

BEÁTA VARGA

## UKRAINE: THE “STATE TO NATION” COUNTRY?<sup>1</sup>

This article presents the historical causes of Ukraine’s weak statehood and why it can be classified as a “state to nation” country. What considerably contributed to the “state to nation” character of Ukraine and the belated establishment of its state was the fact that it did not inherit a unified national identity; some of its territories were “more mature” in this regard, while the eastern regions that were under Russian rule for many centuries were “underdeveloped”. In this “deeply divided” Ukraine due to geopolitical differences, the western “pro-Europe” and eastern “pro-Russia” territories have always been separated. Even when an independent Ukraine was established, Ukrainian national identity was not yet fully developed, so the young Ukrainian state had to take up the task of “nation-building.”

*Keywords: “state to nation” country, “feasible” historical narratives, collective historical memory, “divided” history, “divided” national identity, teleology*

Beáta Varga– associate professor, Institute of History, Faculty of Humanities, University of Szeged; Head of Department of Modern World History and Mediterranean Studies. E-mail: [varga.bea@hist.u-szeged.hu](mailto:varga.bea@hist.u-szeged.hu) ORCID: 0000-0001-7244-0783

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## INTRODUCTION

Hungarian historian Emil Niederhauser in an article with the title “*Reflections of a historian on the theoretical problems of the nation*” identified two sociological concepts from the English-speaking academic world relating to the state and the nation and the order of their appearance. The first of these is: “*state to nation*”, when a nation is created by a state, which in his opinion is characteristic of the creation of the Western political concept of a nation. The second is: “*nation to state*”, when a nation is created before it has its own state, a description that applies to the small nations of Eastern Europe.<sup>2</sup> Niederhauser emphasizes two important criteria for national revival or renewal: the formation of a national language and the *creation of a national history*. In his opinion the latter can refer to the history of the state from the Middle Ages, but also often from the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century, because several nations did not have a state before that time.<sup>3</sup>

The article presents the historical causes of Ukraine’s weak statehood and why it can be classified as a “state to nation” country.<sup>4</sup> The important components of national identity are 1. concurrence or non concurrence of state and nation; 2. a past that is “usable” by modern politics, i. e. historical narratives; 3. collective memory.<sup>5</sup>

## THE CONCURRENCE OR NON-CONCURRENCE OF STATE AND NATION

One of the significant components of national identity is the concurrence or non-concurrence of state and nation. Ukraine can be classified as a country with a *weak statehood*,<sup>6</sup> which had a short and controversial statehood on several occasions but reached complete sovereignty only in 1991. However, when independent Ukraine was established, the Ukrainian

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2 NIEDERHAUSER EMIL, „Egy történész reflexiói a nemzetre vonatkozó elméleti kérdésekről”, *Regio* No. 4. (2002) 4. 134.

3 NIEDERHAUSER, „Egy történész reflexiói,” 135.

4 KISS J. LÁSZLÓ, „Nemzeti identitás és külpolitika Közép-és Kelet-Európában,” in *Nemzeti identitás és külpolitika Közép-és kelet Európában* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2003): 21.

5 KISS J. LÁSZLÓ, „Nemzeti identitás,” 18.

6 В. П. ШЕВЧУК, М. Г. ТАРАНЕНКО, *Історія української державності* (Київ: Либідь, 1999), 109.

national identity was not yet fully developed, therefore it was the young Ukrainian state that had to create the nation, not the other way around.<sup>7</sup>

Ukraine’s present state borders are the result of Soviet politics. Ukrainian statehood, formed in 1991, can be considered de jure and de facto a successor to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>8</sup> Unification of the Ukrainian territories within the framework of a single and sovereign state took many centuries. Different Ukrainian regions belonged to culturally and politically different states, which divided the history of Ukraine and also contributed to the fact that the historical regions of the “*Ukrainian lands*”<sup>9</sup> have also shown significant differences that are still present.

After the break-up of Kievan Rus’, which also included the “Ukrainian lands,” between the 1240s and the 1340s most Ukrainian territories – with the exception of Halych<sup>10</sup> – gradually became part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. As a result of the Union of Lublin signed in 1569, the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were merged into one state, the so-called Rzeczpospolita, whereby almost all the areas inhabited by Ukrainians were united under Polish rule. Thus, until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Polish-Lithuanian influence and authority left its mark on the history of the Ukrainians, but the Polish-Ukrainian relationship remained a determining factor even after that until 1939–45.

For Ukraine the Treaty of Pereyaslav,<sup>11</sup> which resulted in Ukraine’s “voluntary” accession to Russia in 1654, meant the replacement of Polish-Lithuanian leadership by a Russian bond. The contemporary Ukrainian historiography<sup>12</sup> considers the legal status of Ukraine since 1654 as the basis for the creation of a Confederate State by the Treaty of Pereyaslav

7 PÓTI LÁSZLÓ, „Ukraina: a nemzetalkotó állam,” in *Nemzeti identitás és külpolitika Közép-és Kelet-Európában* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2003), 297–318.

8 Up until the achievement of Ukrainian independence the local Ukrainian leading circles were part of the upper layer of the Soviet elite, which made it possible for Ukraine to have a peaceful separation from the Soviet Union at the time of gaining its independence.

9 Because of the lack of a continuous statehood the term “Ukrainian lands” has become widely used.

10 KARÁCSONYI DÁVID, „A kelet-európai sztyep és a magyar Alföld, mint frontier-területek,” *Földrajzi értesítő* 2008. LVII/1–2. (2008): 191.

11 Н. ЯКОВЕНКО, *Нарис історії середньовічної та ранньомодерної України* (Київ: Критика, 2009), 195–197.

12 В. М. ГОРОБЕЦЬ, *Від союзу до інкорпорації: українсько-російські відносини другої половини XVII – першої чверті XVIII ст.* (Київ: Інститут історії України НАН України, 1995), 14–20.; М. КРИКУН, *Між війною і радою. Козацтво Правобережної України в другій половині XVII – на початку XVIII століття: Статті і матеріали* (Київ: Критика, 2006), 13.; Т. ЧУХЛІБ, *Козаки і монархи. Міжнародні відносини ранньомодерної української держави 1648–1721 рр.* (Київ: Вид-во імені Олени Теліги, 2009), 77.; В. А. СМОЛІЙ,

in which the member states – Russia and Ukraine – had a lasting, but loose alliance of sovereign states<sup>13</sup> in which both maintained their full independence. However, in our opinion, the Hetmanate, formed from the Ukrainian territories which voluntarily joined Russia in 1654, can be considered a vassal state with a broad autonomy.<sup>14</sup> However, under the Treaty of Andrusova signed in 1667, which ended the Russian-Polish war on the Ukrainian lands, western Ukraine was temporarily returned to the Polish-Lithuanian state. Since then, the Dnieper River has “divided” the Ukrainian territories not only geographically but also regionally, and the impact of this division is still felt.

Until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, until Ivan Mazepa’s “betrayal,”<sup>15</sup> the Romanov tsars did not introduce any major austerity measures in the Hetmanate in the privileged position of Ukrainian territories, but from 1708, Eastern Ukraine<sup>16</sup> began to be organically integrated into the political framework of Russia. On November 10, 1764 Catherine II of Russia ordered the elimination of the Hetmanate, after which the incorporation of Eastern Ukraine into the Russian Empire took place between the 1770 s and the 1830s.<sup>17</sup>

As a consequence of the partition of Poland between 1772 and 1795, the Romanov and Habsburg dynasties divided the territory of Ukraine.<sup>18</sup> For nearly 150 years – from the 1780s to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – Ukraine was occupied by the two great powers of the region: approximately 80% of its territory belonged to the Russian Empire, while 20% of it Galicia) belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy. The former Polish territory of western

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V. С. СТЕПАНКОВ, *Українська державна ідея XVII – XVIII століть: проблеми формування, еволюції, реалізації* (Київ: „Альтернативи”, 1997), 101–102.

13 ЯКОВЕНКО, *Нарис історії*, 356–359.

14 VARGA BEÁTA, „Önállóság, autonómia vagy alávetettség – Ukrajna 1648–1709 között”, (Szeged: JATE Press, 2008): 49.

15 VARGA BEÁTA, „Oroszország–Ukrajna, 1654–1725” in „Kelet-Európa” és a „Balkán”, 1000–1800 – *Intellektuális-történelmi konstrukciók vagy valós történelmi régiók?* (Pécs: PTE Kelet-Európa és a Balkán Története és Kultúrája Kutatási Központ, 2007), 236.

16 VARGA BEÁTA, „A poltavai csata jelentősége az ukrán történelemben” in *A poltavai csata jelentősége az orosz és a svéd történelemben*, MISZLER TAMÁS, SASHALMI ENDRE (eds.) (Pécs: Pécsi Tudományegyetem BTK, 2010), 101–103.; VARGA BEÁTA, „I. Péter ukrán politikája: Mazepa „árulásának kérdése””, *Acta Historica 118*. (Szeged: 2003): 23–35.

17 ZENON E. KOHUT, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy (1760–1830)*, (Cambridge: Mass, 1988), 102.

18 Between 1764–1782 the Ukrainian administrative system prevailed, but – deprived of its autonomy – it was completely subordinated to the imperial government. Between 1782–1835 the former Hetmanate’s territory was fully incorporated into the Russian Empire.

Ukraine – except for Galicia<sup>19</sup> – also became part of Russia. Thus most of the territory of Ukraine belonged to a state – but not one state – in other words, most of Ukraine was united under the auspices of the Romanov dynasty.<sup>20</sup>

In Austrian-ruled Galicia,<sup>21</sup> the governors, appointed by the Viennese court, used the “divide-and-conquer” principle and successfully played Ukrainians and Poles against each other, maintaining Habsburg control in the province. Galicia, in fact, was the western border of the eastern Slavic territories,<sup>22</sup> an area where Galician Ruthenians sought to create an independent identity.<sup>23</sup> The fact that the Ruthenian leadership was not unified regarding their political ambitions posed a problem.<sup>24</sup> The so-called Ruthenian-Polish group did not recognize Ruthenians as a separate ethnic group, but only as an ethnic group within the Polish people. The Ruthenian-Austrian wing felt their unchallenged loyalty to the Habsburgs would ensure the rise of Galician Ukrainians. The Ruthenian-Ukrainian camp wanted to create an independent, free Ukraine, where all Ukrainians would live together. The Ruthenian-Russian group was also projecting complete Ukrainian unity, not as an independent entity, but under the authority of the Russian tsar. It was recognized by all political circles that political independence could ensure the socio-economic and cultural development of the Ukrainian territories that had been subjugated to the Austrian and the Russian Empire, and that after the ethnic division of the province, Eastern Galicia was considered to be the “Ukrainian Piedmont,”<sup>25</sup> from where the unification of Ukrainian territories could commence. It should also be noted that the Poles, who claimed the whole of Habsburg

19 Ф. Ф МАРТЕНС, *Собрание трактатов и конвенций, заключенных Россией и иностранными державами. II. Трактаты с Австрией 1772–1808.* (Санкт-Петербург: 1875), 15.

20 OREST SUBTELNY, *Ukraine – A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 201.

21 HORST GLASSL, *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk in Galizien (1772–1790)*, (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1975), 64.

22 SZERHIJ JEKELCSIK, *Ukrajna története- Egy modern nemzet születése* (Budapest: Kairosz, 2014), 85.

23 IRINA VUSHKO, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat – Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 5. <https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300207279.001.0001>

24 PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI, “Galicia: A European Land,” in *Galicia. A Multicultural Land* ed. CHRIS HANN, PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 17. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442682252>

25 JOHN-PAUL HIMKA, “Young Radicals and Independent Statehood: The Idea of Ukrainian Nation State 1890–1895,” *Slavic Review* 41/2. (1982), 219–235. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2496340>

Galicia<sup>26</sup> as “Malopolska,” (Lesser Poland) considered the province as a possible “Polish Piedmont”.<sup>27</sup>

The regions beyond the Carpathians belonged to Hungary from the Middle Ages. In southern Ukraine, to which Crimea also belonged, Turkish rule prevailed until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and as a result of the successful Russo-Turkish wars,<sup>28</sup> the Russian Empire extended its borders to the northern shore of the Black Sea.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dissolution of the Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy created a real chance for the solution of the “Ukrainian question”, that is the establishment of a sovereign Ukrainian state that would include east- and west-Ukraine as well. Between 1917 and 1920 the Ukrainians established a sovereign state – the Ukrainian People’s Republic – but the alternating governments could keep their power only for short periods of time and thus could not consolidate it. Achieving independence was also hindered by the fact that East-Ukrainians’ national identity was less developed than in Galicia. In addition, the military preponderance of Poland and Soviet-Russia as well as the passivity of the Entente powers that came out victorious from World War I hindered the establishment of a sovereign Ukraine. As a result, just like in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, after 1921 the development of the Ukrainian nation happened within the framework of two other states: within the Soviet Union and within the reborn Poland.<sup>29</sup>

## A “USABLE PAST” IN MODERN POLITICS – UKRAINIAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

While national history plays a prominent role in the “redefinition” of Ukraine’s identity,<sup>30</sup> representation of the historical past in Russian-Ukrainian relations has been controversial. In order to create their “national

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26 ANN SIRKA, *The Nationality Question in Austrian Education – The Case of Ukrainians in Galicia 1867–1917* (Frankfurt am Main: European University Studies, 1980), 1–33.

27 PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia as Ukraine’s Piedmont* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002)

28 VARGA BEÁTA, „Galícia, az „ukrán Piemont”?”, in „Köztes-Európa” vonzásában. Ünnepi tanulmányok Font Márta tiszteletére, BAGI DÁNIEL, FEDELES TAMÁS (eds.) (Pécs: Kronosz, 2012): 494.

29 SUBTELNY, *Ukraine – A History*, 377–379.

30 TARAS KUZIO, „Identitás és nemzetépítés Ukrajnában. A „másik” meghatározása”, *Regio. Kisebbség, Politika, Társadalom* no. 1. (2002): 97.

history”. Ukrainian historians have had to prove that the Ukrainian people has had its “own” history, one can be traced back to ancient roots, and which has been undoubtedly continuous throughout the centuries. They have had to provide well-grounded historical arguments to support their claim that, despite the fact in that certain periods certain parts of Ukraine’s territory were under the jurisdiction of the Polish-Lithuanian State, the Russian and Habsburg Empires the history of Ukrainians developed continuously between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

From 1991 onwards, during the process of formulating the image of the Ukrainian nation, it became vital for Ukrainian politics of the era to set up “feasible” historical narratives, during which process the emphasis on national self-reliance gained emotional and political relevance, at the same time legitimizing the nature of the young Ukrainian state. From 1991 onwards, during the process of formulating the image of the Ukrainian nation, it became vital for Ukrainian politics to set up “feasible” historical narratives. During this process the emphasis on national self-reliance gained emotional and political relevance, and at the same time legitimized the nature of the young Ukrainian state. Research on and teaching of national history played an important role in developing Ukrainian identity, and it was also significant that the past had to be glorious and had to have continuity!

Contemporary Ukrainian historiography as well as the political leadership consider the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the “real Rubicon”. Once Ukrainians had crossed this, they took a decisive step towards independence.<sup>31</sup> According to the official historical narrative, present day Ukraine is the direct descendent of Medieval Kievan Rus, the Cossack state that Bohdan Khmelnytsky created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the 1918-20 Ukrainian People’s Republic.<sup>32</sup> Even though the Hetmanate that was established as a result of the 1648–1654 Khmelnytsky movement was not a state in every respect, it still became a model for the Ukrainian state in the eyes of future generations.<sup>33</sup> At the end of World War I, Ukraine became the battlefield of various Ukrainian political leaders who fought amongst each other as well as with the Central and the Entente powers. The circumstances were similar in both the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the sense that what prevented the achievement of unity and independence was not only the unfavourable

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31 Чухлів, *Козаки і монархи*, 53.

32 JEKELCSIK, *Ukraina története*, 21.

33 JEKELCSIK, *Ukraina története*, 50.

international situation, but also their inner conflicts. During neither of the “Ukrainian revolutions”<sup>34</sup> did the significant powers of the region have an interest in the creation of a sovereign Ukrainian state. Thus, in both cases Ukraine ended up in a “historical blind alley”.

According to the “traditional scheme” of Russian historiography, the sole successor of Kievan Rus’ was Muscovite Russia that took shape from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This view labels the Ukrainian territories the “West Russian” lands, which sought to preserve their “Russian identity under Polish-Lithuanian rule. Moreover, Russian historical tradition interpreted the history of Ukrainians as an inseparable part of Russian history, and regarded “Little Russians” as a people without a sovereign state, and as a sub-species of Russian ethnicity.<sup>35</sup> For the “Great Russian” historians Ukraine had no specific national features, and they maintained that, due to the immaturity of the Ukrainian peoples a sovereign Ukrainian state would not stand a chance in Eastern Europe. According to Russian imperialist historiography, Kievan Rus’ the Hetmanate (1654–1764) and the integration of the northern shore of the Black Sea into the Russian Empire, all of which could be regarded as an integral part of Ukrainian history, could only be viewed as glorious periods in the history of *Russian* civilization.

The notion that Ukraine was in fact different from Russia in its language, culture, history and political traditions, was primarily formed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the works of “the father of Ukrainian national historiography”<sup>36</sup> and the first president of Ukraine,<sup>37</sup> Mykhailo Hrushevsky. Indeed, it was only from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that historians felt the need to “create” a Ukrainian “national” history that would be an important part of national identity, and which was required not only by necessity but also – as Hrushevsky put it<sup>38</sup> – by “honour.” This prominent Ukrainian statesman and historian emphasized his conviction

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34 Contemporary Ukrainian historiography uses the same phrase – national liberation war, national revolution – both for the period between 1648-1654 and for that between 1917-1922.

35 Н. Г. УСТРЯЛОВ, Русская история. I. (Санкт-Петербург: 1839), 16.

36 VARGA BEÁTA, „M. Sz. Hruszewskij, az „ukrán nemzet történetírás atyja””, *Acta Historica* 134. (2012): 9-121.

37 On November 6, 1917. the Central Council of Ukraine issued its Third Universal and, headed by Hrushevsky, declared the independence of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, but, at the same time, accepted the preservation of unity with the forthcoming Russian Federation.

38 А. П. ДЕМИДЕНКО, *Великий українець: Матеріали з життя та діяльності М.С.Грушевського*, (Київ: Веселка, 1992), 206.

that 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ukraine could be considered a conglomerate of different ethnic, geographical and historical regions with relatively different regional historical identities. In order to emphasize the close relationship between modern and earlier periods in Ukrainian history, Hrushevsky used the notion of “Ukraine-Rus”<sup>39</sup>, and by refuting the Russian paradigm that the Ukrainians did not play any important role in history, his works resulted in a complete break with the “Great Russian” traditional scheme. Hrushevsky believed that Ukrainians’ historical roots went back to much earlier times in history than those of Russians.

In the modern Ukrainian state, the creation of a unified identity especially in relation to its national and historical components is an important legitimizing principle. It should be emphasized though that in the Ukrainian language, the term “nacija” (= nation) in fact refers to the totality of a people connected by origin, language and culture, but who do not necessarily have their own state. One of the main problems for the leadership of the young Ukrainian state was also the issue of historical legitimation. The “new” historical narrative was introduced in school textbooks in such a way that after 1991 works by Mikhailo Hrushevsky and Orest Subtelny<sup>40</sup> temporarily took over the role of textbooks.<sup>41</sup> The main feature of the national narrative is teleology, according to which the main purpose of Ukrainian history is to create a nation state and to represent the historical processes as roads leading to this end, in other words, to present Ukraine as formed due to centuries of efforts to create a modern Ukrainian nation and a national home.<sup>42</sup>

## COLLECTIVE MEMORY

In the course of the Ukrainian people’s endeavours to establish a state, the creation of a collective national consciousness played a decisive role, and this was focused primarily on its historical elements. Emphasis was placed on “national history” and on a “return to the sources of national identity.” This can be illustrated by examples taken from the official speeches of

39 М. ГРУШЕВСЬКИЙ, *Історія України-Руси*. I-IV. (Львів: 1904–1907)

40 ОРЕСТ СУБТЕЛЬНИЙ, *Україна: історія*, (Київ: Либідь, 1991)

41 ANDREJ PORTNOV, „Történelemírás ukrán módra. Megjegyzések a hétköznapi valóság történet alapú átrendezéséhez”, in *Ukrajna színeváltozása 1991-2008 – Politikai, gazdasági, kulturális és nemzetiségi attitűdök*, (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2009), 24.

42 JEKELCSIK, *Ukrajna története*, 22.

contemporary Ukrainian presidents. For example, Leonid Kuchma described Bohdan Khmelnytsky as a titanic figure of Ukrainian history whose name is associated with the appearance of Ukraine on the international scene and with laying the foundations of the present-day Ukrainian political nation.<sup>43</sup> The former Ukrainian president also emphasized that the Ukrainian people was a “powerful nation” in the centre of Europe which has played an important role in the history of Europe. This argument can also be linked to the speeches of Viktor Yushchenko, who pointed out that Ukraine belonged to Europe primarily from a cultural and historical point of view, and emphasised the values of democracy and freedom in the history of the Ukrainians.<sup>44</sup> A common element in the speeches of Ukrainian state leaders – and in contemporary Ukrainian historiography<sup>45</sup> – is the designation of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the period to which the beginning of Ukrainian national identity can be traced back.

Ukrainian leaders have therefore used this “glorious history” to create a collective historical identity, centred on the cult of Mykhailo Hrushevsky who, as the first president of Ukraine, can be the basis for legitimizing the presidential institution of our days, while the figure of Bohdan Khmelnytsky can be seen as the “Father of the Homeland”, the founder of Ukrainian statehood, the creator unity and of continuity in their history.

## A “DIVIDED” NATIONAL IDENTITY

It is possible to treat duality as a major feature of Ukrainian society and politics. This duality stems primarily from the territorial, cultural and linguistic division of Ukraine over the centuries, and is increasingly expressed by the view that the dividing line between east and west Ukraine is so sharp that the separation of the country is inevitable. These “Two Ukraines” exist side by side as two options for the future: “back to the Soviet Union / Russia”? or “back to Europe”? Even today, the identity of the majority of Ukrainians is linked to uncertain, conflicting, incompatible views and values.

Indeed, what divides the Ukrainians in today’s Ukraine is primarily the interpretation of national history. Under the control of the Russian

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43 SZEREDA VIKTÓRIA, „Történelmi emlékezet Ukrajna elnökeinek hivatalos beszédeiben”, *Regio. Kisebbség, Politika, Társadalom* no. 3. (2007): 47–68.

44 SZEREDA, „Történelmi emlékezet”, 54.

45 SZEREDA, „Történelmi emlékezet”, 56.

Empire, no national or independence movement could evolve in eastern and southern Ukraine. East and south of the River Dnieper, the majority of Ukrainians and Russians who have “dual identities” are politically loyal to the Ukrainian state, but they reject the “European Ukraine-Asian Russia” opposition, and the “de-Russification” of Ukraine has never become part of their political aspirations.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, under the relatively liberal Austrian and Polish rule, a strong sense of identity developed in western Ukrainians. These territories were fully integrated into the Soviet Union only in 1945: they emphasized their sovereignty and independent Ukrainian history.

When examining the emergence of a Ukrainian national identity, it is important to note that the ethnonym “Ukrainian” was formulated relatively late, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kievan Rus’, which was formed in the territory of present-day Ukraine from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, was called Ruscia or Ruthenia in Latin sources from the word Rus, and its inhabitants were called Ruthenians or Russi, a term that did not refer to an ethnic group,<sup>47</sup> but was a reference to the power to which the inhabitants were subject. The new political units that took shape after the disintegration of Kievan Rus’ referred to this common origin using the term Rus. The expansionist policies of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century did not encounter any resistance in this region, in fact, there is mention of “voluntary joining” of the south-western areas of the former Kievan Rus’. In the so-called “Lithuanian-Russian Grand Duchy” the Lithuanian rulers practised a policy of tolerance:<sup>48</sup> there was no religious and social discrimination between Lithuanians and “Ruthenians.” This fact also prevented possible conflict between Lithuanians as the “ruling ethnic group” and “Ruthenians” as the “subjugated ethnic group.”

As a result of the Lublin Convention of July 1, 1569,<sup>49</sup> the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were united in one state, the Rzeczpospolita. This marked the beginning of the Polonization and Catholicization policies of the rulers of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Ukrainian territories. We still cannot speak about Ukrainian ethnicity as the Eastern Slavs living in the area of Rzeczpospolita were still

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46 BOCSKOR MEDVECZ ANDREA, „Nacionalizmus és történetírás. Az ukrán történelemformálás hatása a nemzetté válás folyamatában”, *Acta Beregsasiensis*, VIII/2. (2009): 22.

47 FONT MÁRTA, VARGA BEÁTA, *Ukrajna története*, (Szeged: JATE-Press, 2006), 9.

48 *Польное собрание русских летописей*, Том 35. Летописи белорусско-литовские, (Москва: Наука, 1980), 34.

49 *Akta unji Polski z Litwą, 1385–1791* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1932), 414.

called “Ruthenians”. From the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the meaning of the term “Ukraine” became narrower, referring not to the “borderlands” or periphery in general, but to a specific geographical unit: the areas bounded by the central Dnieper River, the central part of today’s Ukraine. For the population living there, the adjective “Ukrainian” was used, which, however, was still not an ethnic, but an administrative and geographical denomination.<sup>50</sup> From the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the term “Little Russian” was used, which originated from the term Russia Minor and denoted the Halichi and Volhynian subdivisions that came under Polish rule in the eastern Ukrainian territories.

What has also contributed to Ukraine’s division and the belated establishment of a state was that it did not have a unified national identity: in East- and Central Ukraine, which were continuously under Russian rule from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a strong national movement could never develop. Then, following the partition of Poland, when west Ukraine – with the exception of Galicia – became part of Russia, most of the Ukrainian territories belonged to, but did not comprise, one state. In Galicia, which was the western border of the eastern Slavic territories and was under the considerably liberal rule of Austria, and was called “the Ukrainian Piedmont”, a stronger national self-consciousness developed after 1772. That is why it was there that the idea of a unified Ukrainian state was first conceived, the realization of which, however, took more than a hundred years, because of the division and weak national consciousness of the Ukrainians.

## SUMMARY

What considerably contributed to the “state-to-nation” character of Ukraine and the belated establishment of its state was the fact that it did not inherit a unified national identity: some of its territories were “more mature” in this regard, while the eastern regions that had been under Russian rule for many centuries were “underdeveloped.”<sup>51</sup> In Eastern and Central Ukraine there never developed a strong national movement and nationalism.<sup>52</sup> What is more, in those areas the local version of Ukrainian

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50 Архив Юго-Западной России, Ч. 3. Т. 1. (Санкт-Петербург:1861) 5, 28, 254, 317, 357.

51 ROMAN SZPORLUK, „Ukraina: Peremvidéktől a szuverén államig”, 2000 11. (1998): 14.

52 TATJANA ZSURZSENKO, „Két Ukrajna – A nemzeti eszme bukásának mítosza”, 2000. Irodalmi és társadalmi havi lap. 10. (2002): 24–28. <http://ketezer.hu/2002/10/ket-ukrajna/> (Accessed November 5, 2020).

identity ruled out neither the spreading of Russian culture and language, nor loyalty to the Romanov dynasty and later to the Soviet system. Eastern Ukrainians did not reject the national concept itself, but primarily its anti-Russian orientation. It took a long time for the “Russian” Ukrainians to consider the “Austrian” or “Polish” Ukrainians as belonging to their own nation. Looking from a different point of view, the separation of Ukrainians from Russians, Poles or Austrians did not automatically mean they had common ground for the creation of an independent Ukrainian state. Under the relatively liberal Austrian rule, in Galicia, a relatively strong national consciousness developed from 1772 on, and that is why the idea of a unified Ukrainian state was first born there, only to wait for its realization for more than a century, due to the division and weak identity of the Ukrainians.

During the long historical process of establishing an independent Ukrainian state out of a peripheral region (= Ukraine), the Ukrainian territories became the double and then the triple periphery of power fields. For such a large country, regional differences may in fact be considered natural. Due to geopolitical differences the western “pro-Europe” and eastern “pro-Russia” territories in this “deeply divided” Ukraine have always been separate. The biggest obstacle, however, was that there was no unified opinion about the character of the Ukrainian state among the different Ukrainian regions and political parties.

Ukrainian nation-building and the consolidation of the state on a national basis has brought about more problems than it has successful solutions. It is important to point out that the independence of Ukraine is less the result of a successful national movement, but more of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The political parties, in fact, do not express national interests, but turn regional bonds into political capital instead: i.e., strong economy in the east, and nationalist rhetoric in the west.<sup>53</sup> Even when an independent Ukraine was established, the Ukrainian national identity was not fully formed, so the young Ukrainian state had to take up the task of “nation-building.”<sup>54</sup> This is why Ukraine can be classified as a “nation state,”<sup>55</sup> although modern Ukrainian history is actually different from the nation-state’s traditional model.

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53 ZSURZSENKO, „Két Ukrajna”, 19.

54 FEDINEC CSILLA, „Az autonómia-gondolat ukrainai változatai” in *A közép-európaiság dicsérete és kritikája*. ed. FEDINEC CSILLA, ILYÉS ZOLTÁN, SIMON ATTILA, VIZI BALÁZS (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2013);, 274.

55 PÓTI, „Ukrajna: a nemzetalkotó állam”, 297.

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