Post-Maidan Europe and the New Ukrainian Studies

Andrii Portnov

Twenty years ago, in his article "Does Ukraine Have a History?," Mark von Hagen observed that "by the indexes of the intellectual organization of history teaching, Ukraine has not had a history," and defined this problem as a part of a greater dilemma in eastern and central Europe—a region "associated with nationalism, anti-Semitism and ethnic irredentism" and "denied full historiographical legitimacy."[1] Nowadays this point sounds no less relevant. The complicated recent events usually called the "Ukraine crisis" revealed, among other things, the strength of historical stereotypes and conventional categories of explanation. In the descriptions of what has happened and what is going on, Ukraine is often portrayed as an apple of discord or a battlefield of the super powers without its own historical and cultural subjectivity. In other words, post-Soviet Ukraine is frequently seen as just a by-product of imperial politics or an incidental outcome of the Soviet Union's attempts to solve the national question. For those who accept such logic, there is no need to know the Ukrainian language or the country's history to comment on the so-called Ukraine crisis, because "there is actually no Ukraine"![2]

I have been observing this simultaneously old and new stereotyping from within German academia. At the moment the Maidan started, none of the German universities had regular positions in Ukrainian literature or history.

This essay is partly based on my public talks given at the Free University of Berlin, the Free University of Brussels, the University of Tartu, the Institute for Advanced Study Berlin (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin), and a series of lectures presented in April 2014 at the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, Columbia University, Princeton University, and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. My understanding of the current events has been influenced by the insightful and original comments of my colleagues, most of all Susanne Frank, Natalia Gumenyuk, Ilya Gerasimov, Oleksandr Osipian, Yuri Ruban, Irina Sherbakova, Thorsten Wilhelmy, and the late Boris Dubin. I am very grateful to all of them and especially to Froma Zeitlin and Joseph Livesey, who read the manuscript of this essay critically and made a lot of valuable comments. I am fully responsible for all the conclusions proposed below.

1. Mark von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 659–61. On the existing stereotype of "essential Ukrainian anti-Semitism," see the important insights in Henry Abramson, "The Scattering of Amalek: A Model for Understanding the Ukrainian-Jewish Conflict," *Eastern European Jewish Affairs* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 39–47; and Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Anti-Imperial Choice: The Making of the Ukrainian Jew* (New Haven, 2009).

2. See the brilliant commentary on such claims in Rory Finnin, "Ukrainians: Expect-the-Unexpected Nation," Centre for Research in the Arts, Sciences and Humanities, December 20, 2013, at www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/blog/post/ukrainians-expect-the-unexpected-nation (last accessed July 30, 2015). On the German context specifically, see Franziska Davies, "Zur Debatte über die Ukraine: Deutschland und der Euromajdan," *Merkur* 69, no. 790 (March 2015): 32–43. Compare Timothy Snyder's important observation that "no synthetic history of the Holocaust written in English spells the names of localities correctly." Timothy Snyder, "Commemorative Causality," *Eurozine*, June 6, 2013, at www.eurozine.com/articles/2013-06-06-snyder-en.html (last accessed July 30, 2015).

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Despite a number of highly valuable German-language publications and the fact that the German historians were among the first to stress the ethnic and national complexity of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, general knowledge about Ukraine remained pretty limited.[3] Thus, it was possible for ex-chancellor Helmut Schmidt to claim that "historians still doubt the very existence of the Ukrainian nation."[4] This highly insensitive and discriminatory remark could be better understood if we keep in mind an important observation by Gerd Koenen about the intersection of the average German consciousness with the official Russian historical discourse: "All of the war crimes committed [by the Nazis] back then 'in the East'—whether in Poland or the Baltic region, in Belarus or Ukraine—and all of the immense sacrifices made during the Great Patriotic War by the many nations of the USSR were placed, in both moral and political terms, on the historical credit account of an eternal, mythical 'Russia.'"[5]

I agree with Timothy Snyder that such challenges to scholarship are also an opportunity. The academic and public debate around the Ukraine crisis has highlighted a number of problems in the field of Russian and east European studies. In my response essay, I would like to focus on several theoretical questions and draw up some proposals for a new program of Ukrainian studies in a transnational and global perspective.

Ukraine and "Balkanization Talk"

The persistence of the stereotypical views of eastern Europe can be seen in the widespread maps of Ukraine's "ethnic zones" which ascribe the preferred language of everyday communication (often mistaken for the "mother tongue") to the ethnic identity and political loyalties of the population. According to

3. For German-language publications on Ukraine, see, for example, Guido Hausmann and Andreas Kappeler, eds., *Ukraine: Gegenwart und Geschichte eines neuen Staates* (Baden-Baden, 1993); Anna Veronika Wendland, *Die Russophilen in Galizien: Ukrainische Konservative zwischen Österreich und Rußland 1848–1915* (Vienna, 2001); Ricarda Vulpius, *Nationalisierung der Religion: Russifizierungspolitik und ukrainische Nationsbildung 1860–1920* (Wiesbaden, 2005); Katrin Boeckh, *Stalinismus in der Ukraine: Die Rekonstruktion des sowjetischen Systems nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Wiesbaden, 2007); Andreas Kappeler, ed., *Die Ukraine: Prozesse der Nationsbildung* (Cologne, 2011); Frank Golczewski, *Deutsche und Ukrainer 1914–1939* (Paderborn, 2010); and Tanja Hofmann, *Literarische Ethnografien der Ukraine: Prosa nach 1991* (Basel, 2014). German histories of the Russian empire and Soviet Union's ethnic and national complexity include Andreas Kappeler, *Rußland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall* (Munich, 1992; in English, Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* [London, 2001]); and Gerhard Simon, *Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion: Von der totalitären Diktatur zur nachstalinistischen Gesellschaft* (Baden-Baden, 1986).

4. "Helmut Schmidt wirft EU Größenwahn vor," *Zeit Online*, May 16, 2014, at www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2014-05/helmut-schmidt-ukraine-eu-weltkrieg (last accessed August 16, 2015). See also the detailed, provocative critique of the German expert community's views on the Ukraine crisis in Anna Veronika Wendland, "Hilflos im Dunkeln: 'Experten' in der Ukraine-Krise: Eine Polemik," *Osteuropa*, nos. 9–10 (2014): 13–34.

5. Gerd Koenen, "What Drives Putin," *Zeit Online*, March 20, 2015, at www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2015-03/russia-vladimir-putin-ucraine-imperialism/seite-2 (last accessed July 31, 2015).

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this logic, the main line of conflict and the main reason for the war lie in the relations between Ukrainians and Russians (Ukrainian speakers versus Russian speakers). Such an attitude comfortably reduces the problem to essentialized categories of "nation" (intimately linked to language) and "nationalism" and invokes false comparisons to postcommunist Yugoslavia or communist Czechoslovakia. It also implies that post-Soviet Ukraine is a "nationalizing state" that fails to grant equal rights to its Russian-speaking population.[6]

Such an approach oversimplifies the language situation in Ukraine. More important, it fails to note the social phenomena that do not match the reductive imposed perspective. It leaves no space for a Russian-speaking Ukrainian nationalism, overlooking the hybridity of post-Soviet Ukraine and the differences between the "mother tongue" and the "language of everyday communication."

In 1991, Ukraine automatically granted citizenship to all permanent residents of the republic, remaining a dual-language society with widespread situational bilingualism without any precise historical, geographical, or social boundary between Russian and Ukrainian. The Ukrainian language in Ukraine, despite its official state status, is actually "smaller" than Russian, which is dominant in mass media, politics, and business.[7] I am not trying to postulate the lack of any language-related problems or conflicts in Ukraine. Rather, my point is that the divisions within Ukrainian society cannot be reduced to the national-language issue; that is, there is no direct correlation between the preferred language of everyday communication and the political or geopolitical orientation of the concrete person, and that there is no politically unified community of "Russian-speaking Ukrainians."[8] The same

6. See the important critical comments on this notion in Volodymyr Kulyk, "The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Beyond Brubaker," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 197–221. Compare Rogers Brubaker, "Nationalizing State Revisited: Projects and Processes of Nationalization in Post-Soviet States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (2011): 1785–814.

7. For more on the complex language situation in Ukraine, see Alexandra Hrycak, "Institutional Legacies and Language Revival in Ukraine," in Dominique Arel and Blair A. Ruble, eds., *Rebounding Identities: The Politics of Identity in Russia and Ukraine* (Baltimore, 2006), 62–88; Volodymyr Kulyk, "Normalisation of Ambiguity: Policies and Discourses on Language Issues in Post-Soviet Ukraine," in Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, ed., *History, Language and Society in the Borderlands of Europe: Ukraine and Belarus in Focus* (Malmö, 2006), 117–40; and Michael Moser, *Language Policy and the Discourse on Languages in Ukraine under President Viktor Yanukovych (25 February 2010–28 October 2012)* (Stuttgart, 2013). On the history of the Ukrainian language in the twentieth century in the context of Russian imperial and Soviet politics, see George Y. Shevelov, *The Ukrainian Language in the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1900–1941): Its State and Status* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

8. On the role of Russian and the specifics of speaking Russian in Ukraine, see Andrew Wilson, "Redefining Ethnic and Linguistic Boundaries in Ukraine: Indigenes, Settlers and Russophone Ukrainians," in Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, and Annette Bohr, eds., *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, Eng., 1998), 119–38; and Volodymyr Kulyk, "What Is Russian in Ukraine? Popular Beliefs Regarding the Social Roles of the Language," in Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, ed., *The Russian Language outside the Nation: Speakers and Identities* (Edinburgh, 2014), 117–40. See also a special monograph in Ukrainian, V. O. Vasyutyns'ky, ed., *Rosiis'komovna spil'nota v Ukraini: Sotsial'no-psykholohichnyj analiz* (Kyiv, 2012); and

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complexity is characteristic of religious life in Ukraine (it is the only postcommunist country with one Greek Catholic and three Orthodox churches) and Ukrainian memories of World War II and Soviet rule.[9]

In the analysis of this complexity, writers in the social sciences and history should try to free themselves from the temptation to treat heterogeneity and hybridity as signs of weakness or underdevelopment. In post-Soviet Ukraine, the lack of a uniform national public consensus on these memory and language issues has often been not so much a force for division but rather a stabilizing factor in a state characterized by so much diversity. It is precisely this lack of a nation-wide consensus that has helped preserve the distinctive pluralism of post-Soviet Ukraine's public space and has maintained ambiguity as a way of avoiding social conflict, an obstacle to the monopolization of public space in the service of one political force or another.[10]

"Identity" versus Violence

Ukraine's peaceful political development came to an end in winter 2014. On January 22, three Maidan protesters were shot dead by snipers. These were the first people killed during mass political protests in post-Soviet Ukraine. All the previous events, including the Orange Revolution in 2004, were bloodless. The killing of dozens of people in the center of Kyiv on February 18–20 turned a violent new page in Ukrainian history, and spring 2014 was marked by the outbreak of war in the east Ukrainian region of Donbas, a highly industrialized, predominantly coal-mining agglomeration on the border with Russia. In 2013, Donets'k and Luhans'k oblasts held 14 percent of Ukraine's total population and produced 25.2 percent of its total exports.[11]

In interpreting the outbreak of violence and Donbas's transformation into a war zone, both Ukrainian public discourse and international media have re-

a collection of statistical data in M. B. Pogrebinskii, ed., *Russkii iazyk v Ukraine*, bks. 1–2 (Kharkiv, 2010).

9. For an overview of the church's situation and its role in Ukrainian politics, see Michał Wawrzonek, *Religion and Politics in Ukraine: The Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches as Elements of Ukraine's Political System* (Cambridge, Eng., 2014). On the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, see Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939–1950)* (Edmonton, 1996). On evangelical communities in Ukraine, see Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Ithaca, 2007).

The literature on memory issues in post-Soviet Ukraine is extensive. One of the most balanced and nuanced syntheses is Peter Rodgers, *Nation, Region and History in Post-Communist Transitions: Identity Politics in Ukraine, 1991–2006* (Stuttgart, 2008). See also Johan Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture* (Lund, 2006). See also the brilliant anthropological study by Tanya Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa: History and Place in Contemporary Ukraine* (Toronto, 2008).

10. For a fuller version of this argument, see Andriy Portnov, "Memory Wars in Post-Soviet Ukraine (1991–2010)," in Uilleam Blacker, Alexander Etkind, and Julie Fedor, eds., *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2013), 233–54.

11. Christian Geinitz, "Ukraine braucht Industrie des Separatisten-Gebiets," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 7, 2014, at www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/ukrainische-wirtschaft-ist-auf-industrie-im-osten-angewiesen-13252074.html (last accessed July 31, 2015).

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lied heavily on "identity" as the main explanation. For example, some Ukrainian writers and journalists promoted a narrative I call "intellectual reductionism," that is, the idea that Ukraine can only succeed by getting rid of the "hopelessly Sovietized" Donbas.[12] Such an attitude not only downplays the responsibility of the local elites, the state apparatus, and Russian intervention for the war in the Donbas, rather ascribing it to the region's population. It also reduces the regional specifics to some kind of essential "Soviet identity." Such claims are sometimes based on surveys like the one held in 1994: when people in Donets'k were asked to choose an identity that described them best, 40 percent of the respondents chose "Soviet."[13] We will never know how they would have replied if this option was not on the list!

By choosing "Soviet" as their self-identification, many people in Donets'k tried to show their disorientation and disappointment with independent Ukraine, in which they had expected their living conditions to have improved. In this sense, it could be described as "negative identification," especially if we treat it contextually. Just three years before the survey, Ukrainian Donbas was the scene of miners' strikes that involved tens of thousands of people. The strikes broke up in summer 1989 with economic demands that gradually turned political. By March–April 1991, before the August putsch and the December referendum on Ukraine's independence, Donbas strikers opted for Mikhail Gorbachev's removal and the transfer of the mines to the republican governments (this demand was first formulated by the Kuzbass miners in Russia and supported in Donbas).[14] In other words, in 1991 the Donbas miners remained in the avant-garde of the anti-Soviet mass movement, and the United States stood as a cultural model to which many miners anchored their future.[15] The hopes for economic improvement without the Soviet center were not fulfilled. Since that time, to use Hiroaki Kuromiya's analogy, "whenever Kiev has attempted to build a nation, the Donbas has acted like an antimetropolitan Cossack land."[16]

In interpreting the ongoing war in Donbas, I would argue for the necessity of thinking beyond "identity" to analyze, rather, "identity talk" by various

12. For more examples of and elaboration on this topic, see Andriy Portnov, "Ukraine's 'Far East': On the Effects and Genealogy of Ukrainian Galician Reductionism," trans. Joseph Livesey, NYU Jordan Center, August 15, 2014, at jordanrussiacenter.org/news/ukraines-far-east-effects-genealogy-ukrainian-galician-reductionism/#.U_ErnaPEQUU (last accessed July 31, 2015).

13. Cited in Yaroslav Hrytsak, "National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of Lviv and Donetsk," in "Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe," ed. Zvi Gitelman, Lubomyr Hajda, John-Paul Himka, and Roman Solchanyk, special issue, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22 (1998): 263–81. It should be noted that in interpreting the results, Hrytsak's article tends to overcome simplified, stigmatizing claims about the "identity" of Donets'k residents.

14. See more in Stephen F. Crowley and Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "Survival Strategies: The Miners of Donetsk in the Post-Soviet Era," in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Workers of Donbass Speak: Survival and Identity in the New Ukraine, 1989–1992* (Albany, 1995), 61–96, esp. 62–68.

15. Daniel J. Walkowitz, "'Normal Life': The Crisis of Identity among Donetsk's Miners," in Siegelbaum and Walkowitz, *Workers of Donbass Speak*, 172.

16. Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Russian-Ukrainian Borderland, 1870s–1990s* (Cambridge, Eng., 1998), 337.

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social actors, without positing the existence of "identity," but also of trying to specify those actors, their interests and motivations.[17] The same is certainly true for the Crimea, keeping in mind the specifics of the peninsula's situation (most of all, the higher percentage of people who have defined themselves as Russians and the presence of the Russian Black Sea fleet). And what is usually overlooked in discussing both episodes is physical violence itself, which establishes facts on the ground and creates new spaces for further violent developments.

Early in the morning on February 27, 2014, around one hundred twenty well-armed men in camouflage without military insignia seized the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea and bluntly refused to negotiate. Their actions played a decisive role in the Russian annexation of Crimea. In the evening of the same day, they allowed the Crimean MPs to come in and vote on the referendum on "reunification with Russia." It happened without the presence of the press and without a quorum. Now we know—and it was later acknowledged by President Putin himself—that those "polite men" were soldiers from the regular marine forces of the Russian Federation.[18]

In Donets'k on April 6, 2014, hundreds of protesters seized the building of the regional state administration with no intervention by the local police. This violent act and the Ukrainian state's inability to respond and to confirm its monopoly on violence paved the way for the situation—with the support of weapons and people sent across the uncontrolled border with Russia—to quickly turn into a war.[19]

Could the route that led from the various difficulties of Crimea and Donbas's socioeconomic and cultural stories in post-Soviet Ukraine to the inevitable separation and war be taken for granted? Or do we need to take a closer look at the contextual opening of these spaces to violence and the appearance of the "violent few," which should be analyzed comparatively by means of historical anthropology?[20] Explanations for the outbreak could be limited to

17. Here I follow the highly valuable suggestions in Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (February 2000): 1–47. On the history of the term *identity*, see Philip Gleason, "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History," *Journal of American History* 69, no. 4 (March 1983): 910–31. See also the argumentation in favor of using *identity* to study Russia and Ukraine in Dominique Arel, "Introduction: Theorizing the Politics of Cultural Identities in Russia and Ukraine," in Arel and Ruble, eds., *Rebounding Identities*, 1–30.

18. There are no consistent histories of the Crimean events so far. For details, see journalist accounts: Sergei Goriashko and Ivan Safronov, "Oni vtorgalis' na rodinu," *Kommersant*, March 3, 2015, at www.kommersant.ru/doc/2688725 (last accessed July 31, 2015); and Sonia Koshkina, "Pochemu my 'sdali' Krym?," *LB.ua*, March 27, 2015, at www.lb.ua/news/2015/03/27/299874_pochemu_sdali_krim_./html (last accessed July 31, 2015).

19. The Kyiv-appointed governor of the Donets'k region, Serhii Taruta, later confirmed in an interview that Ukraine had "lost an opportunity to localize the conflict and to defend the constitutional order." See Evgenii Shvetz, "Sergei Taruta: Rinat bol'she ne oligarkh. A ia—bankrot," *LB.ua*, January 5, 2014, at lb.ua/news/2014/01/05/290927_sergey_taruta_rinat_bolshe.html (last accessed July 31, 2015).

20. Mark Mazower, "Violence and the State in the Twentieth Century," *American Historical Review* 107, no. 4 (October 2002): 1158–78; Randall Collins, *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory* (Princeton, 2008); and Jörg Baberowski, "Gewalt verstehen," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 5 (2008): 5–17. See also an overview of the recent, mostly German-language publications on the history of violence in the twentieth century in Jan C. Behrends, "Ge-

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the supposed susceptibility of this or that group of people to violence. Or it could be analyzed not as purely ideological phenomena but as a situation created by a set of social conditions, group pressures, and survival strategies in wartime. In other words, violence in Donets'k should not properly be explained by ideology and "identity" only. The best illustration of this point is a different trajectory of post-Maidan development in another east Ukrainian city—Dnipropetrovs'k.

Dnipropetrovs'k, like Donets'k, is industrialized and predominantly Russian-speaking. After the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in neighboring Donbas, Dnipropetrovs'k turned into a bastion of civic Ukrainian nationalism, a space in which identification with Ukraine was formulated in political, not language- or ethnicity-based, categories. The emphatic "Ukrainianness" of Dnipropetrovs'k already stood in sharp contrast to attitudes in Donets'k and Luhans'k by April 2014. Soon jokes started to circulate about Ukraine joining the Dnipropetrovs'k Province and analytical articles began to appear arguing that "the east of Ukraine" has shrunken to Donbas.[21]

The sudden "conversion to patriotism" in Dnipropetrovs'k was the result of the combined workings of different, often situational, factors, of which the most important was the stance adopted by the billionaire Ihor Kolomoys'kyi, appointed governor of Dnipropetrovs'k in early April, and his partners from the Privat Group. Unlike the elite groups in Donets'k, who from the start claimed "neutrality" and opted for negotiations with the rebels, the Dnipropetrovs'k elites from Privat adopted an unequivocally pro-Ukrainian position and did all they could to establish control over law enforcement.[22] The success of the Kolomoys'kyi team rested on the resolute stance of the active pro-Ukrainian minority; the relative weakness of local pro-Russian activists; and, last but not least, the geographical fact that Dnipropetrovs'k, unlike Donets'k region, does not share a border with the Russian Federation.

In other words, the closeness of Donets'k and Luhans'k to the Russian border and the tactics applied by the local elites seem to be more important factors in turning the region into a war zone than any kind of specific "Donbas identity." And it was in Dnipropetrovs'k that Ukrainian political nationalism has manifested itself most clearly as a kind of identification that does not involve the abandonment of the Russian language or, for instance, Russian or Jewish identity.

Imagining the New Ukrainian Studies

In his article quoted above, von Hagen insisted, "Precisely the fluidity of frontiers, the permeability of cultures, the historic multi-ethnic society is what

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walt und Staatlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert: Einige Tendenzen zeithistorischer Forschung," *Neue Politische Literatur* 58, no. 1 (2013): 39–58.

21. Cf. the important observations in Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "From Borderlands to Bloodlands," *Eurozine*, September 19, 2014, at www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-09-19-zhurzhenko-en.html (last accessed July 31, 2015).

22. See more in Andriy Portnov, "'The Heart of Ukraine'? Dnipropetrovsk and the Ukrainian Revolution," in Andrew Wilson, *What Does Ukraine Think?* (2015), 62–70, at www.ecfr.eu/page/-/WHAT_DOES_UKRAINE_THINK_pdf.pdf (last accessed July 31, 2015).

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could make Ukrainian history a very modern field of inquiry," and he envisioned such a history as "a veritable laboratory for viewing several processes of state and nation building and for comparative history generally."[23]

The last decade has seen important attempts to open the narrative of Ukrainian history to various national groups in present-day Ukraine and to question the nationally oriented teleological approaches in writing about its modern and premodern past.[24] The prospects of applying the "transnational approach" to Ukrainian studies were formulated in the ambitious volume *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography.*[25] This publication revealed the potential for critiquing national history from a transnational standpoint; at the same time, however, it also reflected the persistence of the categories of national history writing in texts that are supposed to be free of them.[26]

Despite the constructivist talk currently fashionable in the social sciences, explanations for the Ukraine crisis are still dominated by "identity"- and "history"-centered essentialist interpretations. I agree with Ilya Gerasimov, that we "simply lack a ready analytical language and explanatory models to describe the birth of the new Ukraine as a unique and—yes—unprecedented phenomenon."[27] To define this new language, the new Ukrainian studies needs to analyze the specifically post-Soviet Ukrainian hybridity as a distinctive and autonomous subjectivity and fully accept that Ukraine is a complex and dynamic society, which requires nuanced inquiry.[28] This complexity cannot be reduced to the language or ethnic issues but should include other social dimensions and divisions, such as those based on gender, age, and education.[29]

To understand the phenomenon of Maidan, one should look carefully at the forms, processes, and actors of societal self-organization and grass-roots

23. Von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," 670, 673.

24. Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven, 2003); Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (Oxford, 2007); and Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge, Eng., 2010). For an effort to write a history of Ukraine that includes all the major ethnic groups on the territory of present-day Ukraine, see Paul Robert Magocsi, *Ukraine: An Illustrated History* (Seattle, 2007). The problem with multinational history is that it remains nation-centered and often reproduces the discourse of fixed identities.

25. Georgiy Kasianov and Philip Ther, eds., *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography* (Budapest, 2009).

26. See Volodymyr Sklokin, review of *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, ed. Georgiy Kasianov and Philip Ther, *Ukraina Moderna* 17, no 6 (2010): 301.

27. Ilya Gerasimov, "Ukraine 2014: The First Postcolonial Revolution. Introduction to the Forum," *Ab Imperio* 15, no. 3 (2014): 22.

28. Ilya Gerasimov, Serguei Glebov, Alexander Kaplunovsky, Marina Mogilner, Alexander Semyonov, "From the Editors: Emancipatory Hybridity," *Ab Imperio* 14, no. 4 (2013): 21. See also Satoshi Mizutani, "Hybridity and History: A Critical Reflection on Homi K. Bhabha's Post-Historical Thoughts," *Ab Imperio* 14, no. 4 (2013): 27–46.

29. As Yaroslav Hrytsak has put it, Maidan had an important national component, but the phenomenon of such a mass movement cannot be reduced to it. See Yaroslav Hrytsak, "Ignorance Is Power," *Ab Imperio* 15, no. 3 (2014): 226.

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activism that have in some cases proved to be stronger than the corrupted state itself and even prevented the latter from becoming a "failed state."[30] A pro-democratic political movement that was not directly linked to economic growth; a political nation with two languages, numerous churches, and diverse memories; the nature of post-Maidan political legitimacy and mobilization in Russia; European mythology outside the EU; the political, economic, and cultural reasons for the resonance in western and central Europe of the Kremlin's disinformation and propaganda—these are some of the fascinating topics to be analyzed in a transnational and global context.

The new Ukrainian studies could be imagined as *inclusive* in three ways: oriented toward the interaction between Russian, Polish, Jewish, and Ottoman studies; envisioned as a fundamentally interdisciplinary research field in which history meets anthropology, economics, sociology, literary studies, political philosophy, and art history; openly disposed to researchers from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus (involving people from the various provinces rather than focusing on the capital cities only), who are still underrepresented in international debates and exchange programs.

Ukraine is an extremely fascinating subject with no proper analytical language to describe it, and the development of Ukrainian studies could bring important insights into the comparative and entangled research on violence, identification, hybridity, economic infrastructure, situational nationalism, and situational bilingualism. It could also introduce a better dynamic to the field of east European and Slavic studies, show the limits of the intellectual temptation to explain the current conflicts as reincarnations of old ones, and help replace reductive historicization with responsible contextualization.

30. The very first book about the Ukraine crisis in English was Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, 2014). See also Serhy Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2015); Viktor Stepanenko and Yaroslav Pylynskyi, eds., *Ukraine after the Euromaidan: Challenges and Hopes* (Bern, 2014); David R. Marples and Frederick V. Millis, eds., *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Analyses of a Civil Revolution* (Stuttgart, 2015); and Katharina Raabe and Manfred Sapper, eds., *Testfall Ukraine: Europa und seine Werte* (Frankfurt am Main, 2015).

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