The Post-Modernization Theory as a Methodological Instrument for Studying the Crises of the State and the Society in Ukraine of the 2010s

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ABSTRACT

The development of the post-Soviet politics has been viewed as a rather complicated and non-transparent subject, which makes the task of its conceptualization and theorization all the more urgent one. The case of Ukraine as a major post-Soviet nation situated on the cross-roads of the geopolitical influence of Russian Federation and the West deserves a particularly in-depth attention in that regard, as the country's succession of political crises from 1991 on would raise the question of their theoretical evaluation and understanding. Accordingly, this research seeks to highlight the peculiarity of the aforementioned crises on the basis of the post-modernization theory – a major theoretical framework devised to succeed the classical modernization theory in respect of explaining the societal development of contemporary advanced societies under the condition of post-modernity. The present article strives to apply the theoretical framework of the post-modernization theory to the specific case of Ukraine by focusing on the cases of four major political crises that have transpired in the nation between 1991 and 2019, namely the 'Ukraine without Kuchma' protests of 2000-2001, the Orange Revolution of 2004, the 'Euromaidan' and the separatist movement in the East in 2013-2014, and the polarization following the 2019 presidential election. With the reference to theoretical concepts derived from the field of the post-modernization theory, it is argued that the post-modernization theory may indeed be an effective methodological instrument for comprehending those developments as well as for placing them into their effective global historical and political context.

1.Introduction. Providing for a more thorough and in-depth characterization of the processes of political change and transformation in the post-Soviet space from 1991 on may be considered to be one of the key tasks of researchers attempting to come to grips with a highly complicated and at times opaque trajectory of the regional political development. Given that the latter has been punctured by a succession of crises which has in certain cases led to violent and abrupt reconfigurations of the makeup of the ruling elites or even undermined the political order as such, developing a theoretical understanding of their unfolding would entail a need to situate those crises within a consistent and internally coherent theoretical framework. The present article thus represents an attempt at applying the post-modernization theory as developed by such scholars as Ronald Inglehart [1] to the specific case of the post-Soviet Ukraine, with a view to highlighting the extent to which the theoretical premises and takeaways from the post-modernization theory may have either been confirmed or falsified by the political developments in Ukraine since the early 1990s. Hence this article provides an overview of the basic assumptions of the post-modernization theory and its potential applications to countries in transition, as well as a more empirical / case study-based analysis of the experience of political crises of the Ukrainian state and society for the period in question. Based on this analysis, a range of theoretical statements will have been developed that may be seen as placing the post-modernization theory into the Ukrainian context whilst commenting on its viability in regard of understanding the political evolution of a major post-Soviet state-society complex.

2.Literature Review. Essentially, the post-modernization theory had been born out of consistent attempts of various social philosophers and development scholars to conceive of the major trends and directions of societal development after the supposed end of the so-called modernity era [2,3]. In so doing, the notion of post-modernization both builds upon and supersedes that of modernization: whereas the latter was claimed to reflect a progressive development of a society from a less to a more 'advanced' state of its development in accordance with some normative assumptions concerning the course of development taken Western societies in terms of secularization, rationalization, and industrialization [3], the condition of post-modernity has been argued to encompass a turn toward a more multi-dimensional and less predictable stage of societal development wherein the major features of the latter would comprise "disorganization, hyperdifferentiation and dedifferentiation, hyperrationalization and hypercommercialization" [4]. In spite of certain opacity of that theoretical jargon, it may be seen that post-modernization would apparently continue the rational and the commercial turns typical for the previous stages of modernization by taking those to the extremes, while the social fabric of the society as a whole would be characterized by a progressive disruption of previous centralized structures of governance (disorganization) and both a growing plasticity of individual and collective identities (hyperdifferentiation) and the development of a uniform and eclectic mass culture (dedifferentiation). Other aspects of the process of post-modernization that have been focused upon by social researchers adhering to that concept include (1) a shift from mass production to new forms of small-scale productive activities; (2) a decline in state strength in favor of that of global financial players; (3) a transition from state interventionism to noninterventionism in economic activities; (4) a decline of urban metropolises

in favor of new forms of counter-urbanization and urban regeneration and/or deconstruction; (5) and the turn from productive and material capital to virtual and symbolic one [4,5].

While such changes in respect of social fabric and societal development would be attributed to countries previously characterized as 'advanced' under theoretical frameworks based on the classical modernization theory [1], at least some of the aforementioned features of the post-modernization process would be detectable in the case of so-called developing countries and countries in transition, the latter including those of the post-Soviet space, a complex agglomeration of nation-states and communities of integration that emerged paradoxically in the wake of the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 [6]. Already in the 1990s, a vigorous debate would develop in Western sociology regarding the extent to which post-Soviet / post-Communist societies may be regarded as either rejoining the process of the Western path toward modernization from which they would have been allegedly excluded by the Communist experiment, experiencing the condition of post-modernity in the circumstances when old certainties of capitalist modernity would be more tenuous than before, or tracing their own path to yet another alternative form of modernity [7]. The confusion over that issue appears to have been caused by an uncertainty as to a 'proper' evaluation of the Soviet modernity proper: was it a flawed experiment leading to a dead-end for the societies entangled therein, or a fully alternative path to the modern development that was cut short by a purely political dynamic? To a certain extent, one may mention here K. Kumar's [8] notion that the crisis and fall of Communism may have been the most acute reflection of a generalized 'crisis of modernity' just as the Soviet project of a hypercentralized state planning-based socialism would have been the most comprehensive form of modernization attempted in the 20th century. Regardless of a position one may take on that matter, it may be observed that the disintegration of the Soviet society into its national components and an abrupt decentralization and dedifferentiation of its heavy industry-dominated economy in favor of an economic order providing a much wider space to services and financial capital must have come as a major shock to the members of those post-Soviet societies, as it represented a rapid reversal of their previous identities and ideological certainties about the social universe around them [9]. Hence the political development of the post-Soviet societies was bound to be overshadowed by the traumatic experience of a rapid revolutionary transition from one form of social order to another, a qualitatively different one. It is through this lens that further considerations as to the impact of the post-Soviet post-modernization process on political change in post-Soviet societies may be floated here.

The notion of crisis is particularly relevant for understanding the condition of post-modernity in general and its political dimension in particular. As noted by Martin Lloyd Thomas [10], the condition of post-modernity would have brought to the fore a so-called 'postmodern political disposition' (PPD), which is ostensibly characterized by the focus on difference, contingency and contextuality in the course of political actors' increasingly pragmatic orientation toward political actions and processes. The recurrence of political crises would be facilitated by this very pragmatic turn in politics: if one is no longer indebted to particular ideologies and/or normative perspectives on how a society 'should' work, then the field of politics becomes nothing but the terrain for applying specific political technologies in the interest of a unified managerial elite acting autonomously from any explicit social interest [11]. It is in this context

that the notion of political crisis management could arise and find a fruitful ground for its development. As noted by Iryna Isaienko [12], an increased openness of postmodern political societies to external influences implies a greater likelihood of internal political disequilibrium within each respective national society, given that political ideas giving rise to the proliferation of political instability may circulate more freely across nominal national borders. Thus the institutions of political power under the condition of post-modernity are likely to suffer from a continuous process of decline and even degradation as the dissolution of modern forms of political identity would undermine their very foundations [12]. With this in mind, such dynamic may be conceived of as a major source of the endemical nature of political crises that beset the societies undergoing the process of post-modernization.

Therefore, the review of the literature provided above may allow one to infer that the political dimension of social development in the course of the process of post-modernization would be marked by a continuous convergence of political crises taking place within the context of an increasingly dedifferentiated society being ruled by a hyper-rational and hyper-commercial elite that is largely estranged from the latter. While such characterization would refer primarily to the case of advanced industrialized societies of the West, it remains to be seen whether it may be applicable to the cases of transitional post-Soviet societies, such as the one of Ukraine. Therefore, the present article aims to close the respective methodological gap by providing for an overview of the key political crises in the history of the post-Soviet Ukraine through the lens of the post-modernization theory's political research aspects, as provided above. It is thus anticipated that such kind of analysis will bring about a preliminary understanding of the extent to which the post-modernization theory may be viable for providing for the operative understanding of the political development of post-Soviet societies.

3.Methodology. In order to arrive at such a goal, a case study-based approach toward the history of political crises in Ukraine from 1991 on has been adopted, so as to provide for a necessary empirical foundation for further consideration of the potential impact of the process of post-modernization undergone by the Ukrainian state and society in the course of the latter. According to Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman [13], the nature of case study research in political science provides a range of opportunities for conceptual innovation as based on the capacity to 'extract' new ideas and concepts on the basis of a close involvement with the case(s) under consideration. Hence in the context of this article, the case of Ukraine is referred to in order to trace the likelihood of the post-modernization theory being an effective methodological instrument for comprehending the unfolding of the succession of political crises that have marked the post-Soviet history of the country. In doing so, the focus is to be placed on the three potential variables, namely (1) the role of the disorganization of the Soviet social structure; (2) the dynamics of the Ukrainian society's hyperdifferentiation and dedifferentiation; and (3) the impact of post-national developments in respect of the society's political ideas and institutions. The selection of the political crises to be considered here include (1) the 2000-2001 'Ukraine without Kuchma' movement occasioned by the disappearance of journalist Georgy Gongadze; (2) the 2004 'Orange Revolution', (3) the 2013-2014 'Euromaidan' and the subsequent commencement of the conflict in the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas; and (4) the electoral upset of the 2019 and the coming to power of Volodymyr Zelenskyi. Thus a brief yet focused involvement with each of the crisis points under

consideration is expected to enable a better understanding of the utility of the post-modernization theory-based narratives of those developments.

4.Results. Beginning with the 2000-2001 crisis of the political authority in Ukraine, one may refer to the potential aspects of the post-modern political disposition presenting itself. First and foremost, the disappearance and apparent assassination of Gongadze were taken upon by a broad oppositional coalition, which at its peak included such previous ideological opponents as the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU) and the Ukrainian National Assembly – Ukrainian People's Self-Defense (UNA-UPSD), with the common point of convergence being that of a demand for the personnel change at the top of the state, without providing for any ideologically motivated perspective on the change of the national policy whatsoever [14]. The protests, which culminated in March 2001 with the clashes between nationalist activists and the law enforcement [15], failed to achieve their stated goal of removing President Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005) and his entourage from the position of power, but their long-term contribution appears to be that of laying down the current Ukrainian tradition of a diffuse political mobilization under vaguely 'anti-authoritarian' and 'pro-democracy' slogans, with more ideologically motivated groups (usually of nationalist persuasion) playing the role of 'trouble-makers' without any real opportunity to take over and lead the protest toward an ideologically motivated revolutionary path [16, 17]. This fact would stand in a stark contrast with the legacy of both socialist and nationalist radicalism in the 20th century Ukraine, wherein both movements provided and attempted to implement sweeping programs of socio-political and at times socio-economic transformation in accordance with their clearly delineated and internally consistent ideological agendas that claimed to pursue the interests of specific social groups (e.g., 'the working masses' or the 'Ukrainian nation' [18]). In contrast, the 'Ukraine without Kuchma' movement appeared to be reflective of the dedifferentiation of the Ukrainian society in the 1990s which preceded it: the focus would now be placed on a dichotomy of an undifferentiated 'people' against a similarly undifferentiated 'regime', even as appeals would be made toward some of the allegedly 'democratic' members of that very regime, e.g., then-Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko, to join the anti-presidential movement. Likewise, the failure of the movement to pick up the pace and achieve the level of street mobilization necessary to challenge the government may be explained by the impact of the disruption of the social structure of the late Soviet Ukrainian society and a general disorientation due to that fact: the slogans of the protest leaders and activists would be too focused on a single issue of investigating Gongadze's death to motivate any large-scale following among now-hyperindividualistic post-Soviet citizens of Ukraine who would care primarily about their economic survival [19]. Thus the case of the 'Ukraine without Kuchma' crisis and its largely lackluster resolution can be interpreted with the reference to two key aspects of the Ukrainian society's post-modernization, namely variables (1) and (2) as mentioned above.

For its part, the Orange Revolution of 2004 would present both a continuity with the 'Ukraine against Kuchma' movement, being aimed against the ascendancy of Viktor Yanukovych as Kuchma's heir apparent, and a significant difference with the latter, since for the first time in the recent history of Ukraine, a light would be shed on perceived differences and incompatibilities in respect of local and regional identities of the 'East' and the 'West' of Ukraine, with the resultant polarization resembling the

one that would later develop between the 'Blue' and the 'Red' states in the U.S. of the 2010s [20, 21]. The development of distinctive political identities would hence contravene the aforementioned tendency toward dedifferentiation; however, it would be effectively representative of the ones toward hyperdifferentiation (with two specific groups of regions of the one nation-state acquiring and displaying distinctively different and even irreconcilable political identities) as well as toward post-nationalism: the official civic nationalism of the Kuchma era, which represented an attempt at striking a compromise between the late Soviet and the ethno-nationalist traditions of the 20th century [22], would be effectively replaced by a post-modern combination of radical liberalism and ethno-nationalism in the West and the one of a modified 'Russophone' late-Soviet patriotism and oligarchic neo-patrimonialism in the East [23,24]. At the same time, the two forms of post-national identity would appeal explicitly to external actors for their justification and legitimation: the 'Western' one to the notions of European and Euro-Atlantic identity as represented by the prospects of the alliance with the U.S., the European Union and the NATO, and the 'Eastern' one to the one of the common historical, linguistic and religious legacy of Eastern parts of Ukraine and Russia, which would ultimately be integrated with the 'Russian World' ideology supported by the Russian Orthodox Church and sections of the Russian ruling elite [23,24]. Accordingly, the societal polarization and the corruption-driven degradation of the institutions of modern state in Ukraine, which was rather observable throughout the period of 2005-2013, may be viewed as having proceeded side by side.

In that sense, the 2013-2014 'Euromaidan' and the separatist movement that emerged as a counter-reaction to its victory can be seen as a culmination of the tendencies mentioned above. The increased archaization of the political discourse that was brought about by the active use of ethno-national and religious identity as factors of political mobilization and polarization in 2005-2013 could not but find its reflection in terms of the political conflict between the exponents of the two post-national identities (even if both camps would claim that it would be their version of Ukrainian identity that should be seen as the 'real' one), while the process of hyperindividualization within the Ukrainian society gave rise to an emergence of a sometimes confusing variety of radical political groups and movements that have been only loosely associated with the historical political identities to which they appealed. Cases in point may include the pro-Russian post-Stalinist 'Struggle' (*Borot'ba*) group that took active part in the separatist movement in Kharkiv [25] or a far larger right-radical 'Azov movement' that would become one of the more recognizable voluntary units on the pro-'Euromaidan' side [26]. In both cases, in spite of supposedly rigid historically motivated political identities of the groups in question, they would be caught up within the wider streams of their respective camps' mutual struggle, without a real opportunity to implement their ideological precepts in an autonomous way. Accordingly, variables (2) and (3) would be at play here. Additionally, the rise of the separatist movement in the Donbas may be further explained by the reference to the detrimental effects of the disruption and dislocation of the late-Soviet social structure in the 1990s. As the reliance on oligarchic neo-patrimonialism came to substitute the factory- or mine-based working-class identities, the residents of the Donbas would largely become socially marginalized and susceptible to the ideological work of the media sources and political parties controlled by the respective oligarchic groups. The latter's vacillating position may explain the dynamics of the

Donbas conflict in 2014: thus, Rinat Akhmetov's refusal to take a consistently anti-separatist stance in the beginning of the conflict had emboldened the insurgents on par with the assistance provided by the Russian government, while his later coming in favor of the territorial unity of Ukraine prevented the separatists from effectively controlling the city of Mariupol, a major center of the metalworks industry controlled by the oligarch [27, 28]. Thus the lack of any independent and large-scale social movement in the Donbas after 2014 and the latter's ongoing control by the political representatives of the oligarchic groups posing as either 'pro-Ukrainian' or 'pro-Russian' ones would reflect the dedifferentiation and marginalization typical for the region's social structure under the condition of the decline of the late-Soviet social and political identity.

Finally, the 2019 election and the political rise of Volodymyr Zelenskyi can be seen as reflective of the electorate's repudiation of the 'old' political elite and a choice in favor of a media-savvy charismatic outsider – a situation vaguely resembling the coming to power of Donald Trump in the United States three years before. Zelenskyi's political campaign, however, aimed for a message of social unity by shying away from divisive rhetoric (and more or less specific policy proposals or promises to the electorate). The media-driven character of the winning candidate's campaigning, with the emphasis on the construction of a 'catch-all' / de-ideologized political imagery of Zelenskyi, would prove ultimately successful in carrying the vote of circa 72 per cent of the electorate in attendance. Nonetheless, Zelenskyi's success in playing upon the Ukrainian society's dedifferentiation and susceptibility to mediatized political communications – a distinctively post-modern phenomenon – would be counterbalanced by the rise of an alternative political identity on the part of the supporters of former President Petro Poroshenko (2014-2019), who, by playing the card of the patriotic-nationalist mobilization associated with the legacy of the Euromaidan, managed to develop its own 'echo chamber' of devoted followers being antagonistically predisposed against President Zelenskyi and his electorate [29]. The post-national polarization of the Ukrainian society would thus reach the level similar to the one effected by the controversies over the activities of President Trump by his proponents and opponents – albeit with the difference of Zelenskyi having nominally the vast bulk of the country's voting population behind him. Nonetheless, the aforementioned vague and mediatized character of Zelenskyi's political rhetoric and policy when in office appears to have further facilitated the reverse process of hyperdifferentiation in the Ukrainian political system, with the 2020 local election demonstrating an effective collapse of the national party vote in favor of regional and personalistic voting projects of local elites [29]. Hence the current development of the political process in Ukraine appears to be marked by the crisis of the post-national dislocation of political institutions that should have accounted for national unity, whereas the twin tendencies of dedifferentiation and hyperdifferentiation would undermine any pursuit of a meaningful ideological policy of the type characteristic for the modern era.

5.Discussion. That said, the analysis presented in this article has allowed for a brief engagement with the post-modernization theory's potential contribution to understanding the essence of the Ukrainian political crises. It is worth noting that the three aspects of political post-modernization of Ukraine that have been referred to in the Methodology section have not been reflected at the uniform level in terms of their explanatory power for the case under consideration: thus, variables (2; dedifferentiation and

hyperdifferentiation) and (3; post-national degradation of political ideas and institutions) would be more prominent in terms of their attributed impact than variable 1 (the outcomes of the decline of the Soviet-era social structure). Partly this observation may be reinterpreted in terms of variable 1 actually precipitating both 2 and 3, which would nonetheless require a more extensive study of the concepts involved and their comparative explanatory power as mentioned above. Nonetheless, the results of the analysis presented above would definitely indicate the viability of the post-modernization theory as a source of theoretical explanation of a crisis-ridden political development of Ukraine in the recent couple of decades. It is with this in mind that a further refinement of the respective conceptual and methodological instrument for these purposes may be recommended to the researchers interested in the subject.

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