

Copyright © 2003 SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi)
Vol 3(4): 491–507 [1468-7968(200312)3:4;491–507;038571]
www.sagepublications.com

Soviet and post-Soviet

Challenges to the study of nation and state building

GLENN GOSHULAK

York University, Canada

ABSTRACT Since the collapse of the Soviet multinational state-empire, nationalism in post-Soviet states has been the subject of an ever-increasing number of studies. Post-Soviet scholars have adopted a wide variety of studies on different aspects of the relationship between nation- and state-building projects. In the midst of this burgeoning interest in post-Soviet nationalism, however, there has been relatively little interest in the Soviet era itself. Recent studies provide a valuable re-assessment of some aspects of the ‘national question’ in the Soviet Union. However, the scope of these studies has been relatively limited, and primarily undertaken as historical research. An example can be found in the works of Ronald Suny and Terry Martin. These two authors have re-opened evaluations of the early Soviet period and the ‘national question’. However, they focus mostly on the Leninist and Stalinist periods of Soviet history (Martin, 2001; Suny and Kennedy, 1999). Most recent studies of the Soviet Union generally do not study the entire Soviet project; and even if they do, very few have attempted to link it to the post-Soviet projects taking place today. With the exception of Ronald Suny and Rogers Brubaker, (Brubaker, 1996; Suny, 1999), there has been relatively little theoretical discussion of the Soviet nationalities model and its importance for understanding nationalism.

KEYWORDS nationalism • Ukraine

This article will highlight two interrelated issues and problems for the study of nationalism in the Soviet/post-Soviet context. First, the influence of the Soviet period on post-Soviet state building remains largely understudied. Second, studies in post-Soviet nationalism tend to focus primarily on empirical research, while working with – either implicitly or explicitly – essentialist conceptions of nations and national identity. Those who study the Soviet period, however, tend to overemphasize the role of state leaders

and intellectuals in the nationalities policies of the Soviet regime. Both of these approaches reflect a limitation of existing universal theories of nationalism. A post-Soviet perspective, while benefiting from valuable aspects of existing theories of nationalism, would be better informed by a more contextually valid framework. This framework would not seek to replace existing theory, but to modify and extend it to reflect the uniqueness of the Soviet context.

I propose that in studying both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, we need to look at both state and society, not as separate social processes in nation and state building, but as part of the connection between Soviet and post-Soviet state building experiences. This article will use the Ukrainian case to highlight some key issues and problems of existing approaches to Soviet and post-Soviet nationalism, as well as point out some possible new avenues of analysis.

Studies of nationalism in post-Soviet Ukraine reveal some of the limitations of current research into nationalism. As Yaroslav Hrytsak and Louise Jackson have noted, while there are ample empirical studies of Ukrainian nationalism, there is a need for more theoretically sensitive approaches (see Hrytsak, 2000: 263; Jackson, 1998: 102). I would amend this observation somewhat. I argue that while few scholars of national identity and nationalism in Ukraine have incorporated serious theoretical analysis in their studies, there are underlying assumptions about nations and national identity within these empirical studies. Therefore, we need to examine both the applicability of existing theories and the possibility of alternate frameworks of analysis.

WESTERN THEORIES, SOVIET CONTEXT

It is no great insight to observe that the overwhelming majority of theoretical literature on nationalism is written from a western perspective. The predominant explanation for non-western nationalisms is that they are the inheritors of the western model, which has been diffused throughout the globe. While many scholars of postcolonial nationalism have pointed out the ethnocentric/Eurocentric nature of universal approaches, a similar critique has not taken place within the area of post-Soviet studies. Instead, most scholars of post-Soviet nationalism tend to unproblematically assume the validity of such theories for the post-Soviet context. In this article, I will examine two of the dominant tendencies among universal theories of nationalism, and their impact on studying nationalism in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states. While existing theories do offer some valuable insights for studying nationalism, there are some serious limitations that need to be addressed.

THE MODERNIST PARADIGM

The dominant paradigm in theories of nationalism, as Anthony Smith identifies it, is the modernist approach (Smith, 1998). This approach locates the rise and development of nations and nationalisms within the emergence of capitalism and capitalist states. Two of the more influential examples of modernism can be found in the works of Eric Hobsbawm and Ernest Gellner. Hobsbawm's approach, while firmly located within the modernist framework, is guided primarily by his own ideological disdain for nationalism. For Hobsbawm, nationalism is just a product of a particular stage in capitalism, and therefore doomed to 'wither away' as capitalism is transformed. It is therefore not surprising that he applauds the efforts of the Soviet Union in containing nationalism:

Hence, as we can now see in melancholy retrospect, it was the great achievement of the communist regimes in multinational countries to limit the disastrous effects of nationalism within them . . . The USSR's potential for disruption, so long kept in check (except during World War II), is now patent. In fact, the 'discrimination' or even 'oppression' against which champions of various Soviet nationalities abroad used to protest, was far less than the consequences of the withdrawal of Soviet power. (Hobsbawm, 1992: 180)

Hobsbawm warns that the collapse of the Soviet Union leaves post-Soviet states with the potential for disaster. He argues that in the absence of a Soviet mechanism for containing nationalism, the tendency within post-Soviet states will be the construction of a dichotomy between the dominant nation and the 'other'. '[I]n post-communist societies ethnic or national identity is above all a device for defining the community of the innocent and identifying the guilty who are responsible for "our" predicament; especially once communist regimes are no longer there to function as scapegoats' (Hobsbawm, 1992: 174). For Hobsbawm, therefore, nationalisms in post-Soviet states are merely the remnants of an earlier, exclusionary form of identity, reappearing as a result of the collapse of the communist regimes that had contained them.

Ernest Gellner has provided a more systematic and less ideological approach to post-Soviet nationalism. However, he also studied nationalism from within a modernist framework. Gellner's unique contribution to theories of nationalism is his theory of 'high culture'. According to Gellner, the movement from agrarian to industrialized societies creates the conditions for the development of inclusive, egalitarian forms of identity, through mobilization and educational policies. For Gellner, modern nationalisms were formed out of these processes (Gellner, 1987).

Amid the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Gellner wrote an article addressing the Soviet collapse and the future of nationalism within a post-Soviet world. He identified five historical stages of nationalism within the

'Eastern European' context (Gellner, 1991). While the first four stages represented the various developments of nationalism as a political movement, the fifth stage symbolized the transcendence of nationalism from an exclusionary to an egalitarian project. In essence, this last stage represented nationalism as it exists in western nation states today (the development of this western model of nationalism was described in Gellner's 'high culture' model):

It is marked by the greater and better diffused affluence of later industrialism. This means that hostility between culturally distinct groups is not exacerbated so much by jealousy and by the humiliation of a poverty visibly and consciously associated with ethnic status and treated as 'backwardness'. More advanced industrialism also modifies the occupational structure and standardizes cultures, so that their mutual differences become, at least in some measure, merely phonetic rather than semantic . . . (Gellner, 1991: 131)

Gellner argued that, while nationalisms in Eastern and Southern Europe were in the fourth stage of development, the Soviet Union had effectively contained and 'frozen' nationalism, so that the nationalisms which emerged in 1991 were essentially the late 19th-century forms of nationalism (stage two), in which the 'one nation one state' principle predominated. For emerging post-Soviet states, the only hope of avoiding some of the disasters of the 20th-century in other parts of 'Eastern Europe' was to 'catch up quickly'.

While Gellner did not share Hobsbawm's disdain for nationalism, both he and Hobsbawm shared the assumption that the Western model of nationalism, which developed as a result of the particular formation of capitalism within these states, is not applicable to the Soviet case. Given the nature of the Soviet project – as a non-capitalist project – this is a quite reasonable claim. However, a further assumption of the authors is more problematic. For Hobsbawm and Gellner, since the Soviet case does not reflect a capitalist model of modernization, the development of nationalism is seen to have been aborted. Due primarily to the powerful control of the Soviet state/Communist party over Soviet society, nationalism was submerged in its 19th-century form.

PROBLEMS OF ESSENTIALISM

An overall tendency in modernist theories of nationalism is the attempt to offer a universal explanation for the power of nationalism. Writing from a Marxist perspective, Benedict Anderson emphasizes that there is a strong connection between language and nation. He illustrates this by using an example from Ukrainian history. Anderson notes how quickly the Ukrainian language was transformed from a peasant to a literary language in the

19th-century, and points to its importance in the construction of Ukrainian identity. 'The use of this language was the decisive stage in the formation of an Ukrainian national consciousness' (Anderson, 1991). While Anderson's theory of nationalism is quite complex, he emphasizes that language – as a specifically capitalist form – is the crucial link to understanding the mass mobilization of people into a nation. For Anderson, language is viewed as a crucial element in the construction of nations. The development of a 'private-property language', in which no language has any apparent worth over the next, is viewed by Anderson as being critical for the mass growth of the nation. Most importantly, the development of 'print capitalism' provided the media through which to transmit this new kind of language and, subsequently, community:

What, in a positive sense, made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity. (Anderson, 1991: 42–3)

There are several problems with Anderson's concept of print-capitalism. As Anthony Smith argues, assigning such a prominent role to print-capitalism is most dangerous because of its reductive explanatory value:

This view of the nation as primarily a text and discourse inevitably suggests a leading causal role for print technology and print-capitalism, one which leaves little room for other modes of cultural representation and omits other vital factors in the rise of nations and the spread of nationalism. (Smith, 1998: 138)

A further problem with Anderson's approach is the association between print technology and capitalism. Is the connection between capitalism and print language simply coincidental? Or is the development of print technology a particular capitalist process? If so, what exactly makes this specific form of technology a capitalist form?

Anderson's theory combines elements of essentialism with modernism. His construction of 'print capitalism' as a major factor in the mass mobilization of the 'imagined community' is derivative of Karl Deutsch's communication approach, which emphasized the role of communication structures in the mobilization of nationalist movements (Deutsch, 1966). However, it is curious that Anderson specifies print language as a specifically 'capitalist' form of technological innovation. One possible explanation is that Anderson is attempting to link his theory within modernist parameters: i.e. that mass nationalism is essentially a product of the emergence of capitalism. This is certainly a possibility, given Anderson's own acceptance of the basic parameters of the modernist approach. This does not mean that Anderson's theory is limited to print language as the sole factor in the 'imagining' of the nation. What is critical, however, is that he attempts to essentialize its mass nature within the emergence of capitalism.

A different approach to understanding nations and nationalism stresses

the links between national identity and ethnicity. Although Anthony Smith acknowledges that nations are primarily modern communities, he argues that they have roots in premodern forms of belonging, which are linked by ethnicity. Smith attempts to maintain a balance between viewing nations as modern (capitalist), while rooted in primordial communities (ethnicity). This dual nature of nationhood reveals itself in Smith's analysis of Ukrainian nationalism. On the one hand, Ukrainian identity in the 19th-century is referred to as a 'nation-in-the-making' or 'ethnic category', because it does not have a long history to draw upon (Smith, 1996: 110). However, Smith also argues that during the 19th-century an 'ethnic' conflict developed between Russians and Ukrainians. The source of Ukrainian nationalism was Russian westernization: 'In the case of the Ukrainians, it was the incipient westernization of Russia and the onset of industrialization in the latter half of the 19th-century that turned a literary movement into a social and political nationalism' (Smith, 1992: 55).

In analyzing nationalism in the post-Soviet era, Smith rejects Gellner and Hobsbawm's claim that nationalism was successfully contained and 'frozen' in its late 19th-century form. However, his analysis reveals a tendency to reduce the study of nations and nationalism to an ethnic essentialism. Although language and religion are viewed as significant factors, they become subverted within an ethnic explanation:

as the recent interest in religion in various parts of the Soviet Union demonstrates, language did not so much replace as preserve ethnic identities whose fuller articulation requires a 'religious' dimension to the extent that such a dimension is inseparable from a distinctive 'ethnohistory' and from a continuing, if hitherto unspoken, sense of ethnic election. (Smith, 1992: 62)

The Ukrainian case highlights a weakness of Smith's assumption. While industrialization was beginning to take place in the late 19th-century, it was very selective and isolated. Few of the workers in the new industries were Ukrainian; the vast majority remained in the village. It was here that the beginnings of a Ukrainian national movement began to emerge (Guthier, 1990). The Ukrainian case highlights the complex nature of nationalism. In Western Ukraine (Galicia), which was under Habsburg rule, a much more significant movement began to develop in the late 19th-century. This was spurred on by the continued oppression of Ukrainian peasants under the Polish gentry, and was also aided by the electoral representation given to Ukrainian peasants (see Kann, 1970; Subtelny, 2000).

Modernism and the Soviet experience

A common aspect of the approaches of Gellner, Hobsbawm, Anderson, and Smith, is that, in attempting to provide a universal framework, they oversimplify what are, in different contexts, very complex nationalist movements.

One problem with Gellner's approach is that it denies the applicability of his 'high culture' model to the Soviet project. Upon closer examination of the Soviet project, the changes that took place during the Soviet period exhibit a striking similarity to those described by Gellner in his 'high culture' model. Mass industrialization and migration of the Soviet peoples reflected a movement from 'Agraria' to 'Industria', as described in Gellner's model (see Lewis, 1971; Liber, 1992). In the Soviet Union, education – Gellner describes this as 'exo-education' – also played a significant role in promoting a sense of 'Sovietness' among the population (see Simon, 1991). Even if we acknowledge that the 'high culture' project of the Soviet Union was unique, this does not justify studying it outside of the modernization model, as Gellner and Hobsbawm do. Instead, we need to study the Soviet Union as an alternate form of modernization, which, while sharing some similarities with the western (capitalist) model, is also unique in many aspects.

A further problem with Gellner's 'high culture' model is the claim that it promotes an egalitarian, non-ethnic form of identity. This is the model to which Gellner is referring in his identification of the fifth stage of nationalist development in the Eastern European context. This reflects the same assumptions about national identity as the 'civic' model, which is often portrayed – implicitly or explicitly – as a polar opposite of 'ethnic' identity. In this way, the more civic-oriented western forms of nationalism are viewed as polar opposites to the ethnic-oriented nature of (backwards, non-modern) post-Soviet nationalisms. As Taras Kuzio has argued, the civic/ethnic nation dichotomy is very problematic (see Kuzio, 2000). Not only are lines between civic and ethnic concepts more blurred in practice; in addition, the myth of a dichotomy between 'civic' Western Europe and 'ethnic' Eastern Europe is dangerous and misleading. By accepting Gellner's argument that Eastern European nationalisms were 'frozen' in their 19th-century (supposedly ethnic) forms, this myth is simply being reinforced.

'Nationalising states'

Rogers Brubaker has provided a very influential analysis of the links between the Soviet and post-Soviet period. Brubaker argues that, contrary to the claims of Gellner and Hobsbawm, national identity was 'institutionalized' in the Soviet Union (Brubaker, 1996). Yuri Slezhkhine notes that federalism in the Soviet Union was more than just a tool for propaganda:

Uncompromisingly hostile to individual rights, they eagerly, deliberately and quite consistently promoted group rights that did not always coincide with those of the proletariat. 'The world's first state of workers and peasants' was the world's first state to institutionalize ethnoterritorial federalism . . . (Slezhkhine, 1994: 415)

Brubaker goes beyond simply understanding the nature of the Soviet state. In describing the post-Soviet states, he refers to them as 'nationalising states':

These are states that are conceived by their dominant elites as nation-states, as the states of and for particular nations, yet as 'incomplete' or 'un-realized' nation-states, as insufficiently 'national' in a variety of senses . . . Almost all of the twenty-odd new states of post-Communist Eurasia can be understood in this sense . . . (Brubaker, 1996: 79)

Brubaker's analysis shares some of the assumptions of the modernist approach; specifically, that the post-Soviet states are producing 'exclusionary,' essentialized expressions of national identity in their state building projects. While Brubaker does not specifically define the nation in terms of language or ethnicity, others have used his model for such purposes. In the early 1990s, Ian Bremmer argued that in Ukraine, there were regional divisions between Russians and Ukrainians, and that the source of this division was primarily ethnic (Bremmer, 1994). According to Bremmer, an escalated conflict between these two communities was a distinct possibility in the early years of independence.

Dominique Arel also applied Brubaker's model, modifying it to reflect what he saw as the special nature of Ukrainian identity. Arel argued that the conflict between identities in Ukraine was primarily linguistic, not ethnic (Arel, 1995). According to Arel, regional conflicts between eastern and western Ukraine, if they were to escalate, would be mobilized along linguistic lines of identification.

The developments in empirical research on national identity in Ukraine during the 1990s reveal that most scholars have been uncomfortable with essentializing explanations. While early studies emphasized the role of ethnicity and language in national identity, more recent studies have challenged the simple dichotomy between Eastern Russian/Russophone and Western Ukrainian/Ukrainophone identities (see Barrington, 1997; Craumer and Clem, 1999; O'Loughlin and Bell, 1999). Brubaker's designation of post-Soviet states as 'nationalising states' reinforces the myth of two diametrically opposed types of national projects: 'civic' versus 'ethnic'.

A second problem with Brubaker's analysis is that it rejects the agency of society and social forces in the construction of national identity, and in relations between various national communities within states. Ronald Suny and Michael Kennedy do not completely reject the utility of studying nationalism from a state-society perspective. However, they argue that the most important element is the role of intellectuals, who are seen to construct the nation:

Although we do not disregard the broad structural and discursive frameworks and social dynamics that provided the context in which nations have been constructed or doubt that the popular exercise of nationalist visions and the utilization of national ideology by states have greater explicit social

consequence, we are concerned here with the 'quiet politics' . . . of nationalism that establishes the possibilities for what states and societies might do. In their contestation of the meaning of the nation, intellectuals are disproportionately involved in such quiet politics. (Suny and Kennedy, 1999: 2)

The authors provide a valuable point about the role of intellectuals. They emphasize the process of nation building as one of 'articulation', which involves 'a measure of fit between a cultural product and the social environment' (Suny and Kennedy, 1999: 5). What is absent in this analysis, however, is any conception of effective limitations on the actions of intellectuals. The restraints on intellectuals are identified as the social environment in which they operate, but (supposedly) this does not provide much resistance to their nation-building projects.

This is one of the valuable contributions of empirical research on Ukrainian identity. By focusing on the social environment in which post-Soviet state and nation building take place, these studies reveal how society affects the actions of both state leaders and intellectuals. However, these studies need to be located within a wider theoretical perspective. What is needed is an approach that is able to provide a comprehensive framework for studying the unique nature of national identity in the post-Soviet states. In essence, we need to bring the study of the role of state and society back together.

ALTERNATE APPROACHES AND FRAMEWORKS?

Providing an alternate theoretical approach to studying post-Soviet nationalisms does not mean abandoning the existing theoretical literature on nationalism. The problem, however, is that there are some very problematic assumptions that need to be addressed. First, Gellner's model suggests that factors such as urbanization and migration policies are influential in the changing nature of national identities. Despite Gellner's objections, the Soviet project reflects Gellner's model of 'high culture', both as a movement from an agrarian to industrial state, and in the cultural project of creating a supranational identity.

In a recent thorough and insightful historical reassessment of Lenin, Stalin, and the nationalities question, Terry Martin refers to the Soviet Union as an 'affirmative action empire' (Martin, 2001). Martin argues that one of the unique features of the Soviet Union was its ability to draw upon the experiences of the Habsburg empire in dealing with the nationalities question. In doing so:

Russia's new revolutionary government was the first of the old European multiethnic states to confront the rising tide of nationalism and respond by systematically promoting the national consciousness of its ethnic minorities and

establishing for them many of the characteristic institutional forms of the nation-state. (Martin, 2001: 1)

Martin's analysis is a crucial reassessment of the Leninist and Stalinist periods. His research reveals that the nationalities question was a complex problem for the Soviet leadership, not only in the effort to build 'socialism in one country', but also as a response to the continuing pressures from the many different national identities within the former empire.

While Martin's study is important, it is limited in its historical scope. What is needed is a way to study the whole Soviet experience and, most importantly, how the Soviet experience influences state building projects today. One possible avenue of investigation involves studying post-Soviet states as postcolonial states. While the Soviet Union does not neatly fit into the category of empire, it is more problematic to define it as a state. As Alexander Motyl suggests, an empire is a particular kind of state, 'a highly centralized, territorially segmented, and culturally differentiated state within which centralization, segmentation, and differentiation overlap' (Motyl, 1998: 18).

Michael Hechter's concept of 'internal colonialism', while offering an alternative to traditional colonial approaches, is also problematic. In attempting to explain how the Celtic identity survived within the British empire, Hechter pointed out that ethnic separatism was a cultural response to the continued political and economic dominance of the core (Hechter, 1975). Internal colonialism focuses on the relationship between political, cultural, and economic factors. However, there are problems when applied to the Soviet case. In the Ukrainian case, increased interaction between the core (Russians) and the periphery (Ukrainians) did not necessarily lead to the reinforcement of ethnic difference.

Graham Smith describes the specific nature of the Soviet state as a form of 'federal colonialism'. According to Smith, the federal colonial structure of the Soviet Union was highlighted by two paradoxes. First, while national self-determination was denied to the republics, a degree of localism was tolerated. The relationship between the centre and local (often nativized) administrators, while dominated by the central Party, was complex and changed over time. Second, while the state attempted to create an all-union form of identity, it provided some – albeit limited – social space for identity building at the regional level (Smith et al., 1998: 5–6).

Reassessing the nature of colonialism from the level of the state is an important aspect of creating a distinctly post-Soviet theoretical perspective. However, we also need to evaluate the role of society in understanding nationalism today. In assessing the causes of Soviet collapse, Alexander Motyl is somewhat ambivalent about the role of society and social forces. Motyl admits that the Soviet state, despite its totalitarian nature, was never fully able to control Soviet culture (although he never explains what he

means by culture). While acknowledging that social forces were not simply passive, Motyl argues that they were released primarily as a result of the state's attempt to reform itself (Motyl, 1990). Society, therefore, did not provide any impetus for change; instead, it was simply the recipient of state actions.

State and society

Studying the post-Soviet/ postcolonial state from both above (the state) and below (society) allows for a more balanced and sophisticated approach. One possible framework for a new model can be found in the state-society approach developed by Joel Migdal (Kohli et al., 1994; Migdal, 2001). In studying third world states, Migdal and others have concluded that the relationship between state and society needs to be studied as a symbiotic relationship, rather than as two separate spheres of activity. The 'state-in-society' model involves studying struggles and coalitions among social and political forces as a complex web of interactions.

The state-in-society model is useful in studying post-Soviet states in two important aspects. First, it highlights elements of both continuity and change in the transition from a colonial to postcolonial state. In what Migdal describes as the 'transformative state', both state and social actors are forced to reorient themselves. For state leaders, legitimizing and solidifying their position in power often involves creating a unique quality for their state. Creating a 'national idea' is part of this project of state building. This process includes the invocation of historical symbols, the promotion of a cultural/ethnic/linguistic basis, and the articulation of inclusiveness/exclusion for minorities within the state. However, this process is never smooth or easy. The success of state leaders in promoting a 'national idea' is dependent on creating alliances with political and social forces.

In the Ukrainian case, the complex relationship between state and society is evident in the nation building and state building project undertaken by Ukraine's first president, Leonid Kravchuk. Legitimizing the idea of a Ukrainian state meant providing some kind of rationale for the uniqueness of the Ukrainian state. As leader of an independent Ukrainian polity, Leonid Kravchuk attempted – to a limited degree – to construct a transformative state. He called for the restoration of the Ukrainian language and culture and promoted the adoption of Ukrainian historical symbols (Kuzio, 1998: 127–8). Kravchuk emphasized that he was defending the interests of Ukraine, but was careful about how he characterized its inhabitants. He referred to them as the 'people of Ukraine' rather than 'Ukrainian people', a more ethnically neutral way to avoid offending ethnic Russians (Motyl, 1995: 115). While utilizing symbols and myths from Ukrainian historical experience, Kravchuk emphasized from the very beginning that the new state was a state for all its citizens:

I have one great aim. I am not saying that in our generation we can create a complete and mighty Ukrainian power; rather, the great aim lies in creating, in laying the foundations of statehood so that the people have a state of their own, their own native state . . . Not Ukrainians but all the people living on our land, Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Poles, Hungarians, everyone. (Kravchuk, 1992)

When dealing with sensitive historical issues, Kravchuk avoided offending either the Ukrainian or Russian historiographic perspectives. When asked whether he thought Kyiv was the cradle of the Russian state, Kravchuk responded:

The matter is that Kiev has never been the cradle of the Russian state. It was a cradle of the Kievan Rus incorporating different lands. This is a historical fact which nobody calls into question. However, we don't make it a basic principle of our relations with Russia and Byelorussia. We refer to this fact as a purely historical one. (Kravchuk, 1993)

Kravchuk's role as leader of the Ukrainian state and as promoter of Ukrainian identity might appear surprising, given that he was once the ideological chief for the Ukrainian Communist Party. However, the transition from colonial to postcolonial state should not be seen as a complete break. In many cases, those who were in positions of power within colonial administrations are often best suited to transforming themselves in the postcolonial environment.

In the 'transformative state', political and social forces are also forced to reorient themselves within the postcolonial environment (Kohli et al., 1994: 13–14). In the post-Soviet environment, many of the social forces that emerged in the late 1980s have become reoriented as political parties and organizations. As political parties, these various groups maintain a dual function within state and society. While they are part of the institutional structure of the state, at the same time, political parties attempt to aggregate support from society. In this sense, they have links both to the state and society (see Ware, 1996).

During the late 1980s, a variety of nascent social forces began to emerge – although quite timidly – in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. The most prominent of these emerging forces was 'Rukh' ('Movement for Perestroika'). While Rukh's beginnings were initially a reawakening of the suppressed dissident movement (Paniotto, 1991), what aided the development of Rukh into a political force was the development of an alliance with members of the Communist Party (Dawson, 1996: 76–7)

The problems and dilemmas of postcolonial transition for both state and social forces can be seen in the relationship between Rukh and Leonid Kravchuk. While Kravchuk had defeated Rukh's candidate in the first-ever presidential elections, he needed political allies to help solidify his hold on power. Likewise, Rukh, although wary of Kravchuk, was not strong enough

as a political force. What developed, therefore, was an uneasy – yet temporary – accommodation between two seemingly opposing forces.

The state–society approach can also help in reassessing the nature of the Soviet state.

As Miroslav Hroch notes, it cannot simply be assumed – as Gellner and Hobsbawm do – that the Soviet state was always effective in its state-building and, especially, its nation-building efforts:

The conventional view that current turmoil is the result of the release of irrational forces that were long suppressed – ‘deep-frozen’ as it were – under communism, and are now in full revival after a lapse of fifty years, is evidently superficial. Such a conception is extravagant – closer to the world of fairy-tales than of historical processes. (Hroch, 1996: 89)

While the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was a dominant force in both state and society, there were periods when its grip was weakened slightly. One aspect of the state-in-society model entails providing ‘an anthropology of the state’ (Kohli et al., 1994: 15–16). Migdal argues that we need to ‘disaggregate’ the state: to avoid treating it as a unitary actor by looking at different levels of interaction both within the state and between state and society.

Even in the most oppressive regimes, such as the Soviet Union, the state was not as monolithic as the totalitarian model suggests. First, the relationship between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the state was sometimes complex and difficult (see Laird, 1970: 101). Second, the relationship between Moscow and the various republics often led to the development of centre–periphery conflicts. While the centre (Moscow) controlled the periphery (republics), loyalty to the centre was not always absolute. In the Ukrainian republic, pressures to satisfy both the centre and local sometimes led to a conflict between loyalties to the Party and – especially for nativized Party bureaucrats – loyalties to local interests (Beissinger, 1988).

The Ukrainian Republic reveals some of the variations in Communist Party control of state and society. While the Communist Party was hostile towards Ukrainian nationalism and marginally tolerant of Ukrainian identity, at various periods it was unable or unwilling to silence the emerging voices of dissent, both within the Party and in Ukrainian society. During the 1960s, expressions of nationalist sentiment and discontent over the status quo emerged in two distinct forms: first, in the writings of a small but dedicated group of dissidents (see Bilocerkowycz, 1988); second, discontent extended to the top of the Ukrainian Communist Party leadership. Petro Shelest, First Secretary of the Ukrainian SSR from 1965 to 1972, was an adamant defender of Ukraine’s economic interests. While his defense of Ukrainian identity and culture did not mean he was a nationalist,

his career represents a link between the 'national communism' of the 1920s and its revival – albeit in a different form – in the late 1980s (Pelenski, 1975). Even though expressions of national identity were isolated and marginalized, they were never fully extinguished (either by design, or through sheer survival). In the 1980s, the symbol and expression of discontent re-emerged; in the social movements and within the Ukrainian Party itself, anti-colonial sentiments began to emerge, as Party members, officials and emerging social organizations began openly questioning the correctness of Moscow's policies.

STATE-SOCIETY APPROACH AS AN ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

In drawing attention to the state-society approach, I am not suggesting that existing theories and approaches have no useful value. On the contrary, looking at nationalism in post-Soviet states can involve drawing from and highlighting valuable aspects of nationalism which theorists have pointed to. For example, Migdal agrees that we need to examine the role of symbols as part of the 'imagining' of the nation, or creation of a 'high culture', for this is part of the nation building process:

No state can monitor all its rules; each needs what Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman called 'legitimizing universes', a constellation of symbols justifying state domination. It is this need that lies behind the attempts by states to shape the moral or symbolic order of their populations . . . It is the transformation of people as they adopt the symbols of the state and the transformation of the state as it incorporates symbols from society – both seemingly 'non-political' processes – that an anthropology of the state can illuminate. (Kohli et al., 1994: 15)

National identity is often used in the creation and maintenance of legitimacy. However, this does not mean that the tools used for creating a national (state) identity are always effective. This is because the legitimacy process itself is conditioned by the struggles that take place both within and between the state and society. How the nation is conceived, therefore, is an object of struggle and accommodation.

In addition, ethnicity and language, as pointed out by Anderson and Smith, play crucial roles in the formation and articulation of the nation. However, in different contexts, these factors are part of the matrix of state-society relations, and will interplay with other factors in different ways. The state-society approach, therefore, is not meant to constitute a theory of nationalism. Rather, it is a framework for organizing and explaining nationalism from the post-Soviet context.

CONCLUSION

The state-society model is important in that it points out the need for new directions in the research of post-Soviet nationalisms. As an organizing framework, this approach does not seek to replace as much as include and go beyond existing studies and approaches. To better understand nationalism today, we need to challenge the notion that all the really important questions about nations and nationalism have been answered. In addition, the issue of the Soviet national question needs to be reopened, not only as an historical event, but also in understanding issues of continuity and change in the transition between Soviet and post-Soviet state and nation building. Finally, existing theories of nationalism cannot be assumed to be as universal as they attempt to be. We need to reassess how much of these theories apply or do not apply to the Soviet case. In the end, it is hoped that the study of nationalism in general can be better served.

References

- Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.
- Arel, D. (1995) 'The Temptation of the Nationalising State', in V. Tismaneanu (ed.) *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, Vol. 7. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Barrington, L. (1997) 'The Geographic Component of Mass Attitudes in Ukraine', *Post-Soviet Geography and Economy* 38(10): 601–14.
- Beissinger, M.R. (1988) 'Ethnicity, the Personnel Weapon, and Neo-Imperial Integration: Ukrainian and RSFSR Provincial Party Officials Compared', *Studies in Comparative Communism* 21(1): 71–85.
- Bilocerkowycz, J. (1988) *Soviet Ukrainian Dissent: A Study of Political Alienation*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Bremmer, I.A. (1994) 'The Politics of Ethnicity: Russians in the New Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies* 46(2): 261–83.
- Brubaker, R. (1996) *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Craumer, P.R., and James I. Clem (1999) 'Ukraine's Emerging Electoral Geography: A Regional Analysis of the 1998 Parliamentary Elections', *Post-Soviet Geography and Economy* 40(1): 1–26.
- Dawson, Jane I. (1996) *Eco-Nationalism: Anti-Nuclear Activism and National Identity in Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Deutsch, K.W. (1966) *Nationalism and Social Communication; An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gellner, E. (1987) *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gellner, E. (1991) 'Nationalism and Politics in Eastern Europe', *New Left Review* 189: 127–34.
- Guthier, S.L. (1990) *The Roots of Popular Ukrainian Nationalism: A Demographic,*

- Social and Political Study of the Ukrainian Nationality to 1917*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI.
- Hechter, M. (1975) *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hobsbawm, E.J. (1992) *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hroch, M. (1996) 'From National Movement to Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe', in G. Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*, pp. 778–97. London: Verso.
- Hrytsak, Y. (2000) 'National Identities in Post-Soviet Ukraine: The Case of Lviv and Donetsk', in Z.Y. Gitelman (ed.) *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk*, pp. 264–77. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Jackson, L. (1998) 'Identity, Language, and Transformation in Eastern Ukraine: A Case Study of Zaporizhzhia', in T. Kuzio (ed.) *Contemporary Ukraine: Dynamics of Post-Soviet Transformation*, pp. 99–113. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Kann, R.A. (1970) *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918*. New York: Octagon Books.
- Kravchuk, L. (1992) 'Kravchuk Interviewed on Presidential Role,' Moscow Ostankino Television (11 February 1992), in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-SOV-92/029 (12 February 1992).
- Kravchuk, L. (1993) *Our Goal – A Free Ukraine: Speeches, Interviews, Press Conferences, Briefings*. Kiev: 'Globus' Publishers.
- Kohli, A., J.S. Migdal and V. Shue (1994) *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuzio, T. (1998) *State and Nation Building in Ukraine*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Kuzio, T. (2000) 'Nationalism in Ukraine: Towards a New Framework', *Politics* 20(2): 77–86.
- Laird, Roy D. (1970) *An Experiment in Creating a Monohierarchical Polity: The Soviet Paradigm*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lewis, R.A. (1971) 'The Mixing of Russians and Soviet Nationalities and Its Demographic Impact', in E. Allworth (ed.) *Soviet Nationality Problems*, pp. 117–67. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Liber, G. (1992) *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923–1934*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, Terry (2001) *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Migdal, J.S. (2001) *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Motyl, A.J. (1990) *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality. Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Motyl, A.J. (1995) 'The Conceptual President: Leonid Kravchuk and the Politics of Surrealism', in T.J. Colton and R.C. Tucker (eds) *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, pp.103–22. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Motyl, A.J. (1998) 'After Empire: Competing Discourses and Inter-State Conflict in Post-Imperial Eastern Europe', in B.R. Rubin and J. Snyder (eds) *Post-Soviet*

- Political Order. Conflict and State-Building*, pp. 14–33. New York: Routledge.
- O'Loughlin, J. and J.E. Bell (1999) 'The Political Geography of Civic Engagement in Ukraine', *Post-Soviet Geography and Economy* 40(4), 233–66.
- Paniotto, Vladimir (1991) 'The Ukrainian Movement for *Perestroika*—"Rukh": A Sociological Survey', *Soviet Studies* 43(1): 177–81.
- Pelenski, J. (1975) 'Shelest and his Period in Soviet Ukraine (1963–1972): A Revival of Controlled Autonomism', in P.J. Potichnyj (ed.) *Ukraine in the Seventies: Papers and Proceedings of the McMaster Conference on Contemporary Ukraine, October 1974*, pp. 283–99. Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic.
- Simon, G. (1991) *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Slezkhine, Yuri (1994) 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism', *Slavic Review* 53(2): 414–52.
- Smith, A.D. (1992) 'Ethnic Identity and Territorial Nationalism', in A.J. Motyl (ed.) *Thinking Theoretically About Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Smith, A.D. (1996) 'The Origin of Nations', in G. Eley and R.G. Suny (eds) *Becoming National: A Reader*, pp. 106–31. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, A.D. (1998) *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Smith, G., V. Law, A. Bohr and E. Allworth, eds, (1998) *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Subtelny, Orest (2000) *Ukraine: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Suny, R.G. and M.D. Kennedy (1999) *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Suny, R.G. and T. Martin (2001) *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ware, A. (1996) *Political Parties and Party Systems*. New York: Oxford University Press.

GLENN GOSHULAK is an adjunct professor of Political Science at York University and an Associate Member of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Toronto. He has written articles on the national question in post-Soviet studies and is currently working on a comparative study of ethnic conflict in Crimea and Kosovo. Address: Department of Political Science, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. [email: ggosh@yorku.ca]