

Regionalism: An Underestimated Dimension of State-Building

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Ukraine is an amalgam of ethnodemographic, geopolitical, economic, social, and cultural regions. To take this peculiarity of Ukraine into consideration is vital for successful state-building, whereas to neglect it may impede the development of, or even destroy, the state structure. The first years of Ukraine's independence demonstrated that the lack of an active regional policy substantially weakens the overall process of state- and nation-building. Despite this danger, Ukraine's regional diversity is ultimately a source of strength. Diversity can provide the new state flexibility, enabling Ukraine to adapt better to the changes occurring in Europe.

Regional diversity may become a weakness, however, if the state-builders are unable to create adequate mechanisms to harness its capacities. Soviet central planning has left a legacy of indifference to regional needs. New state institutions must reverse the disintegrative potential of regionalism. From 1991 to 1994, regional independence movements in Ukraine threatened to mark the end of a young nation struggling to make its independence irreversible. While the country is no longer at risk of collapse, regionalism does greatly affect central policymaking, hindering efforts at political and economic reform. As Sarah Birch and Ihor Zinko maintain, "The real significance of regionalism lies in the constraints it imposes on central policymaking, which account in large measure for the difficulties successive Ukrainian governments have experienced in implementing coherent reform programs."¹

The process of establishing a new Ukrainian statehood is further complicated as it is occurring simultaneously with the transitions to democracy and a market economy.² These processes are occurring under the profound restructuring of the post-Soviet geopolitical region. The triangular problem of transition faces all the post-Soviet republics. The parts of the former whole are trying to acquire their own national identity and integrity and to overcome, with different degrees of success, the morbid condition of postempire institutions. In the Ukrainian case, external factors affect the

state-building process. Currently in Ukraine, Russia, and the entire Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), integrative and disintegrative factors are acting simultaneously. Their complex and controversial interaction obviously influences the pace and forms of state-building and regional dynamics.

What are the peculiarities of Ukrainian regionalism? What factors determine its present and future role in state-building? How does the choice of this or that model for internal or external integration influence processes of regionalization? This chapter considers two aspects of the phenomenon of Ukrainian regionalism: first, the formation of national identity and statehood, and second, the dynamics of integrative and disintegrative processes.

PECULIARITIES OF UKRAINIAN REGIONALISM

Modern Ukraine is often considered a country with two poles, an eastern one centered in Donetsk and a western one centered in Lviv. These two key regions differ on ethnolinguistic grounds (with the large-scale presence of ethnic Russians and domination of the Russian language in the east and Ukrainians and the Ukrainian language predominant in the west), religious adherence (Orthodoxy versus Catholicism), social and cultural orientations (collectivism and state paternalism versus individualism), the type of economic orientation (state property versus private property), geopolitical preferences (pro-Russian, Eurasian versus pro-Western, European), and attitudes toward the past (different views on the significance of the Pereiaslav Rada of 1654 and the events of World War II).

As the capital, Kyiv lies midway on the eastern-western Ukraine axis. The bureaucratic center plays the role of conflict mediator between east and west, aiming at achieving its own interests, preserving stability, and protecting the state against disintegration. This simplified scheme largely reflects both current and historical realities. For a long time, sometimes centuries, different regions of Ukraine were parts of different, often hostile, states, including the Polish-Lithuanian, the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian, and the Russian Empires, as well as Romania. This scheme is not sufficient, however, for in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of Ukrainian regionalism.

DEFINING “REGION” AND “REGIONALISM”

According to current administrative and territorial divisions Ukraine consists of twenty-four provinces, or oblasts; two cities subordinated to the central state, Kyiv and Sevastopol and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.³ The name of each oblast is derived from the area's principal city. Although the terms oblast and region are often used interchangeably, region is more often used to denote the totality of several regions. Thus, for instance, western Ukraine in the narrow sense comprises three oblasts—Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil—and in the broad sense five oblasts,

with Riven and Lutsk added. Eastern Ukraine in the narrow sense includes two provinces, Donetsk and Luhansk, and in the broad sense five oblasts, adding Zaporizhzhya, Dnipropetrovsk, and Kharkiv. The media sometimes use the terms “left-bank” for eastern Ukraine, and “right-bank” for western Ukraine. Historical and geographical names are also quite common, such as Galicia, Volyn, Zakarpattia, Bukovina, Pridneprovie, Slobodskaia Ukraina, Novorossia, Podillya, and Donbas.

Ukrainian sociologists and political scientists have identified eleven regions by geopolitical criteria. These are:

1. Kyiv
2. Northern (Zhytomyr, Chernihiv, and Kyiv oblasts)
3. Central (Vinnytsia, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Cherkasy, Khmelnytsky)
4. Northeastern (Sumy, Kharkiv)
5. Northwestern (Lutsk, Riven)
6. Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhya)
7. Western (Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Ternopil)
8. Southwestern (Zakarpaty, Chernivtsi)
9. Southern (Mykolayiv, Odesa, Kherson)
10. Crimea
11. Donetsk (Donetsk, Luhansk)

All the political parties in Ukraine recognize that the present administrative and territorial state divisions are not fixed in perpetuity. Whether advocating unitary, unitary-decentralized, or federal models of state organization, politicians accept the possibility that current administrative and territorial units may be combined into larger ones.

This is not the first time that state-builders have grappled with the search for an optimal administrative division of Ukraine. In 1918, the president of the Ukrainian People's Republic, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, proposed dividing Ukraine into thirty lands, with three cities—Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa—designated as special districts along with their suburban territories.⁴ The presence of future administrative and territorial reform on the agenda of state-building (even though not an urgent priority) affects the behavior and policy of regional elites today. Although the 1996 Constitution of Ukraine describes Ukraine's territorial organization as being based on a “combination of centralization and decentralization,” it does not contain the basis for that paradoxical formulation in the other sections of the text referring to territorial division of the country. There is no further mention of the specific prerogatives of the regions. The centralized system of executive command established in 1994 (local councils and their heads) is maintained intact, and regional councils are given relatively little power.⁵

Western political analysts usually treat Ukrainian regionalism from the point of view of the emergence of specific local interests expressing the position of regional political elites to the politics of the central government. These specific local interests have been regarded as those challenging the country's integrity and its eventual split along ethnic and historical lines: russified east vs. ukrainianized west. Real life appears to be

more complex, however, than this simplistic dichotomy. Since 1991 it has become increasingly evident that the state is not threatened by imminent disintegration despite the presence of clearly demarcated regional differences.

Regionalism in Ukraine eventually lost its secessionist flavor. The ethnic unrest that some analysts predicted would arise from efforts to "ukrainianize" the country's ethnic Russians and Russophone Ukrainians simply did not occur. The question of ethnically and linguistically based national identity appeared to be sharply formulated in the regions with a clear majority of a Russophone (Crimea) or a Ukrainophone (western Ukraine) population. In these regions people try to use both Russian and Ukrainian in both official and everyday practice. In the rest of the country, people use Ukrainian at work, but in everyday practice speak either in Russian or a mostly pidgin Ukrainian called *surzhyk*—a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian words (or in western Ukraine—of Polish and Hungarian). The language component of national identity has not lost its significance. But national identity cannot be reduced only to its linguistic component but should be understood in a broader cultural, historic, and economic context.⁶

ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF REGIONALISM

As table 10.1 shows, Ukraine's principal economic indicators reveal great regional differentiation. About 60 percent of national income and over 60 percent of the principal production funds are found in seven oblasts: Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Luhansk, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhya, Odesa, and Kharkiv. Oblasts differ in their per capita contribution to national income by as much as 45 percent.

Even this single indicator illustrates the serious deformation of interregional social and economic development, a situation that creates fertile ground for increased social tensions and regional cleavages. The experience of other countries shows that such tensions emerge if there is a difference of 30 to 40 percent in national per capita income among the regions.⁷

In individual regions of Ukraine, the differentiation is increased because of the peculiarities of Ukraine's regional economy. The example of Donbas, whose economic potential is determined by industry, illustrates this tendency. Heavy industry based in Donetsk creates about two-thirds of the national income and around 82 percent of regional net income, and employs about 45 percent of the workers. The Donetsk economy concentrates on iron and fuel production, ignoring consumer needs and causing severe pollution.⁸ Single-industry towns, particularly those centered on coal mining, have found themselves in a difficult situation.

Industrial regions typically function as company towns. Most social services are tied to the local employer. Typically in the Dnipro and Northeastern regions, and the Donetsk oblast, housing, hospitals, nursery schools, and recreational facilities belong to the large factories and mines. In Donetsk, for example, the municipal councils own 2,088 apartments; and various enterprises control some 3,003 apartments. This distribution means that the inevitable closing of mines as the result of structural transformations has had dis-

Table 10.1

Regional Economic Development in Ukraine (1992)
(in percent)

Region/Oblast	Regional share of GNP	Regional share in National Income Production
Donetsk	16.40	13.95
Dnipropetrovsk	12.65	11.59
Luhansk	8.40	7.92
Kyiv	7.12	7.63
Zaporizhzhya	5.54	5.10
Odessa	5.24	6.80
Kharkiv	4.74	4.45
Poltava	4.58	4.25
Lviv	3.94	3.90
Crimea	3.17	3.59
Vinnytsia	2.82	3.19
Cherkasy	2.30	2.40
Sumy	2.25	2.19
Khmelnitsky	2.20	2.64
Kherson	2.19	2.25
Chernihiv	2.18	2.33
Zhytomyr	2.13	2.44
Mykolayiv	2.08	2.18
Ivano-Frankivsk	1.90	1.93
Kirovohrad	1.68	1.76
Riven	1.64	1.95
Ternopil	1.47	1.72
Lutsk	1.33	1.58
Zakarpaty	1.19	1.19
Chernivitsi	1.00	1.08
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Derzhavhy, *Komitet Statystyk* (Kyiv: State Statistic Committee, 1993), p. 43.

astrous repercussions for their employees. It is expected that fifteen mines in the Donetsk oblast are to be closed in the next five years due to depleted coal reserves. These closings will exacerbate the current regional shortage of housing and hospital beds.

Imports from other regions of Ukraine and other republics of the former Soviet Union had played a significant role in supplying the Donbas with consumer goods and food. The breaking of traditional ties and the increasing economic isolation of the region have resulted in shortages of food and consumer goods. This situation makes the sharp disproportion between the monetary income of the region's population (among the highest in Ukraine) and the production of goods (the lowest among all regions of Ukraine) even more critical. Miners' income has drastically increased in recent years, without a corresponding growth in the supply of goods. Therefore, prices

have risen, and other sections of the population are being forced into poverty. Naturally, this disparity brings about high inflation and increases regional social tensions.

It should be emphasized that these processes were evident even prior to the breakup of the former Soviet Union. One of the motives of the 1989 miners' strikes in Donbas was a conviction that Moscow was "robbing" the region, and that the Minister of the USSR Coal Industry cared more about the Kuznets basin in Russia than the Donetsk basin in Ukraine. During perestroika, popular hopes for a better life were vested in regional economical independence. By the early 1990s, these hopes combined with the national sovereignty movement, which was regarded as the only positive way of eliminating Moscow's control. Over 83 percent of Donbas residents voted for Ukrainian independence on December 1, 1991.

When the signs soon appeared that Kyiv was replacing Moscow as a center of control while the economic crisis worsened, a second centrifugal wave was born, this time inside Ukraine. The idea of regional independence found a second life.

Apparently, that development was inevitable. As Janusz Bugajski discusses in chapter 9, when Ukraine first became independent, it had no integrated system of state institutions. This process of creating state attributes, which has not yet been completed, was given much consideration. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake not to see at that time the beginning of the intense struggle of regional elites for influence over the political processes occurring in Kyiv.

Owing to the dissimilarity of the political field of Ukraine, the process of the renewal of the elites that was stimulated by the interdiction of the Communist Party proceeded faster in western Ukraine, especially in Kyiv. This fact was reflected in their better coordination and—briefly—their greater influence, despite the minority of seats held by the national democrats in parliament. After the elections in 1990, the nationalist forces from the western regions were at their most powerful in parliament because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the banning of the Communist Party of Ukraine, and the disorganization of the leftist camp. The west was, as a region, integrated more fully into the central institutions than was the east.⁹

Gradually, however, political forces and special interest groups based in the industrial regions of eastern Ukraine began to take the lead. During 1992–93, six political parties (the Party of Labor, the Communist, Socialist, and Liberal parties, the Slavonic Unity party, and the Civic Congress of Ukraine) held their constituent congresses in Donetsk. Each local elite started to exert pressure on Kyiv to protect the interests of the region. Regional leaders used the miners' movement and the Independent Trade Union of Coal Miners as their main mobilization mechanism. With the help of the Donbas miners' strike of June 1993, the fuel and power lobby successfully blocked the Kuchma government's timid efforts at economic liberalization. The agricultural lobbies from southern and central Ukraine, which were interested in state credits and preserving administrative management, emerged as the allies of the "red directors," as the Communist-era industrial managers are known.

The history of the first phase of regional development in Ukraine (from December 1991 to March 1994) illustrates the priority of economic factors in its emergence.

During that period regionalism was stimulated not only by the group interests of industrialists and local elites, but also by the inconsistency of Kyiv's policy. The specific conditions of eastern Ukraine and Crimea made these regions the epicenters of local initiatives. Crimea is quite deliberately left out of this analysis because it is a special case of regionalism requiring separate consideration. Nevertheless, many of the origins of regionalism touched upon in this chapter are typical of Crimea as well.

During the second phase of regionalism in Ukraine (after the 1994 elections), the political influence of the western oblasts decreased because of a lack of economic reform and declining standards of living. Corruption of state officials and low public opinion of government bodies have only fueled popular mistrust of the first wave of regionalism. After the elections of 1994, a strong contingent of left-wing and centrist members of the parliament from the east rose to power. It was the east's turn to become integrated into the central structures.¹⁰ Economic issues then took hold of the Ukrainian political agenda.

The priority of economic prerequisites in activating regionalism does not imply that there are no other factors, ethnic issues in particular, that play a role. It is true that the wave of regionalism is primarily a reflection of the national economic crisis. It is also true, however, that the most vulnerable branches of the economy are located in the regions that have significant ethnic Russian populations, that border Russia, that favor Soviet-style management, and that contain groups favoring CIS integration or strategic union with Russia.

THE SUBTLE NATURE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Debate on regionalism among many eastern Ukrainian politicians is dominated by two topics: regional self-sufficiency and the region's struggle against Kyiv and western Ukraine. A quotation from an election leaflet by Oleksander Baziliuk, a leader of the Civic Congress of Ukraine, illustrates this fact: "Almost all Ukrainian industries are southeast-based. The largest part of industrial production comes from here, and the most money is made here, too. But all of it goes into western Ukraine. The money goes to Kyiv, and only 20 percent returns. On the average the budget share for a resident of Donbas is three times less than that for a resident of Galicia." The leaflet bears at the top the slogans: "Together with Russia forever! Yes to Union with Russia! Yes to the sovereignty of Donbas! No to a feudal independence!"

The regional debate is implicitly an ethnic debate. Although only too obviously politicized, it reflects a real process of building national identity in a multiethnic state. Ukraine faces a special problem from Ukrainian Russians, who had become accustomed to being the dominant ethnic group in the USSR. How would the 11 million Russians living in Ukraine identify themselves? Are they prepared to transform their cultural identity into political demands? The majority of Russians live in eastern and southern Ukraine. They have lived side by side with Ukrainians long enough to bind their identity to the region and not to their "historical motherland." Their ancestors

moved to Ukraine from Central Russia in tsarist times either to seek a better life or to escape persecution.

The specific regional identity of Donbas has been heavily conditioned by the history of its development within the Soviet Union.¹¹ As the primary region for heavy industry, Donbas was the showcase of socialism, a privileged place with a peculiar mentality of its inhabitants that allowed every Donbas resident to be proud of the fact that he or she came from the “all-union stoke-room,” or *kochegarka*—the coal producing region for the entire USSR. The feeling of superiority was also strengthened by easy access to Moscow and Kyiv, where Donbas residents had allies in the highest corridors of power. As an exceptional region, the positive stereotype of Donbas was firmly rooted in the minds of its residents and was enhanced by the comparatively lower standard of living of the neighboring Rostov oblast in Russia.

Territorial and economic components prevail over the ethnic element in the self-identification of Russians in eastern Ukraine. Hopes of economic well-being within independent Ukraine, together with a strong feeling of belonging to an important region, were the main motives for voting for independent Ukraine in the December 1991 referendum. A great number of ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, combined with a still greater number of Russian-speaking people, helped the population to block any fears of ukrainianization.

In the western parts of Ukraine (Lutsk, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Riven, and Ternopil oblasts) where the Russians constitute just 5 percent of the population, the situation is different. Most people came to western Ukraine after World War II. They really are more “Russian Russians” than the Russians of the east or the south. But because of the small, dispersed numbers of Russians in western Ukraine, the strong influence of Ukrainian culture, and the lack of Russian-speaking communities in Galician and Volynian villages—a factor that even the Russian mass-media could not outweigh—the process of assimilating Russians went further here than anywhere else in Ukraine.

Norwegian researcher Paul Kolste has suggested that diaspora groups face three choices: assimilation, identifying with the ethnic minority, or developing one’s own identity.¹² For the Russians in western Ukraine, gradual assimilation is the most likely. The Russians of the south and the east are more able to participate actively in political life with ethnic Ukrainians while retaining their own cultural integrity.

The processes of privatizing public property and forming new political institutions have so far been ethnically neutral. Ukraine has adopted no laws that directly or indirectly impede the participation of Russians in privatization and the formation of a new state structure. In fact, many of the highest positions in the Ukrainian government are taken by people of non-Ukrainian nationality.

There is a vast ethnic tolerance among Ukrainians and Russians in Ukraine. As summarized in table 10.2, an April 1992 survey revealed two tendencies. First, both Russians and Ukrainians are placed in an absolutely similar sequence on the seven-point social distance scale. Even “Russians” make no exception for the Russians. Secondly, the intolerance index for Ukrainians is in all cases a little higher, with the exception of attitudes toward Ukrainians, both native and of the diaspora.

Table 10.2

Tolerance toward Other Nationalities

Nationality	Ready for relations through marriage with people of the given nationality, %		Index of intolerance to the given nationality (scale: 1-7)	
	Russian	Ukrainian	Russian	Ukrainian
Ukrainians	69	84	1.66	1.47
Russians	67	34	1.82	2.64
Belorussians	38	25	2.62	2.92
Ukrainians of diaspora	18	25	3.75	3.39
Poles	17	15	3.75	3.79
Jews	14	7	3.88	4.30
Americans	12	11	4.15	4.37
Germans	12	7	4.20	4.51
Romanians	10	6	4.50	4.61
Japanese	5	4	4.52	4.72
Crimean Tatars	4	3	4.91	5.16
Georgians	4	3	5.06	5.37
Vietnamese	3	2	5.29	5.30
Arabs	6	2	5.29	5.39
Gypsies	3	3	5.51	5.60

Source: E. Golovakha and N. Panina, *Sotsianoe bezumiye: Istorija, teorija, i sovremennaia praktika* (Kyiv: Abris, 1994), 114

Some differences are observed among members of the same nationality living in various regions of Ukraine. The Ukrainians of eastern Ukraine, which borders Russia, are the most tolerant of Russians; it is harder to explain the data indicating that Ukrainians of southern Ukraine show the least tolerance for Russians. Common tendencies are the decrease of self-tolerance among Ukrainians as a function of decreasing numbers of Ukrainians in the total ethnic composition of a region and the perception of Russians as a socially closer-knit community. The latter tendency is contradicted by the Galician data demonstrating greater closeness between the diaspora and Galician Ukrainians than among the Russians and Galician Ukrainians, as shown in table 10.3.

A typical example of regional identity in northeastern Ukraine and Donbas is a growing number of multilateral agreements concluded between the border regions of Russia (Belgorod, Kursk, Briansk, Rostov, and Voronezh oblasts) and Ukraine (Sumy, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts). The representatives of these regions have had several meetings (in Belgorod, Kharkiv, and Donetsk) to discuss

Table 10.3

**Interrelations of Russians and Ukrainians
in Various Regions of Ukraine**

Index of intolerance (scale 1–7)

	To Ukrainians	To Russians	To Ukrainians of diaspora
Population of Ukraine			
Total	1.55	2.45	3.48
Ukrainians	1.47	2.64	3.39
Russians	1.66	1.82	3.75
Ukrainians in different regions			
Western	1.08	2.71	1.81
Central	1.13	2.53	3.53
Eastern	1.52	2.23	3.74
Southern	1.98	3.17	3.85
Crimea	2.29	2.24	4.29

Source: Golovakha and Panina, 116.

matters of coordinating cross-border trade and industrial and other ties between the regions. Similar forms of regional diplomacy have been utilized by the border regions of western Ukraine.

These new phenomena are not examples of “hidden” or “lukewarm” separatism. Rather it is a natural, commonsense, and pragmatic reaction by regions dissatisfied with the ineffective policies of the Ukrainian and Russian governments. However, there is some degree of “economic egoism” of the border regions, which are striving to use their favorable location as a means of getting some benefit from the center. Hence the combining of efforts by the regions to achieve this aim is not accidental. The heads of oblast administrations in Kharkiv and Donetsk have issued joint appeals to the presidents of Russia and Ukraine.

There are some troubling aspects of such a cross-border partnership. The most critical of these is an attempt to expand regional diplomacy into a basis for integration within the CIS. Many politicians in Russia give a very colonialist interpretation to the concept of economic bases for integration. “As many debtors to Russian Federation have no money for settling energy-resource accounts,” said Sergei Shakhrai, then Russian deputy prime minister and later President Yeltsin’s representative to the Constitutional Court; “We must exercise a tough and concentrated policy of getting land and enterprises as payment, that is, creating the economic basis for integration.”¹³

In theory, Russia could attempt to use well-established paths of cooperation between border regions to influence the situation from the outside, thus “ethnicizing”

foreign policy in an attempt to support and protect compatriots in a "near abroad." Yet there is no strong organized secessionist political force in Ukraine. Emerging regional elites see more prospects for themselves within the boundaries of independent Ukraine than in a situation of "furious competition for scarce resources" with their stronger counterparts in Russia. Even more important, the "integrationist" scenario lost its attractiveness in the eyes of the population of neighboring Ukrainian regions after the events in Chechnya.

NEW REGIONALISM AND THE POLICY OF INTEGRATION

The parliamentary, presidential, and local elections held in mid-1994 ended the first phase of Ukrainian regionalism. That phase was characterized by a somewhat chaotic search by regions to find their place in the new environment and ways to influence Kyiv's policy.

For Ukrainian statehood, the most important result of the parliamentary elections was establishing the priority of an active and balanced regional policy in the minds of members of parliament and the electorate. Most members of parliament won their seats based on this issue. The distribution of parliamentary leadership positions was obviously to the advantage of eastern interests. (See table 10.4.)

Deputies from the Donetsk, Dnipro, and Northeastern regions took twelve out of twenty-three positions in the parliament's standing committees. Among the other committees just one chair came from western Ukraine, the Committee on Culture and Spirituality.

This imbalance in the regional representatives' influence in parliament has been corrected by local elections. They eliminated the dangerous division between proreform western Ukraine and conservative eastern Ukraine. The old elite has been considerably shaken. Many cities and regions, including Donetsk oblast, the city of Luhansk, Kharkiv, and Odesa, elected pragmatic proreformists. Simultaneously in western Ukraine pragmatic politicians gained more power. The danger of intensifying the opposition among regions that arose after Leonid Kuchma's election as president (he was supported by left-bank Ukraine) was neutralized by the positive results in local elections.

The signing of cooperation agreements between Mariupil and Lviv, as well as Donetsk and Ivano-Frankivsk, has indicated a new, constructive phase of regionalism. The two regions have worked out a program for attracting Western investors, including the World Bank. The essence of "new regionalism" has been expressed by the leader of the "Reforms" parliamentary faction, First Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Pynzenyk: "If the center is unable to unite the country, the regions must do it."

Although gains have been made, challenges remain for Ukrainian policymakers, particularly their ability to coordinate regional and national development strategies in Ukraine. The growth of social tensions, caused by a more radical pace of economic reforms, will inevitably stimulate tension both in interregional relations (competition

Table 10.4

Regional Representation in Ukrainian Parliament and Preferences during 1994 Presidential Election

Region/ Oblast	Max # Deputies	Committee		
		Chairs	Kravchuk	Kuchma
Donetsk	47	3		+
Dnipropetrovsk	34	1		+
Kharkiv	28	3		+
Luhansk	25	1		+
Kyiv	23		+	
Lviv	23	1	+	
Odessa	23			+
Crimea	23			+
Zaporizhzhya	18	2		+
Vynnytsia	17	2	+	
Kiev	17	1	+	
Poltava	16	1	+1st rnd	+
Zhytomyr	13	2	+	
Sumy	13	2		+
Khmelnysky	13	1	+	
Cherkasy	13		+	
Ivano-Frankivsk	12		+	
Chernyiv	12	1	+	
Kirovohrad	11		+1st rnd	+2nd rnd
Mykolayiv	11		+1st rnd	+2nd rnd
Kherson	11			+
Zakarpaty	10		+	
Riven	10		+	
Ternopil	10		+	
Lutsk	9		+	
Chernihiv	8	2	+	
UKRAINE	450			+

Source: Natalia Panina, Evhen Golovakha. "Tendentsii rozvytku ukrainskogo suspilstva, 1994–1998" *Sotsiologichri pokaznyky* (Kyiv: Instytut Sotsiologii Ukrainy, 1999), p. 52.

for scarce state resources) and between center and periphery. It was the latter consideration that weakened former Leonid President Kravchuk's political will, as he feared that reforms might cause Ukraine to break up.

President Kuchma was taking a risk. He seems, however, to have learned by Kravchuk's sad experience. In the first hundred days of his presidency, he has established structures to facilitate regional participation in decision-making, pushed for constitutional power-sharing, and called for radical economic reforms.

On September 20, 1994, a Presidential Decree was issued establishing a Council of Regions. According to the decree, the Council of Regions has been created for "consultation in, working out coordinated drafts on most important problems in social

and economic spheres, on matters concerning the relations between central and local executive authorities and institutes of local self-government." The Council is led by the president; his deputy is the prime minister. Members include the heads of regional councils, the leaders of the Kyiv and Sevastopol City Councils, and the chair of the Crimean government.

Apart from its immediate objective, "to ensure vertical coordination and the balance of economic reforms," a new Council could be seen also as a step toward a two-chamber parliament with a Chamber of Lands (Regions) composed of regional representatives.¹⁴ Importantly, before bringing the report on economic reform to parliament for consideration, President Kuchma discussed its main points in the Council of Regions. After four years of existence, however, the Council of Regions still has more a consultative than a decision-making role. It has not developed into a powerhouse of economic reforms mainly because of Kuchma's lack of strong political will.

The president has repeatedly stressed the importance of the processes of integration that are under way in post-Soviet states. As Ukraine shares borders with three countries of the CIS, it is important to assess how new integration tendencies will influence Ukrainian regionalism. Regional political elites, with their differing conceptions of national identity, favor contradictory international policies. In Ukraine, integration thus becomes both a policy tool and a focus of political dispute among state-builders. Under current circumstances, domination by either orientation may lead to instability and internal conflict and will increase Ukraine's vulnerability to external pressure. A reasonable policy of integration, however, would hardly destroy the still-evolving national identity, but rather would give it greater value.

CONCLUSION

The balance of geopolitical preferences shaped so far is not final. Its development is likely to be determined by the processes taking place both in Ukraine and in Russia, as well as in Europe. Until the point of minimal stability of social and economic spheres is achieved, the likelihood of destructive regionalism is still real, thus endangering the process of nation- and state-building. The sooner the "rules of the game" are adopted—the forms of state government and political structure—the greater are the chances for successful economic reforms in Ukraine.

The contradiction between the hierarchical system of the Soviet era and the new system of division of powers is one of the basic components of conflict in Ukraine, just as in many other post-Soviet states. In Russia in October 1993, this contradiction resulted in military confrontation. To eliminate the possibility that a similar scenario might occur in Ukraine, a legitimate basis for relations between Kyiv and the regions, including taxation and revenue, must be established.

At the same time, along with the regional macropolitics, it is essential that there should also be special regional micropolitics that take into account the individual features of the diverse Ukrainian regions, especially border regions and those that are very depressed economically. The Council of Regions could create a framework in which

the natural competition among the regions, together with the contradictions arising as a result of it, could find a legitimate compromise-based solution.

To bolster the chances of reform, it is imperative to demarcate clearly power-sharing among the national, regional, and local governments en route to a practical devolution of power. Decentralization will be a healthy process as it will allow regions to exploit their respective strengths and clarify their local interests; force regional authorities to be more responsible and accountable to their local electorate, eliminating the traditional scapegoat role of the central government; and encourage regional elites to cooperate more pragmatically and more actively on a horizontal level (region-to-region), avoiding the bureaucracy of the central government. At the same time, more freedom to develop regional transborder economic and cultural cooperation with neighboring countries (Poland for western Ukraine, and Russia for eastern Ukraine) will be in the best interest of these regions and would subdue western Ukrainian fears of any pro-CIS orientation at the state level. This point is especially important considering the specific geopolitical location of Ukraine and the absence of national consensus on foreign economic and political cooperation preferences. Decentralization will also eventually demonstrate (especially in eastern Ukraine) the difficulties of self-government and thus stimulate more mature relations between Kyiv and the regions.

It is clear that many barriers to establishing the optimum model of state structure and form of governing are yet ahead. Nevertheless, constructive features of the new stage of regionalism in Ukraine, manifested after the elections of 1994 and 1998, provide a basis for moderate optimism. Active regional policies, coupled with the elimination of uncertainties about the division of powers among different levels and institutions of government as well as implementation of concurrent program of economic reform and solidarity with the West, provide a real possibility of consolidating the political system and creating a functioning multiethnic society in independent Ukraine. Under these conditions, integration with the West and cooperation with Russia could emerge as a viable strategic option for Ukraine.

NOTES

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1. Sarah Birch and Ihor Zinko, "The Dilemma of Regionalism," *Transition* 2, no. 22 (1 November 1996): 22–25.

2. See Roman Szporluk, "Reflections on Ukraine After 1994: The Dilemmas of Nationhood," *Harriman Review* 7, nos. 7–9 (March–May 1994): 1–10.

3. Constitution of Ukraine (28 June 1996), Chapter 9, Article 132.

4. A. Slusarenko and M. Tomenko, *Istoria ukrainskoi konstytutskii* (Kyiv: Lybid, 1993), 71.
5. Birch and Zinko, 23.
6. Birch and Zinko discuss three aspects of regionalism. First, the economic and political center of Ukraine after 1991 was no longer Moscow, but Kyiv. Second, the majority of Ukrainian regions (sixteen out of twenty-four) acquired an external border. Third, the relationship between the ethnic structure of the regions and that of the center was inverted. Ethnic Ukrainians changed from being a minority in a country with a Russian dominance and a Russian capital to being a majority in a country with a Ukrainian capital.
7. V. Popovkin, "Ekonomichna nebezpeka i nezalezhnist Ukrainy," *Rozbudova Derzhavy*, no. 2 (November 1993): 18.
8. See *Kontsepsiia programmy stabilizatsii ekonomiki Donetskoi oblasti i ee sotsialnogo rozvittia* (Donetsk, 1992).
9. Birch and Zinko, 25.
10. Birch and Zinko, 64.
11. See Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Donbass between Ukraine and Russia," paper presented at the conference on Empire and Nation in the Soviet Union, University of Chicago, 24–26 October 1997.
12. *Raduga*, nos. 11–12 (1993).
13. *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 12 May 1994.
14. *Zhizhn*, 18 October 1994.

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edited by
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