted in another impediment to their merger in some 'imagined community'. Large territory where Russian-speakers have been settled also contributed to the difficulties in articulation of joint interest. Bearing in mind economic specialisation of various areas it becomes clear that symbolic communality can not be underpinned by shared economic interests, which makes political mobilisation even more challenging. In fact, the economic diversity has created a serious ground for prospective conflict with, making groups to compete for the scarce resources in post-Communist Ukraine.

Many of the Russian speakers in Ukraine fail to associate themselves with one clear identity group with a notable preference given to the 'Soviet' identity. Some opinion polls indicate that about 25-40%<sup>32</sup> of residents in eastern Ukraine (especially in Donbass area) opt for 'Soviet' when asked about their group identification. There is an opinion poll that has come up with some 84% of Donetsk residents as thinking of themselves as Soviet<sup>33</sup>. One should remember that quite often people identifying themselves as Soviet refer to different symbols or are unable to elaborate on what peculiar values and symbols this identity includes. This results from the fact that a number of competing symbolic systems are competing for these people creating considerable hurdles to realisation of a group's communality.

It seems relevant to restate the argument that there is a great deal of symbols shared by the Russian-speakers and inherited from the Soviet Union, however, they are placed in a highly competitive environment and there is a missing link clearly underlining the group's uniformity and overshadowing lesser dividing lines. For the time being, though, shared identity building of

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<sup>32</sup> Politichnyy Portret Ukrainy, Kiev 1994; Chernysh N. Romanyuk Shid-Zahid: Compromis chi Konfrontaciya. Sociologichna Dumka, no.4, 1996.

<sup>33</sup> Smith G. Wilson A. Rethinking Russia's post-Soviet Diaspora: The potential for political mobilisation in Eastern Ukraine and North-East Estonia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, Jul 1997, Issue 5, p. 845.

which Soviet Union has launched is rather underdeveloped and a lot needs to be done for this identity to become a completed project.

Hence, it is likely to be difficult for any ethnic entrepreneur to mobilise the entire Russian-speaking community for some collective action taking into account the sheer complexity of the problems such attempt will inevitably entail. Nevertheless, potentially there are some chances to unite the group in question by actively exploiting the shared systems of symbols and values and by promoting the notion of communality. There are elements incorporated in the identity composition of the Russian-speakers that allow to launch such attempt. Whether local elites in Russian speaking areas are able and willing to champion such convergence of fragmented groups in the Eastern, Southern and Central parts of Ukraine will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

### **Part 3. Ethnic Entrepreneurs: Restrained Capabilities**

After reaching a conclusion that Russian-speakers are highly incoherent group lacking clear identity, it seems appropriate to consider the ability of elites representing this group to take measures to build some identity based on the available symbols. It will be affirmed that Russian-speaking elite in Ukraine is considerably restrained in its capacity to initiate identity-building and resource-mobilising process. Inheriting fragmentation and mutual competitiveness from the Soviet Union, this elite appeared to be exposed to the policy of elite accommodation pursued by Ukrainian government that consisted of creation of an institutional framework enabling wide participation, integrating minority's elite and activating internal cleavages inside this elite. It will be asserted that the extensive participatory provisions combined with the specific system of power-allocation indeed prevented attempts to mobilise residents of the Russian-speaking areas and to benefit on their discontent.

This part will first look at the process of elite accommodation and investigate the content of Ukrainian accommodative strategies. Then some suggestions on how this accommodation can be sustained and how institutional development of the Ukrainian political system may be shaped to ensure that accommodation process is irreversible will be made.

#### ***Elite Accommodation in post-Communist Ukraine***

If one is to understand the factors stimulating or discouraging ethnic elite to attempt to mobilise the group, it is essential to consider two crucial points - (1) the unity of this elite and (2) the extent to which it enjoys access to state institutions and resource allocation bodies. In this section, both points will be addresses together with the examination of the degree of control the government has over local elites. However, it seems appropriate to start with the brief analysis of the real capacity of elite to organise its constituency for any kind of action.

This paper tries to make a point that accommodation of any cultural minority and its social integration should begin with the accommodation of this minority's elite. This is especially vital for societies with strong and deeply

rooted state-centric values. In case of Russian-speaking minority this paper considers, these values play particularly important role. It has been stressed above that the very composition of identity predisposes people to this - vision of a state as a provider of basic services, welfare provisions etc. resulted in full reliance on the state and/or other legitimate sources of power. Talking about legitimate power-sources, one should understand the origins of those - when state lost some ability to maintain welfare provisions at the level expected by the general public, other institutions and individuals appeared in a position to assume this state function and to employ it for their own benefits. Therefore, in many cases, importance of local administrations, some managers of particular enterprises who managed to replace state as a welfare-providers has grown considerably. These people utilised the access to resources to build up their positive image and seize more power in the areas they had their interests in.

Another influential elite group is political units associated with the left wing ideology. The significance of this groups has dual origin - first of all these parties and organisations are using symbols of the Soviet past and some rhetoric of their Soviet predecessors. Bearing in mind the importance of these things for Russian-speaking minority it is easy to understand that people advocating these ideas are practically destined to find considerable support among the community in question. Another contributing factor is the limited access left-wing parties enjoy to the state institutions, which allowed them to dissociate themselves from the deterioration of living conditions and impoverishment of populations after the collapse of the USSR. Exploiting the sentiments to the past, fears of radical Ukrainian nationalism and welfare values Communists, Socialists and other left-wingers managed to become a dominant power in the areas of Eastern, Southern Ukraine and Crimea. These areas constantly supply a greatest number of Communist and other Left wing MPs to the national Parliament - Verhovna Rada (see Appendix 6) and local administration in the areas.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there are two clusters of local elite that might be in a position to influence public opinion or to mobilise it for some kind of collective action. One cluster consists of local leaders who built their

power by redistributing resources to which they got access and the second one is made up of left-wing politicians and political parties who cultivated the Soviet-linked values and tried to benefit from it. These two clusters should not be seen as entirely independent and it must be noted that they quite often overlap making situation even more complicated.

Therefore, one may conclude that there is a theoretical probability that elite can utilise the levers it has to mobilise people against the policy of central government aimed to establish strong links with NATO. However, theoretical possibility does not immediately imply a practical result.

There are two questions that have to be answered in this respect - (1) Is local elite capable to confront decisions of the central government efficiently and (2) To what extent does local elite oppose NATO and support pro-Russian orientation of Ukraine?

It must be emphasised that the scope of political opportunities Russian-speaking elite has enjoyed in Ukraine was remarkably wide. Unlike Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia there were no hurdles in a form of citizenship and linguistic restrictions. Both Ukrainian presidents have actively employed elite from the Eastern and Southern areas to take leading positions in Kiev and most Ukrainian prime-ministers came from the Russian-speaking areas. The power in Kiev was actually shared between Russophones and Ukrainophones from all areas of the country. Kuchma after becoming a president paid particular attention to the safeguarding of local elite representation in the central bodies creating a Council of Regions in 1994 and for a long time advocating some federate arrangements (dropped only during Constitutional negotiations in 1996). At the same time, local elites being able to influence decision making on the state level had to take account of the fact that power structure in Ukraine was extremely centralised and local administrations were not granted with many rights. All important decisions in respect to distribution and redistribution of scarce resources (in particular privatisation of the most attractive assets) have been taken in Kiev, appointment for the positions with the greatest power in regions were also made by the President and government. This stimulated the reorientation of the elites to Kiev and contributed to the emergence of an important factor that eventually limited the

capability of Russian-speaking elites to stimulate some collective action. The leading national positions were contested by elite groups from six major areas - Donbas, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Kharkiv, Crimea and Odessa. Five out of six were Russian-speaking and their competition between each other prevented any attempts to unite Russian-speakers against nationalising policies pursued by the government. For a long period of time groups from Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk were two leading actors in Ukrainian policy. Access to power in both cases was inherited from the Soviet Union, when both regions were known as launching pads for the positions in Ukrainian and Soviet governmental structures. Being based on different economic foundations they failed to merge which gave additional impetus to their mutual competition. Therefore, availability of political opportunities has not resulted in the mobilisation of resources (as one could expect) but the scope of these opportunities actually prevented ethnic mobilisation by accommodating all segments of elite and activating cleavages inside Russian-speaking groups. Disjoined elite appeared to be unable to raise large scale support to ethnically-driven issues and unwilling to do so having sufficient range of political opportunities (which might be lost in case of the restoration of the union with Russia and other CIS countries). Disagreeing on a number of issues and fighting for national position, local elites could not act in concert also when the foreign policy priorities were formulated. It turned that diverse economic and political interests resulted in a lack of a common vision of how Ukrainian foreign policy should evolve and which allegiances Ukraine should seek. This obviously reduced chances of political mobilisation making the forming of the communality sense among Russian-speakers even less likely.

The Communist Party is a slightly different case. Being by all means the most popular political organisation in Ukraine, it has effectively been pushed to opposition and marginalised. The only places it enjoyed considerable access to power were local administrations in the Eastern parts of the country. However, due to the peculiar distribution of power between national authorities and local institutions, this did not entail serious implications on a national scale. Local authorities are to a large extent dependent on the national government and in order to succeed they are forced to negotiate and

compromise. The power of the president to remove undesirable officials from the office also allows to oust the most radically-minded individuals (like the leader of Luhansk branch of the Communist Party, who was elected a mayor of Luhans) from the positions in local administrations.

Communist Party used to be one of a few political groups in Ukraine that have demanded the restoration of the Soviet Union. However, the position of this organisation has been gradually moderated and, it seems, there are two factors contributing to this process. First of all, Communist Party was also subject to elite accommodation - communist were granted some positions they sought, acquired access to economic resources and managed to secure considerable representation in the Parliament. The government, compromising on the most sensitive issues, such as Soviet time symbols and holidays and trying to split the party from within by granting posts and benefits to some of the party's members, managed to force party to reconsider its stance on the issue of the very existence of the Ukrainian state. And despite Communist are still very nostalgic about the Soviet Union, their aspiration to rebuild it has certainly lost momentum. On the other hand, communists striving to become a party representing all areas of the country could not afford to narrow their support to the Russian-speakers only. Also being contested by other left-wing groups (Socialists, Progressive-Socialists, Social-Democrats), they had to come up with a set of slogans that would be more acceptable to a broader electorate. It must be said that the evolution of the communist party undergoes rather slowly and it is virtually impossible to talk about the radical changes. Soviet-style rhetoric is still there but its effect is certainly diminishing. So does the public support to the party - the inability to resist the President and the government in the recent (January-February 2000) take-over of the Parliament illustrates this point rather well.

It is appropriate to mention some fringe political groups (though most of them can hardly be defined as elite) advocating reunification with Russia and specifically targeting Russian-speakers. Such parties as Civic Congress, the Party of Slavonic Unity, to an extent Interregional Block of Reform are actively trying to capitalise on a nostalgic feeling to the Soviet past and on the national sentiments of Russians-speakers. Parties are confined to the Eastern Ukraine

and are virtually unknown in other parts of the country. If one is to assess the efficiency of these organisations, it will soon become apparent that all these parties are enjoying marginal popularity and fail to get either elected in any representative bodies or to organise any visible protest. This fact indirectly supports the conclusion drawn above that ethnic elements in the identity of Russian-speakers are insignificant. Parties cultivating ethnic sentiments are consistently failing and success of the communist in the Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine can be explained not by their appeals to the ethnic feelings but by the fact that the party exploits socialist, egalitarian values and actively utilises Soviet symbols.

Another factor worth mentioning here is external influence. Russia that could theoretically play an important role in the making up the common identity of the Russian-speakers is not seriously represented in the areas under consideration. Raids of Russian political leaders and other signs of support from both radical Russian nationalistic organisations and Russian government are inconsistent and sporadic. Only Communist Party of the Russian Federation provides stable support to their Ukrainian counterparts, though it favours a faction of the Ukrainian communists led by the speaker of Crimean Parliament L. Grach, who in a way contests the leadership of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Practically, flashes of activity among Russian-speakers groups as well as support from Russian organisation occur normally before elections or some other political event with high profile. In the intervals, pro-Russian organisations lose the pace and appear to be effectively invisible. This lack of determination and endurance is especially sharply seen in contrast to the stamina and consistency of Ukrainian nationalist movements that actively promote their values and wage political campaigns regardless of political timetable.

The most challenging test of possible ethnic mobilisation so far has been experienced by Ukraine in March-May 1999, when NATO launched a military offensive against Yugoslavia. The general attitude to the NATO's action was overtly negative and there was a great deal of sympathy to Yugoslavia. All public opinion polls indicated a significant drop in support to Ukraine's co-operation with NATO and the rate of disapproval of NATO's intervention was

extremely high. This moment was a golden opportunity for Russian-speaking elite to boost the identity-building process and to strengthen their position by converting popular resentment in an ethnically-driven collective action. However, nothing worth special attention happened. Apart of a few pickets organised by the Communist Party and several rallies in the Eastern areas and Crimea, each of which involved no more then several hundreds people, no action of mass protest or solidarity with Serbs took place. Local elite from the Russian-speaking areas remained indifferent, which is remarkable bearing in mind the forthcoming presidential elections and the chances to get publicity. The only visible action undertaken on request of Communist were hearings in Parliament that however, failed to produce any tangible outcome. Neither decision to suspend Ukraine's co-operation with NATO was taken, nor were other proposals to limit in any way relations with the alliance. Despite the majority (consisted mainly of the left-wingers) of those present voted in favour of the proposed resolutions, the great number of MPs, which neglected the very fact of parliamentary hearings and did not show up, did not allow the decision to pass. Almost half of MPs representing Russian-speaking areas were absent or did not bother to vote (being physically present in the chamber). This fact is indicative of an interest these members of a local elites have had in the issue that could potentially result in the greatest possible mobilisation on the ethnic ground. Failure to capitalise on the raising hostility towards NATO is a fact that tells a lot about both elite aptitude to utilise available resources and about the real potential for converting of a popular discontent into serious consequential action. Comparing Ukrainian situation to the one in Russia, one can easily spot the dramatic differences - an outbreak of anti-NATO actions magnified by the radical stance taken by all elite groups stands in clear contrast with the fairly calm reaction of Ukrainian population and Ukrainian elite. The government obviously expressed its concern with the NATO's bombings and even attempted to broker some peaceful settlement (unsuccessfully), it stressed once again that Ukraine had no immediate intentions of joining the alliance, but no measures able to jeopardise the relations with NATO and the USA were taken.

It is now appropriate to ask whether Russian-speaking elite in Ukraine is pre-determined to oppose NATO co-operation with Ukraine. Some research conducted among Ukrainian elite in 1997 addressed the problem of the attitudes to NATO and results did not show overwhelming support of any of possible future scenario. Only 34% of the nation-wide sample ruled out the possibility of Ukraine joining alliance, whereas the rest was divided not over the idea of joining but over the timing of this - 28% considering that Ukraine had to enter the alliance at that moment and 38% thinking that the event would have to happen some time in the future<sup>34</sup>. Results, however, are somewhat different in Eastern and Southern areas of Ukraine. Naturally, opposition to NATO is stronger among the elite there with 49% in Eastern Ukraine and 36% in Southern opposing the very idea of prospective membership<sup>35</sup>. Being obviously indicative of considerable opposition to the membership in NATO, these results clearly demonstrate the lack of any dominant view on this issue. Elite is deeply divided over the problem and any common stance seems to be inconceivable. In practical terms this means that the risk of possible popular mobilisation is not so huge, since elite is unlikely to unite. The possible driving force behind any possible consolidation of elite might lie in economic interests of financial groups affiliated with the Russian speaking areas. Since general opposition to NATO comes from Russia, which strongly objects any forms of NATO-Ukraine integration, it may be assumed that economic links that bind Ukraine and Russian in general as well as Russia with Ukrainian financial groups could be used as levers to press the Russian-speaking elite. So far economic factors have not played significant role in elite's self-determination and even the declining trade with Russian limited the Russian leverage to press Ukrainian economic elite. However, with the processes of privatisation and economic reforms speeded up, economic links might get back in play and to become an influential variable. The ratio between Russian and Western capital in Ukraine will have important implications for the prospects of political mobilisation and ethnic tension in Ukraine.

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<sup>34</sup> Bilinsky Y. Endgame in NATO's enlargement: the Baltic States and Ukraine. Westport, Conn. : Praeger, 1999, p. 27

There are several conclusions that can be made regarding the prospects to mobilise Russian-speakers for some kind of collective action to manifest the discontent with enhanced co-operation with NATO. Apparently there is a potential for such mobilisation, however its practical realisation seems to be very problematic. There are at least two major impediments to such action - division within the elite based both on ideological differences and regional-economic divisions and the strength of the central power which is able to tame effectively any attempt of local barons to assert themselves. Another important reason is the diminishing importance of connections with Russia and therefore shrinking ability of Russia to influence Ukrainian partners. This makes Ukrainian elite less likely to risk to confront central authorities since benefits are no longer so significant.

However, Ukraine is still very volatile place and dramatic changes can happen at any time. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to talk about the sustainability of the situation described above and about the probable trends. It is, though, possible to suggest what measures might be taken to stabilise the existing situation. Next part will deal with this problem in greater details.

### ***Sustaining the ethnic accommodation: institutions and ethnicity***

It has been already said that relations between national identity and institutional framework of the political system are reciprocal. Institutions are central to any conflict and are extensively used by ethnic groups both as symbols providing some grounds for group's boundedness and as units imposing new symbols and strengthening existing ones. However, in societies divided along culturally based lines institutions serve not only as identity-reinforcing bodies but also aim to create a viable framework to establish inter-group communication, to guarantee the protection of group rights and to accommodate the ethnic differences.

The prime task of the institutions in deeply divided societies is to achieve the integration of the elite groups of all ethnic communities. Apparently, elements of the political system mainly affect elite organised in various political units

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<sup>35</sup> Bilinsky Y. Endgame in NATO's enlargement: the Baltic States and Ukraine. Westport, Conn. : Praeger, 1999, p. 27

(parties, organisations etc.), which in their turn foster or retard ethnic conflict. Therefore, sustainable changes in identity compositions are only possible through incorporation of elite into political system by establishing a set of adequate provisions for political participation and access to vital resources. This section will look at how political institutions responsible for political representation and participation can be adjusted to minimise the chances to mobilise ethnic community for some collective action. The answer to this question is absolutely essential for Ukraine, since it bears implications for the sustainability in identity changes and, thus for the future place of the country in the international system. The purpose of this section is to suggest the best scenario for Ukraine to build institutions that will allow to go on integrating Russian-speaking elite and, thus to perpetuate changes in identity composition of the groups sharing hostile attitudes towards Western organisations, and NATO in particular.

Participation of ethnic minority in political life is a vital element of smoothly functioning political structure in the divided countries and can be ensured through a number of channels - power-sharing, regional or cultural autonomy, specific electoral arrangements and other elements ensuring representation and promoting wider political participation.

The general impact of representation system on the development of ethnic conflict is widely accepted. However, there is very little consensus over the issue of what type of representation system would suit ethnically divided societies better. The general debate is taking place between the advocates of proportional system of representation and the supporters of the majoritarian one.

System of proportional representation is often seen to be more appropriate for ethnically segregated societies since it is supposed to reflect the actual lines dividing this society in the most accurate way. It is considered as more adequate substitution of majoritarian system because the latter tends to exclude entire blocks from political institutions on the regular basis. It is also viewed as a perfect means to mitigate ethnic tension and to moderate demands of radical ethnic parties. The main advantage of the proportional system is its ability to organise regular access to political structures of

particular state and, by doing that, to fulfil the main aspiration of minority elite. Another important consideration in favour of PR system is its alleged capacity to activate (or even create) internal cleavages within ethnic group and, therefore, to decrease the effect of ethnic issue on political matters. The parties that would emerge as a result of internal split would be more eager to co-operate with their counterparts from the other part of society creating, thus, cross-communal links and diminishing the significance of ethnic conflict. In sum, one can notice that scope of representation (with the focus on group) is pivotal to the PR system and group's rights are supposed to be protected in the best way available.

Opponent of the system pointed out at a number of potential dangers embedded in the proportional representation. The most obvious one is a possibility that extremist political groups would enter political arena and, thus, would constitute a threat to the very existence of the state. It is also not so evident that simple representation of particular political party would lead it to moderate demands and to reduce the importance of ethnic elements in the political platform. On the contrary there is a strong probability that PR might cherish separatism and even lead to the disintegration of a state. Ethnic groups often live in small, geographically separated enclaves and political party having overwhelming support in one of those enclaves could perfectly develop an aspiration to gain power at a national level. Lacking technical possibility to do so within existent political framework, it can start to cultivate a strive for secession that might easily lead to the protracted instability of the entire state.

There is also an argument against PR based on purely technical particularities of the electoral process. Typical attribute of proportional electoral system is electoral threshold which can become a strong weapon that excludes smaller groups unable to surpass it. If group is internally divided (historically or as a result of PR influence on it) or lacks internal cohesion underpinned by clear and powerful identity, PR system is perfectly capable to marginalise it. Consistently excluded group may, in its turn, develop extremist or anti-systemic stance on existent political institutions and, thus, exacerbate ethnic situation inside the state. To conclude, one can say that PR with its focus on

group representation prefers segments of society with clearly spelled value system and internal coherence, and group with substantial degree of internal separation is likely to be underrepresented under PR. Another reverse effect of PR is the capability to reinforce identity rather than to weaken it, which would therefore freeze ethnic conflict instead of resolving it.

The possible substitution of PR is majoritarian system and its various modifications. It denies the crucial importance of group representation and emphasises the role of individuals. The focus is switched from the scope of representation to its quality, which is seen as the factor facilitating establishing cross-communal links and allowing more space for manoeuvre. It acknowledges the possibility of internal division within any given group and thus recognised the existence of different interests that can be stretched beyond the boundaries of ethnic group. Individual competition is also more likely than PR to create cleavages in the group, but unlike previous electoral system the probability that it will lead to the virtual exclusion of the group is much lower.

In terms of pure inter-group competition, majoritarian system make it much more challenging task to maintain such competition and to prevent cross-segmental links to be established. Individuals would feel less constrained by their political and group affiliations that normally might prevent them from entering alliances with members of other groups. Increased communication between members of the group and their membership in the same functional group will inevitably facilitate the dilution of the ethnic lines that divide a particular society.

Majoritarian system is therefore more likely to produce sustainable results if one aims to minimise the effect of ethnic division in a society, but it by no means is an ultimate solution and its side effects are apparent. There is, for instance, a danger to exclude group from political participation in case group is dispersed throughout the country and does not constitute a majority in any of the regions. Numerical domination of majority will lead in this case to the consistent denial of minority's members' bids for seats in representational bodies.

There is also a pretty strong correlation with the identity of the given group and its relations with others. Strong integrity could (at least in the short run) decrease the potentially positive effect of majoritarian mechanisms and still make it vote for one ethnic party. Group can adjust its representation institutions according to the framework it is placed in. In some cases there is another danger worth mentioning, namely strong inter-group hostility, which might hamper attempts to establish inter-group links. Open co-operation with members of minority might be a factor damaging political standing of the party and making it less popular among the core ethnic group. This situation is the one that can cause particular concern since it is potentially the most capable to deprive group access to the resources.

It may be argued, nevertheless, that systems that stress on individuals rather than on groups are more appropriate in the societies with strong ethnic separation since their potential to bridge communities is greater than ability to exacerbate a situation. However, both group-centred and individual-centred systems are not perfect and has obvious disadvantages. It would be reasonable to suggest that some kind of mixed system is the most apt to keep the balance between collective and individual rights. In many cases of divided societies exactly mixed systems were adopted and their functioning proved to be the most adequate way to secure 'ethnic peace' in such societies.

The disadvantage of the simple electoral models is their long term effect. Results of ethnic accommodation and integration are not coming immediately and co-operation between groups takes ages to be established. In the interim, inter-group hostility and distrust can seriously hinder and slow down the processes of ethnic integration. It is obvious that PR system is more vulnerable to such situations. Despite it guarantees certain provisions to groups, it also forces them to manifest their affiliation and to declare their political and cultural goals. This by itself might be explosive and is able to hamper any attempts to establish communication between communities. Moreover, such manifest means of participation may result in certain exclusion of the group - goals that ethnic groups aims to achieve might become non-accomplishable. Ethnic conflict under such conditions may recreate itself.

It is evident, however, that in some societies the seeming inability of a party representing an ethnic group to deliver some tangible results does not bring about any worsening of the ethnic relations. The one of the possible explanations is existence (alongside the manifest means) of latent mechanisms that facilitate minority participation and allow access to relevant resources other than public politics. Latent mechanisms are appropriate in two cases - if ethnic group is legally denied access to political sphere and if legal mechanisms prove to be insufficient for ethnic group to achieve desirable goals. In both cases minority is forced to look for alternative arrangements that satisfy two conditions - have efficient access to power-structures and do not contradict to basic foundations of group identity. Specific mechanisms of latent access may vary depending on specific case and, for the purpose of this paper, it would be appropriate to review briefly the ways of functioning of both systems and the range of options available for Russian-speaking minority in Soviet-successor states.

The evolving political system in Ukraine provided considerable space for both participation and accommodation. From the very beginning, political system made an emphasis of individual competition, which prevented clear alignments along ethnic lines and ethnic parties effectively never emerged (or remained fringe groups) in Ukraine. It is also important to mention that having a country composed of internally fragmented groups, system based on the quality of representation hindered the possible consolidation of ethnic groups - institutions capable to reinforce the identity and to promote an ideology that would unite disjointed clusters of population had very little chances to emerge. Though, the development of the party system has been impeded as well, the benefits clearly outnumbered the losses and when in 1998, first elections with the mixed proportional-majoritarian system took place, all parties resting their programmes on ethnic sentiments effectively failed. At the same time, ethnic groups were not excluded and political system can be given a credit for creating a provision for representation of all ethnic groups. Avoiding structuring of the party system along ethnic lines, political system enabled ethnic minorities (and mainly Russian-speakers) to enter nation-wide political organisations and to use their structures for accessing state institutions and

vital resources. Communist party eagerly incorporated Russian-speakers, however, being a party that has tried to maximise support in all areas it could not afford to narrow its political platform to the protection of one single ethnic group. This, in return, has gradually moderated the position of minority making it less confrontational and used to participate in the institutions associated with the Ukrainian state. Therefore, one can easily detect the twofold effect of the political system Ukraine used in 1991-98 - it served both as a tool to accommodate elite and as a mechanism to promote the meaning of nationwide institutions as bounding symbols.

It has been said that centralisation of the political system assisted in the process of the elite accommodation since it has become increasingly important to establish co-operative relations with the central power. However, this was not the only element of the political system that contribute to the accommodation of elite. Institutions responsible for the management of political competition also encouraged elite to abandon the confrontational position and to attempt to co-operate with the representatives of other ethnic groups.

Finally, it can be said that to sustain the changes that have already taken place in the process of elite accommodation, political system should remain as inclusive as possible and focus on individual competition should be retained. However, even more important is to retain the centrality of nationwide institutions. The role of central power-holding bodies in identity-building is immense and in Ukrainian case, it played a vital role in reorientation of the Russian-speakers from Moscow to Kiev. Political groups have been formed across ethno-linguistic lines and now political system can afford to boost (and to cement) this process by introducing some elements of PR. The first experience with the PR in 1998 did not bring about any negative consequences in terms of ethnic parties' emergence or activation of ethnic cleavages. Stimulating the evolution of a political structure, it seem expedient to continue with the PR as long as adequate provisions are made to ensure individual competition. One possible example is Single Transferable Vote - a system adopted in the republic of Ireland and Estonia that combines elements

of PR and majoritarian systems thus taking account of group representation, emphasising on the individuals participating in the elections.

## Conclusions

Making a conclusion it will be useful to go back to the vantage point of this paper and to remind of the problem it has attempted to answer. Ukraine since 1991 has faced a number of problems originating from the deep regional cleavages that cut country along the lines of attitudes to Russia, Russian language status, Ukrainian national culture etc. These cleavages have made profound effect on every aspect of Ukrainian domestic and foreign policy and in many cases determined the stances pursued and advocated by the Ukrainian government. However, it should be emphasised that these cleavages are very dynamic and are being constantly redefined due to the influences coming from various sources including the evolving foreign policy. The question this project aimed to answer was whether the current state of the dividing lines and the trends in their evolution would suffice to serve as a basis for collective action mobilised over the issue of Ukraine-NATO partnership.

Analysing the prospects for some kind of collective action, it should be emphasised that there is an evident lack of such conducive factor as a strong sense of community among the group in question. Population of the Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine is fragmented and this fact considerably impedes the possibility for a large-scale political mobilisation. Nevertheless, there is certainly a potential for such mobilisation embedded in the structure of identity of the Ukrainian Russian-speakers that can be used to cultivate a hostile attitude towards NATO and to produce some kind of resentment with the subsequent effect on the stability of the country. The identity of the group in question has been formulated around the symbols of the Soviet Union and positioned towards the outside world with a developed mistrust of the West and Western military organisation. Other elements of the identity composition that might be damaging for the future relations of NATO with Ukraine consist of symbols that are currently used in the making of Russian nation. The overlap of identity symbols creates a great deal of confusion and makes additional hurdles for those attempting to construct new universal identity in Ukraine. Therefore, one may conclude that if aforementioned symbols are

reinforced and activated, this might have dire implications for the development of the relations of Ukraine with other countries and eventually result in the overall instability of the entire security structure in Eastern and Central Europe.

However, this paper has established that there are two serious impediments that so far prevented large-scale mobilisation of public on the basis of identity against some policy development. One of those impediments is apparently low profile of problems related to the Ukraine's position in the international system and clear priority given to welfare-based issues. This reduces the risk of potential discontent in two ways - first of all, potentially dangerous identity symbols are not being reinforced and, therefore, gradually lose their importance and strength; and secondly public awareness of the issues in focus remains weak which entail the evident lack of interest in and decreased concern of those steps Ukrainian government might take in foreign policy.

The second important impediment is a clear inability (and to an extent unwillingness) of the Russian-speaking elite to mobilise public. A number of evidences show that several quite promising opportunities (especially NATO engagement in Kosovo) were not utilised by pro-Russian political groups which allows to draw a conclusion that elite both does not enjoy the full control over its constituency and is not willing to stretch its capacity to the limits for the sake of doubtful ends. The explanation of such pattern in elite behaviour is threefold - on the one hand, central-periphery relations were built in way allowing central authority to control and to manage the activities of local power-holding groups. Full control over media combined with other levers have granted a great range of possibilities to impose almost any view in relations to local elite is seen by the government as the most justified (recent events with the formation of the parliamentary majority and constitutional referendum uphold this point). On the other hand, though, local elite was also prevented from the possible attempts to rebel by granting it with an adequate institutional arrangements enabling to access decision making and resource allocating structures. Political system has been developing in a way that representation was made possible for every actor with a number of modes of political participation available. Members of elite groups in Eastern Ukraine

capitalised a lot on the inclusiveness and accommodative abilities of the Ukrainian political system by gaining governmental posts in power-holding institutions, establishing strong links with the central authority in Kiev etc. And finally, internal fragmentation of the Russian-speaking elite and its engagement in power-contest in Kiev have resulted in failure of this elite to act in concert on whatever issue and thus have minimised the chances for any collective action.

Hence, one can detect several trends that evidently indicate the decreasing opposition to the NATO-Ukraine co-operation and a shrinking basis for ethnic mobilisation in the Russian-speaking areas of the country. The question with which it would be appropriate to end this project is how these trends can be sustained. It seems that three elements aimed at strengthening and securing the current trends can be formulated

1. The image of NATO incorporated in the structure of the identity of Russian-speakers with negative connotations should be altered in order to eliminate the perception that alliance may be hazardous for the well-being of Ukrainian citizens and may endanger their lives. This can be achieved primarily by organising extensive educational programmes explaining the purposes of NATO's presence in Ukrainian policy and positive implications of the co-operation, but also by practical assistance in various problematic areas Ukraine requires external help. If such assistance results in the positive outcomes for the state in general and ordinary citizens in particular, this might lead to dramatic changes in public attitudes to NATO.
2. Since NATO is not entirely separated from the rest of the Western world and there is a popularly perceived divergence between the West on the one hand and Russia/CIS on the other, it is vital to make substantial improvements to the overall image of the Western world and Western political institutions. It has to be mentioned that radical changes have already taken place, but there is still a plenty of room for further progress. Deeper and more extensive participation of the Western countries and institutions in the post-communist transformation in Ukraine may have double ramifications - on the one hand, changes for better will inevitably contribute to the improvement of the popular vision of the West, but on the

other, enhanced economic links of the Russian-speaking elite with the Western partners may reduce even the marginal chances of this elite attempting for ethnic mobilisation on whatever ground.

3. And finally, the development of the democratic institutions in Ukraine should progress in a way that will allow the greatest room for political participation of every group seeking representation. Flexibility of the political system will result in a wider range of options for elite groups to access institutions responsible for decision-making and resource distribution. Taking into account the regional diversity of Ukraine, it seems appropriate to introduce the system that will emphasise on the individual competition and will favour cross-community links. State institutions should become a symbol binding people from different areas together and providing the best opportunities for accommodating the differences.

Suggestions made above are based on the assumptions made in the beginning and basically confirmed by this project - foreign policy, national identity and political institutions are mutually interrelated and one inevitably affects another, which implies the necessity to address the issues of the institutional change and of the pace of the foreign policy development if national identity is to be changed. Accommodation of minority elite will eventually lead to the accommodation of the entire minority and to the elimination of dividing lines so far embedded in people's minds. Ukraine demonstrates a great potential and determination to succeed in the reorientation to the West and if given sufficient support from the NATO, EU, etc. it can ultimately become the real guarantor of stability in Central and Eastern Europe, reliable partner of any country striving for the increased security in the region and to become a crucial factor in making Europe a safe place.

## Appendixes

### ***Appendix 1. Ethnic Composition of Ukraine (data from the census of 1989)***

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Ukrainians	37419053	72.73
Russian	11355582	22.07
Jews	486326	0.95
Belorussians	440045	0.86
Moldavians	324525	0.63
Bulgarians	233800	0.45
Poles	219179	0.43
Hungarians	163111	0.32
Romanians	134825	0.26
Greeks	98594	0.19
Tatars	86874	0.17
Armenians	54200	0.11
Roma	47917	0.09
Crimean Tatars	46807	0.09
Germans	37849	0.07
Others	303347	0.59
Total	51452034	100.00

### ***Appendix 2. Results of Voting in Verhovna Rada sorted by Regions with high share of Russian-speakers (voting to suspend Ukraine-NATO relations on April 6, 1999).***

<b>Region</b>	<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstained</b>	<b>Did not vote</b>	<b>not Absent</b>
Crimea	6	0	1	0	3
Dnipropetrovsk	7	1	0	1	7
Donetsk	14	0	0	1	7
Zaporizhzhya	4	0	0	2	2
Lugansk	10	0	0	0	2
Mykolaiv	2	0	0	0	3
Odessa	6	0	0	1	3
Poltava	3	0	0	3	2
Sumy	4	0	0	0	2
Kharkiv	7	0	0	3	4
Kherson	2	0	0	0	4
Sevastopil	1	0	0	0	1
	66	1	1	11	40

**Appendix 3. Results of Voting in Verhovna Rada sorted by parties and factions (voting to suspend Ukraine-NATO relations on April 6, 1999).**

Party	For	Against	Abstained	Did not vote	Absent
Communist Party	121	0	0	1	0
UNR	0	5	1	6	18
Socialist Party	24	0	0	0	0
Green party	0	1	7	2	14
NDP	5	7	1	6	25
Gromada	8	0	0	0	9
PSPU	10	0	0	0	3
SDPU	2	0	0	0	25
Independents	6	0	0	0	11
SeIPU	13	0	0	0	2
Reformy i Poryadok	0	6	1	0	5
Vidrozhennya regioniv	0	3	1	11	11
NRU	0	4	0	2	10
Bat'kivshchyna	10	2	0	1	11
Labour Ukraine	2	0	0	2	11
not in factions	7	1	1	3	9
	208	29	12	34	164

**Appendix 4. Results of Voting in Verhovna Rada sorted by Regions with high share of Russian-speakers (voting to launch the process of reconsideration of Ukraine relations with NATO on April 20, 1999).**

Region	For	Against	Abstained	Did not vote	Absent
Crimea	6	0	1	0	3
Dnipropetrovsk	7	1	0	1	7
Donetsk	14	0	0	1	7
Zaporizhzhya	4	0	0	2	2
Lugansk	10	0	0	0	2
Mykolaiv	2	0	0	0	3
Odessa	6	0	0	1	3
Poltava	3	0	0	3	2
Sumy	4	0	0	0	2
Kharkiv	7	0	0	3	4
Kherson	2	0	0	0	4
Sevastopol	1	0	0	0	1
	66	1	1	11	40

**Appendix 5. Results of Voting in Verhovna Rada sorted by parties and factions (voting to launch the process of reconsideration of Ukraine relations with NATO on April 20, 1999).**

Party	For	Against	Abstained	Did not vote	Absent
Communist Party	121	0	0	1	0
UNR	0	5	1	6	18
Socialist Party	24	0	0	0	0
Green party	0	1	7	2	14
NDP	5	7	1	6	25
Gromada	8	0	0	0	9
PSPU	10	0	0	0	3
SDPU	2	0	0	0	25
Independents	6	0	0	0	11
SeIPU	13	0	0	0	2
Reformy i Poryadok	0	6	1	0	5
Vidrozhennya regioniv	0	3	1	11	11
NRU	0	4	0	2	10
Bat'kivshchyna	10	2	0	1	11
Labour Ukraine	2	0	0	2	11
not in factions	7	1	1	3	9
	208	29	12	34	164

**Appendix 6. Party affiliations of MPs (Verhovna Rada elected in 1998) sorted by areas.**

Parties	Kiev	East-South	West	Central	Total
Nationalistic	0/0	0/0	6/8%		6/1.4%
Liberal national	21/15.3%	4/2.8%	22/29.3%	5/7.9%	52/12.4%
Centrists	38/27.7%	12/8.4%	8/10.7%	16/25.4%	74/17.7%
Center-Left	30/21.9%	20/14%	6/8%	5/7.9%	61/14.6%
Left	39/28.5%	52/36.4%	14/18.7%	15/23.8%	120/28.7%
Pro Russian	0/0	3/2.1%	0/0	0/0	3/0.7%
non-party	9/6.6%	52/36.6%	19/25.3%	22/34.9%	102/24.4%
Total	137	143	75	63	418

**Appendix 7. Public Opinion in Ukraine on NATO - related issues.**

Statement	Percentage of Affirmative Answers (in brackets percentage of those who failed to give clear answer)
Policy of the expansion of co-operation with NATO is in conflict with Ukraine's interests and contradicts its non-align status	24,1% (42,3%)
Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement eastward is justified	24,8% (55,2%)
In case of NATO expansion Eastward situation in Europe will become insecure	19,4% (52%)
Consequences of Ukraine's entry into NATO would be absolutely negative for the country.	21,3% (45,1%)

Source: Ukraine and NATO: Attitudes of the Ukrainian Population Towards NATO. Kiev, 1997.

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