EXPEDITIONARY CULTURE FIELD GUIDE

UKRAINE

U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success (Photo: Ukrainian and Polish soldiers compete in a soccer during cultural day at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center in Yavoriv, Ukraine).

The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1 "Culture General" provides the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment with a focus on Eastern Europe.

Part 2 "Culture Specific" describes unique cultural features of Ukrainian society. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location. This section is designed to complement other pre-deployment training (Photo: A Ukrainian media woman dances as the US Air Forces in Europe Band plays a song in Dnipro, Ukraine).

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ or contact the AFCLC Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic because it represents the premium Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity (Photo: A Ukrainian fighter jet conducts a low-altitude fly over in Mykolaiv, Ukraine).

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones, where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on

influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains–which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems and others (see chart on next page)—as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the way a culture defines family and kinship, a US military member operating overseas can more effectively interact with members of that culture (Photo: Winter in Slovenia).

Social Behaviors across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival,

although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more complex market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our most basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different based on our cultural standards. As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Usually, we assume that those in the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

This collective perspective forms our worldview—how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

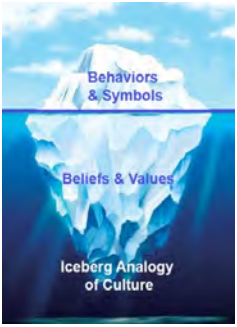
Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system assigns meaning, sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central aspect of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed (Photo: A river boat in Prague, the capital of Czech Republic).

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have helped shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change (Photo: Ukrainian soldiers).

Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).



In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success (Photo: Romanian military personnel converse in front of a plane in the Bucharest airport).

As you travel through Eastern Europe, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common across the region. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language (Photo: 1909 Russian painting of Slavic peoples).

Eastern Europe comprises 10 countries on the eastern side of the European continent: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Archaeological finds suggest people inhabited the region as early as 40,000 BC. From approximately 10,000-3,000 BC, hunter-gatherers formed semi-permanent settlements, sustained by agriculture and cattle herding. Although short-lived, the Roman Empire's incorporation of much of the region's South in the early centuries AD significantly influenced culture in present-day Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovenia. Slavic tribes settled in the plains of present-day Ukraine beginning in the 6th-century AD, eventually moving west and south along the fertile basin of the Danube River.

Over the following centuries, various migratory peoples from elsewhere in Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia continued to settle in the region, expelling, conquering, or mixing with the Slavs and other inhabitants. By the 10th century, loosely aligned settlements coalesced into large, powerful kingdoms, including the Bohemian Empire centered in present-day Czech Republic and the Kingdoms of Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria. In the 14th century, much of the region fell to the Ottoman Empire, based in present-day Turkey, with many of the region's residents experiencing several centuries of Turkish raids.

While present-day Bulgaria and parts of Romania remained under Ottoman rule for over 500 years, in the 16th century, many regions became subject to the rule of the Austrian House of Habsburg – one of Europe's most influential royal dynasties that later joined Hungary to form the powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire. Meanwhile, Poland formed an independent state, eventually uniting with neighboring Lithuania to control large parts of the region, including Ukraine and Belarus.

Unable to repel persistent attacks from neighbors, the Polish-Lithuanian Empire disintegrated in the late 18th century, with Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus falling under Russian control for the next nearly 120 years. During this time, Russia violently quelled nationalist movements, suppressed regional languages, and deported thousands of native inhabitants while encouraging Russian immigration into the region.

All 10 Eastern European states experienced substantial conflict during World War I (WWI). Immediately following the war, most states enjoyed brief periods of independence. By contrast, the newly formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) absorbed Belarus, parts of Moldova, and Ukraine, all of which suffered severely under communist repression. Notably, after its defeat in WWI, the Austro-Hungarian Empire splintered. Hungary consequently lost nearly 2/3 of its territory and 3/5 of its people to neighboring nations (Photo: Russian army in 1920s Kiev).

With the onset of World War II (WWII), all 10 states again became battlegrounds. While some immediately sided with the Axis powers, others were unable to withstand German aggression. All 10 states suffered heavy casualties throughout the war. During its occupation of the region, Nazi Germany murdered, deported, or confined most of the region's sizeable Jewish population and other "undesirables."

At war's end, the USSR either absorbed or heavily influenced the political, social, and economic systems of each Eastern

European state. Adopting communist tenets, each state nationalized private companies, appropriated private property, and rapidly expanded industrial development. Communist leaders also encouraged Russification in the region, violently repressing national languages, religions, and cultures.

In the late 1980s, democratic movements swept across the Soviet bloc, and within a few years, all 10 states had declared independence from the USSR. Further, they removed communist leaders, transformed their governments, and adopted market capitalism. Since then, all states but Belarus largely pivoted away from Russian influence to pursue political, military, and economic integration with the West.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. All 10 Eastern European states are parliamentary republics led by an elected Prime Minister, President, and legislature. In most states, Presidential powers are largely ceremonial with executive power vested in the Prime Minister, who leads the government together with the support of a Cabinet of Ministers. In most states, political parties typically form coalitions in order to attain and maintain power (Photo: Hungarian Parliament).

With most having suffered crippling dictatorial rule for much of the late 20th century, each Eastern European state emerged in the 1990s with new political, social, and economic structures. While some states have since created relatively stable, well-run democracies, others face challenges to the democratic process. Corruption is a prevalent problem in the region. In some cases, governments' inability to adequately curb widespread corruption results in frequent public protests, causes distrust of public officials, and creates an overall skepticism of the democratic process. Moreover, weakened by

overly broad and at times differing ideological profiles, ruling political coalitions and parties tend to dissolve frequently, resulting in a political landscape marked by infighting and successive changes of government.

Most states are members of strong regional alliances, such as the European Union (EU) and NATO. Although somewhat fraught with political instability, most states remain committed to improving democratic processes, serving as advocates of a democratic and pro-Western agenda in the region. By contrast, Belarus is politically aligned with Russia, while Ukraine and Bulgaria have historically attempted to balance relations between the West and Russia, at times resulting in internal tension between ideologically opposing political groups (Photo: Kiev, Ukraine).

With the exception of Belarus, the states rely on NATO, the EU, the US, and other international support to defend against external, state-level threats. Russia's recent aggression in the region, notably its 2014 annexation of Crimea and ongoing support of separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine, has significantly heightened regional tensions and consequently dominates the states' security environment.

The region exhibits differing levels of ethnic diversity. Poland, for example, is largely homogenous, with ethnic Poles comprising 97% of the population. By contrast, the native populations of Ukraine and Czech Republic are significantly lower, 78% and 64%, respectively. Notably, the Roma and other ethnic minorities suffer significant social division, discrimination, and stigmatization across Eastern Europe.

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer

individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society.

Early residents of Eastern Europe practiced a variety of indigenous religions, venerating multiple deities and spirits who inhabited the natural world. Romans introduced Christianity as early as the 1st century. By the 10th century, many Eastern European kingdoms had adopted Christianity as a state religion. In the early 11th century, theological differences between western and eastern branches of the Christian movement forced a permanent divide between the Roman Catholic Church centered in Rome and the Eastern Orthodox tradition of the Byzantine Empire. Over subsequent centuries, both branches of Christianity flourished in the region. Later, as the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe, some states saw the Catholic Church reorganize under Lutheran authority. Across the region, Christianity became closely linked to national identity.

In Poland, for example, the Catholic Church became entrenched in daily life, influencing education, social services, and remaining politically influential even today. Throughout the centuries, Judaism also enjoyed growth in the region, with among others, Polish and Czech Jewish communities growing significantly until their annihilation during WWII (Photo: Bulgarian Orthodox imagery hangs in a church).

During their years of occupation and influence, the Soviets suppressed all religious institutions and activities in the states, while simultaneously cultivating atheism and encouraging the devout to abandon long-held religious beliefs. To do so, the states' communist governments carefully regulated religious affairs and deported clergy, while destroying or converting most churches and synagogues for other uses. Consequently, membership in religious organizations decreased significantly over the years. Nevertheless, most states saw a resurgence in religiosity once religious freedom was restored following the fall of communism.

Today, some of the region's inhabitants are Orthodox Christian, while others – including the majority of Poles (86%), Slovaks (62%), Slovenes (58%), and Hungarians (52%) – are Roman Catholic. Notably, while most Eastern Europeans retain deep religious convictions, others remain religiously unaffiliated. For example, only about 50% of Belarusians claim a religious affiliation – the lowest rate in the region – while large numbers of Slovenes, Slovaks, and Czechs are atheist. In parts of the region, small Jewish and Muslim communities are experiencing some growth. One notable exception is Bulgaria, where a relatively large Muslim community (8% of the population) traces back to the early 14th century.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin").

Family life and relationships are highly valued within Eastern European societies. Residents maintain strong connections with both immediate and extended family members, supporting them emotionally and financially and providing physical care for elderly or ailing kin if needed. Most households comprise 2 parents and their children (nuclear family), with many families choosing to have just 1 or 2 children. Nevertheless, extended kin on both sides of the family often live nearby and are significantly influential in family matters (Photo: A Romanian girl).

Rapid urbanization has changed family life in recent years, as urban inhabitants marry later or cohabit (live in long-term, unmarried partnership) and have fewer children. Consequently, while the traditional family structure remains common in rural areas, it is more diverse in urban centers.

While historically marriage was an arranged union, today Eastern Europeans typically choose their own partners. Couples may spend several years dating, live together, and have children before choosing to marry. In some states, divorce is increasingly prevalent among younger generations, with rates comparable to the US. Still in others, the practice is relatively uncommon and carries social stigma.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles.

The Eastern European states' historically patriarchal culture privileged men as leaders and providers. While some of the region's inhabitants continue to adhere to traditional values – men as breadwinners and heads of household and women as mothers and wives – gender roles and responsibilities began to transform during the Soviet era and continue to change today, particularly among younger generations (Photo: Polish woman holds a copy of Poland's Constitution).

Although women hold equal rights under the law, political, social, and economic inequalities between the genders remain. For example, women often face discrimination in the hiring and promotion process, routinely receive lower wages than their male counterparts, and suffer from sexual harassment in the workplace.

Despite these barriers, the number of women serving in the political sector across the region has increased over the past few decades. Eastern European women hold a significant proportion of national and sub-national government positions, with most states maintaining similar or higher female participation rates in their national legislatures as the US.

Notably, the region's women suffer high rates of gender-based violence (GBV), particularly domestic abuse and rape. Often considered private matters, many incidences of GBV go unreported. If cases are reported, the prosecution of perpetrators is rare. Although homosexuality is legal throughout the region, homosexuals still suffer discrimination, stigmatization, and violence in some areas.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. Most of the region's languages derive from the Slavic branch of the Indo-European language family, while Moldovan and Romanian belong to the same family's Eastern Romance branch. A member of the Uralic family, Hungarian is the region's only language not part of the Indo-European family. Notably, the Bulgarian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian languages are written in the Cyrillic alphabet. By contrast, all other state languages employ the Latin script (Photo: Rural Ukrainian shop).

Some states managed to largely avoid harsh Russification policies during the Soviet era. Others suffered years of linguistic repression when Russian became the predominant language in education, the media, and government proceedings. Today, with the exception of Belarus, Russian is no longer the region's main language. Instead, native languages have largely supplanted Russian, though some residents continue to use Russian in business and everyday life. The states are also home to native speakers of other languages, notably Romani (the language of the Roma), Turkish, German, and other regional languages. English has become increasingly popular over the last several decades and is spoken widely in business and by young, urban residents.

Generally, the region's residents demonstrate respect, privacy, and candor in their communication practices. In some states, communications reflect notable emotion and engagement. By contrast, others typically refrain from displaying strong emotions in public, feel comfortable in silence, and prefer quiet speech. Across the region, residents usually share personal information only with family or close friends and are reserved when interacting with strangers.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers (Photo: Central School in 1910 Ukraine).

Prior to the 14th century, most formal education in the region occurred in religious institutions where clergymen taught religion and basic literacy. Notably, while Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic had established universities as early as the 14th century, secular centers of higher academic learning were slow to develop elsewhere in the region. Nevertheless, by the late 1800s, extensive public school networks administered both religious and secular curricula to millions of students across the region.

Most Eastern European governments established free and compulsory public education systems in the early 20th century. The subsequent Soviet occupation and influence brought significant changes to schools and curricula. During that period, the education system promoted Soviet ideology and communist tenets and emphasized Russian culture and language. It also

prioritized vocational instruction, while simultaneously suppressing Eastern European languages and culture.

Today, most Eastern European students receive free and compulsory schooling at the primary and secondary levels. School enrollment rates are high, and nearly 100% of Eastern European residents are literate. Challenges to the education systems include low teacher salaries, rural school closures, and disparities in educational attainment between majority groups and linguistic and ethnic minorities.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. As in most Western cultures, Eastern Europeans tend to be preoccupied more with time management than relationship-building. They too value punctuality, a sense of responsibility, and candid professional interactions. Within their personal lives, however, most Eastern Europeans invest significant time into establishing and maintaining relationships (Photo: A Polish paratrooper interacts with a US National Guard soldier).

They also like to build relations before conducting business, which tends to move more slowly in Eastern Europe than in the US. Throughout the region, residents usually begin discussions with light conversation. Most communication is explicit and direct, with frequent eye contact. Eastern Europeans generally require less personal space when conversing than is common in the US. One exception is in Slovenia, where residents maintain about the same personal distance as in the US.

Eastern European states observe a number of public holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and their respective independence day. Further, all Eastern European states commemorate both the end of World War II and the Soviet era, as well as unique seasonal or harvest holidays.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Most Eastern European forms of artistic expression – including art, architecture, dance, music, and theater – reflect the region's rural peasant past, history of foreign presence, and modern global trends.

Traditional music and dance in Eastern Europe typically promote themes such as nature, the seasons, rural life, and love. Folk songs, festivals, and dance are particularly popular in rural areas, often utilizing traditional instruments. Most common dances are performed in pairs, circles, or lines. Under Russian and Soviet influence, classical ballet became a common form of dance across the region. Classical music and opera remain popular, as well as rock, jazz, and international pop music. Government financing for the arts largely declined after the Soviet era, yet artistic freedom has increased significantly (Photo: Slovak dancers perform in a circle).

Rural landscapes and geometric designs are common themes in visual arts. Eastern Europeans also practice various traditional handicrafts and folk art that reflect the region's rich peasant history, along with Christian or ancient pagan motifs. Common handicrafts include pottery, embroidery, and baskets. Soccer is the most widely followed sport in the region, followed by basketball, volleyball, and gymnastics. During the winter, residents also enjoy ice hockey, skiing, and ice skating.

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures, and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Eastern European dishes tend to be simple, hearty, and mildly seasoned. Most meals consist of a staple, such as potatoes, oats, or barley served with a meat, fresh salad, and various breads. While beer is the most popular alcoholic beverage, some residents enjoy unique herbal liquors or vodka. Notably, the region also has a rich history of wine production, dating back to the 1st century BC (Photo: Hungarian pork goulash and dumplings).

Health in Eastern Europe has improved significantly in recent decades, evidenced by decreased infant and maternal mortality rates and longer life expectancies. Most residents have access to free, state-funded healthcare in modern facilities.

Nevertheless, the region's healthcare systems face several challenges. The quality of care varies significantly between private/public and urban/rural facilities. Generally, public facilities concentrate in cities and are ill-equipped, overcrowded, understaffed, and plagued by corruption. Meanwhile, private facilities offer first-rate care mostly to the wealthy. Finally, a shrinking yet aging population threatens to burden already overloaded national healthcare services in many states.

Non-communicable "lifestyle" diseases such as cardiovascular, cancer, respiratory, liver and diabetes account for the majority of deaths across Eastern Europe. In addition, the region's residents suffer from high rates of suicide and alcohol poisoning. Mostly a result of Soviet-era industrial policies, pollution is a widespread hazard throughout Eastern Europe, causing further health-related issues.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Prior to the 19th century, the Eastern European states maintained largely agrarian economies, with residents

engaging in subsistence agriculture or laboring as serfs on large elite landholdings (Photo: Belarusian currency).

During the 1800s, several states began to industrialize, while Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and Slovenia remained primarily agrarian. Industrialization intensified throughout the region in the Soviet era, when all states followed a centrally-controlled and planned economic system, establishing large collective farms and developing various heavy industries.

Following the end of communism, the states immediately sought to decentralize their economies and adopt liberal, free market systems. While the transition initially caused their economies to contract, by the early 2000s, all 10 nations experienced growth. For most states, accession into the EU further spurred economic expansion. In 2008, the global financial crisis slowed investment in the region, reducing demand for exports and causing severe economic contractions in every state except Poland and Belarus.

Some of the states reacted quickly to the crisis with strict internal reforms which allowed their economies to rebound within a few years. Others were slow to respond and suffered a protracted recession. Notably, the crisis in Ukraine has hurt that country's recent economic growth, while Belarus continues to experience economic stagnation.

The economic outlook in the region is varied. Some states such as Romania, Czech Republic, and Slovenia appear poised to maintain stable growth rates. The non-EU member states of Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova are impacted the most by geopolitical events in Russia. All 10 states are vulnerable to economic fluctuations due to their export-oriented economies. Some common economic challenges include persistent corruption, aging populations, and emigration of skilled workers.

The EU is by far the region's largest trading partner, except for Belarus, which heavily relies on trade with Russia. As EU members, most Eastern European states benefit from a secure business environment and free movement of goods and services.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. All 10 Eastern European states have invested in extensive road networks and efficient public transportation systems, particularly in urban areas. While Slovenia maintains the region's best roads, Ukraine and Romania have some of the world's worst. Rural infrastructure is typically less developed, and corruption often impedes progress on road and rail projects.

Generally in better condition than roads, railways connect major cities throughout the region, though some services are slow and inefficient. The Black Sea and major rivers, notably the Danube, host important ports. Although modern information technology is available in all states, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Bulgaria, and Romania have some of Europe's least developed networks. Internet use also varies widely, with over 81% of Slovaks using the Internet at home compared to just under 63% of Ukrainians (Photo: US soldiers speak with a Polish resident).

While Poland relies on fossil fuels for 85% of its energy needs, nuclear fuels account for 61% of Hungary's energy usage. Most Eastern European states depend on imported natural gas and oil from Russia and the Middle East. Governments throughout the region have announced their intention to increase the use of renewable resources such as hydroelectric plants, wind, and other renewables.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize Eastern European society at large, we will focus on specific features of Ukrainian society.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

Overview

Over the centuries, Ukraine's position between Europe and Asia made it a crossroads of trade, while its abundant natural resources and rich soil attracted migrants and invaders from Scandinavia to Central Asia. Ukrainians trace their nation's history to a 9th-century Slavic kingdom founded by Vikings. In subsequent centuries, Ukraine endured foreign invasions and occupations. By the early 1600's, resistance flared with the Cossacks, who would establish a temporary independent state before absorption into the Russian Empire. The 20th century was a tragic period, with Ukraine losing some 15 million people due to the world wars, famine, and communist political repression. With the 1991 end of communism, Ukraine finally achieved its independence. In recent years, Ukraine has faced challenges to its political and economic stability, while defending its borders from an aggressive Russia. In 2014, Russia occupied the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, while Russian-backed insurgents began their destabilizing activities in Eastern Ukraine, leading to a territorial dispute.

Early History

Archaeological evidence indicates that humans lived along the Black Sea coast on the Crimean Peninsula around 30,000 years ago. By about 20,000 years ago, regional inhabitants constructed dwellings of mammoth bones. Beginning around the 5th millennium BC, people living along Ukraine's waterways in the North and West began to settle in permanent agricultural communities. Members of this Trypillian culture also made intricate clay pottery and figurines (Photo: Ukrainian stamp featuring Trypillian artifacts).

Around 3000 years ago, waves of nomadic peoples began to arrive in the region. Renowned as horse-mounted warriors, the Scythians established a vast empire centered on the Crimean Peninsula around 750 BC. The Scythians were talented goldsmiths who buried their nobility along with the jewelry made for them. Today, that artwork is prominently displayed in various museums. Meanwhile, Greeks established colonies on the Black Sea coast beginning in the 7th century BC. Migrations of groups such as Baltic Goths, Central Asian Huns, and Central Asian Bulgars and Avars continued in the 1st millennium AD (Photo: Scythian earrings from the 3rd century BC).

The Arrival of the Slavs

Meanwhile, Slavic tribes had left their Central Asia homeland, settling north of the Black Sea by around the turn of the millennium. In the 5th century AD, Germanic tribes moved south to invade the Roman Empire, disrupting the Slavic settlements and prompting many to migrate again. Primarily farmers, the Slavs spread through much of East and Central Europe. While other Slavs moved west and south, the ancestors of the Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarusians (known as the East Slavs) spread through much of Ukraine. The Slavs built several fortified settlements, most notably Ukraine's modern-day capital of Kyiv. While archaeologists believe the city was founded around the 6th century, Ukrainian tradition holds that 3 brothers founded the settlement in 482.

Kyivan Rus

At the end of the 8th century, the Vikings began to rapidly expand beyond Scandinavia. Known as Varangians in Eastern Europe, these merchant-warriors traveled along rivers, trading and pillaging. By the mid-9th century, they had reached the territory of modern-day Ukraine. In 882, Varangian prince Oleg conquered Kyiv and united several neighboring tribes. With its capital at Kyiv and its Slavic population known as the Rus, the subsequent Kingdom was called Kyivan Rus. Over the next 2 centuries, Kyivan Rus became a powerful empire extending from the Baltic Sea in the North to the Black Sea in the South.

Volodymyr I the Great's Conversion to Christianity: An admirer of the powerful Byzantine Empire, King Volodymyr I (the Great) traveled to Constantinople, the Byzantine capital (Istanbul today) where he adopted Eastern Orthodox Christianity in 988 (see p. 2 of *Religion and Spirituality*). He then held baptisms in Crimea and soon after invited Orthodox priests to Kyiv, where they performed a mass baptism of city residents. Both Christianity and Byzantine culture heavily influenced the development of Kyivan Rus in following years. In the mid-11th century, Kyivan Rus entered a long period of decline during which centralized power in Kyiv gradually gave way to fractured principalities loosely associated under the name Rus' Land (Illustration: 20th-century painting of Vikings and Slavs).

The Arrival of the Golden Horde

The region was weak and fractured when Genghis Khan and the Mongol hordes united in the steppe north of China and began their conquests of much of Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The Mongol Golden Horde and its armies of Turkic Tatars reached the outskirts of Rus in 1237 and sacked Kyiv in 1240, ending the Kyivan Rus era. Within the territory of modern-day Ukraine, the western principality of Galicia-Volhynia managed to stay somewhat independent during this period. It reached its height under Danylo Romanovych, who in 1256 established Lviv, Western Ukraine's largest city today.

Meanwhile, in the South, Crimea and the surrounding steppe had come under the gradual control of the Turkic nomadic Kipchaks who were later defeated by the Golden Horde in 1237. As the Kipchaks fled, they were replaced by Tatar members of the Horde. When the Golden Horde disintegrated in the mid-15th century, some territories divided into smaller divisions called Khanates (a political entity ruled by a Khan). One such territory, the Crimean Khanate, developed a close relationship with the Ottoman Empire, centered in Istanbul, a status it would retain until its 1774 conquest by Russia.

Polish and Lithuanian Rule

Meanwhile, both Poland and Lithuania were seeking to grow. In the mid-14th century, Poland invaded Galicia-Volhynia and soon controlled the entire region. Having already seized most of neighboring Belarus, Lithuania occupied most of the remaining Ukrainian territories, including Kyiv in the 1360s. Competition between the 2 powers for Galicia-Volhynia ended in the 1380s, when Lithuania took Volhynia from Poland.

Under Lithuanian rule, the Rus (or Ruthenian) lands of modern-day Ukraine initially retained considerable autonomy. As the Ruthenian aristocracy preserved its position, the government and legal code drew heavily from Slavic customs, and the Rus language became the official state language. Influenced by the Ruthenians, many pagan Lithuanians converted to Orthodox Christianity. By contrast, direct Polish rule in Galicia resulted in significant changes. Alterations in law and land tenure caused the Ruthenian aristocracy to lose its political dominance and societal position, Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Poles actively tried to weaken Ruthenian Orthodoxy.

The Polish-Lithuanian Union: Nevertheless, Ruthenian influence in Lithuanian-held lands would not last. In 1386, Lithuania and Poland united, and as a requirement of the union, Lithuania's leader converted to Roman Catholicism. Soon, the Polish-Lithuanian union became Europe's largest country, with borders from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Poland dominated the union, meaning its policies discriminating against the Ruthenian population and Orthodox Christianity also affected Lithuanian-held Ukrainian territories. As a result, Polish language, culture, traditions, and Roman Catholicism spread throughout the region. Some Ruthenian nobles sought support from the Russian principality of Muscovy (Moscow) in their failed attempts to break away from Poland-Lithuania (Photo: 16th-century Polish-Lithuanian coins).

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: To counter the mounting menace of an expansionist Russia to the east and the Ottoman Turks to the south, Poland and Lithuania strengthened their connection by founding the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. Poland then annexed most of Lithuania's Ukrainian territories. Subsequently, the term ***okrayina***, meaning "outskirts" was widely used to describe the Commonwealth's frontier.

Over the next century, almost all ethnically Ukrainian lands experienced Polish political and cultural domination. Because the Poles reserved certain roles and privileges for Polish Catholics, many Ruthenian elite adopted the Polish language and Roman Catholicism. By contrast, Ukrainian language and the Orthodox faith came to be associated with the lower Ruthenian classes. Meanwhile, Ukraine's fertile lands attracted Polish nobles, who settled on large agricultural estates worked by Ukrainian peasants. Gradually, the peasants saw their plight worsen over the course of the 16th century. Many became serfs, enslaved laborers who were bought and sold with the land they worked for their wealthy Polish landowners.

This influx of Polish nobles and expansion of agriculture encouraged the growth of towns where foreigners, known as burghers, formed a new middle class. Burghers included Polish, German, and an especially large population of Jewish craftsmen, business owners, and estate managers (Photo: 19th-century painting of the 1569 union of Poland and Lithuania).

Religious Divides

As the Catholic Church steadily expanded eastward, some Orthodox Ruthenians rejected Polish values and emphasized their traditional Orthodox and Ukrainian identities. For example, around 1580 Ruthenian Prince Konstantyn Ostrozky founded a Ruthenian cultural center in Volhynia that attracted leading scholars and printed the first Bible in Old Church Slavonic, a precursor to modern Ukrainian (see p. 2 of *Language and Communication*).

Seeking to gain status within the Commonwealth, the Orthodox Church leadership in 1596 chose to accept the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, creating the Uniate Church (predecessor of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church – see p. 6 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Although the Commonwealth granted the Uniate Church official recognition, it never gained a place in society equal to that of the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, many Ukrainians rejected the arrangement, preferring to support an underground Orthodox Church and causing a deep split in Ruthenian society that persists today (see p. 2 of *Religion and Spirituality*).

The Cossacks Emerge
Beginning in the 15th century, Lithuania hired mercenaries for protection against the Crimean Khanate. Soon, many others – notably Muscovites, Moldovans, Poles, Jews, and Greeks fleeing economic or religious persecution in their homelands – joined the mercenaries' ranks on the Ukrainian southern steppe. By the late 16th century, Ruthenians seeking to escape serfdom joined these groups, making them predominantly Ruthenian in language and culture.

Called Cossacks from the Turkic word ***kazak***, meaning "free man," these groups developed a semi-democratic military society with a general assembly (***rada***) led by a commander-in-chief (***hetman***). From their armed base at Zaporozhian Sich**,** the Cossacks fought off slaving raids conducted by the Crimean Khanate and attacked Ottoman ships and settlements. Poland also engaged the Cossacks to fight on their behalf against the Tatars, Ottomans, and Muscovites (Illustration: 19th-century painting of Cossacks).

Cossack Rebellions and Orthodox Resurgence: Increasingly viewing themselves as a distinct group, the Cossacks engaged in a series of revolts against the Poles beginning in 1591. In 1620, the Cossacks aligned with the Orthodox Church, and Kyiv, now a Cossack stronghold, became a refuge for Orthodox thinkers. With Cossack military support, the Orthodox Church pressured the Polish

government and received rights equal to the Uniate Church. The resurgence of Orthodoxy sparked a cultural revival (see p. 1 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

The Khmelnytsky Insurrection: Seeking to avenge Polish injustice to his family, Cossack *hetman* Bohdan Khmelnytsky led a successful insurrection against the Poles with the help of Tatar, Muscovite, and Swedish allies in 1648. This victory inspired a massive popular uprising, with widespread violence as Cossacks and Ruthenian peasants turned on those they considered their oppressors – Polish landlords and officials, Roman Catholic and Uniate clergy, and Jews (see p. 7 of *Religion and Spirituality*) (Illustration: 17th-century painting of Khmelnytsky).

The Treaty of Pereyaslav: In 1649, Khmelnytsky began to organize an independent Cossack state. Seeking an ally, Khmelnytsky signed the 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav with the Russian Tsar (emperor) which provided mutual defense against the Poles. While the treaty also specified self-government for the Cossacks, the actual intent of the document is still controversial today. Ukrainian historians typically emphasize the Russians' recognition of Ukraine's autonomy. By contrast, Russians tend to consider the document as evidence of Ukraine's acceptance of Russian control. Despite the treaty, relations between the Cossacks and the Russians quickly deteriorated.

The Ruin

Following Khmelnytsky's 1657 death, no clear Cossack leader arose, leading to a state of chaos the Ukrainians call "the Ruin." Efforts towards Ukrainian statehood failed as competition between Poland and Russia for Ukrainian lands heightened. To clarify their claims, Poland and Russia agreed to partition the Ukrainian territories under a 1667 truce. Specifically, Poland retained its Ukrainian territories west of the Dnieper River (Right-Bank Ukraine), while Russia claimed Kyiv and the territories east of the Dnieper (Left-Bank Ukraine).

Many Cossacks resisted the partition. Seeking to reunify Ukraine, *hetman* Petro Doroshenko of the Right Bank invaded the Left Bank. The invasion ultimately failed, and from 1669, the Ottomans, Tatars, Poles, and Russians competed to control the Right Bank, devastating some areas. In the ensuing chaos many Right Bank Cossacks fled for the Left Bank, where they hoped an autonomous *hetman* state under Russia would provide better living conditions (Photo: 19th-century painting of Doroshenko).

The Ruin ended with the 1686 Polish-Russian Treaty of Eternal Peace, which reaffirmed the 1676 partition. While the treaty ushered in an era of relative stability, Right Bank residents continued to suffer. Now capable of suppressing the weakened Cossacks, Poland abolished the Right Bank *hetman* state in 1699, then encouraged Ruthenian peasants from the Northwest to resettle the depopulated region. Despite these failures, the decades of turmoil solidified Cossack identity. Cossacks on both sides of the Dnieper now referred to their fatherland as Ukraine.

The Hetmanate in Left-Bank Ukraine

In contrast to the Right Bank, residents of the Left Bank enjoyed relative prosperity. In 1669, Moscow reaffirmed its commitment to an autonomous Cossack state (Hetmanate) outlined in the 1654 Treaty of Pereyaslav. Although the Russian Tsar retained considerable influence, for a century the Hetmanate enjoyed a measure of self-government and flourished economically, though the conditions of the serfs gradually worsened. Nevertheless, Kyiv experienced a cultural renaissance and flowering of Ukrainian literature.

Sloboda Ukraine: Meanwhile, land east of the Hetmanate was largely unpopulated. Seeking hardy settlers who could develop the land and defend the region against Tatar incursions, Moscow encouraged Cossacks and Ukrainian peasants fleeing Polish rule and The Ruin to inhabit the lands. Called Sloboda

Ukraine after the free settlements (***slobodas***) founded by the newcomers, the region saw tremendous population growth along with the development of the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine's 2nd-largest city today.

Ivan Mazepa: The Left Bank Hetmanate reached its peak under Ivan Mazepa, who spent much of his wealth restoring and supporting Ukrainian churches, schools, and cultural institutions. In 1704, Mazepa took advantage of a Right Bank anti-Polish revolt to briefly reunite the 2 Ukrainian territories. Nevertheless, Cossack officers resented the Russians' use of Cossack regiments and believed Russia's administrative and military reforms threatened Cossack autonomy. Under pressure from his officers and in a bid for independence, Mazepa led an unsuccessful uprising against Russia in 1709 (Illustration: 18th-century painting of Mazepa).

Russian Absorption of the Hetmanate: Following Mazepa's failed rebellion, Russian Tsar Peter I severely curtailed the Hetmanate's autonomy. Russia took control of grain exports, banned Ukrainian language publications, and conscripted tens of thousands of Cossacks into hard labor. For the next 50 years, successive Tsars continued Russia's erosion of Ukrainian autonomy until Catherine II (the Great) of Russia abolished the Hetmanate in 1764. In the 1780s, the Russian military absorbed the Cossack regiments, while the Russian government imposed serfdom in the Ukrainian territories and placated the Ukrainian elite by elevating their status to equal that of the Russian nobility.

Right-Bank and Western Ukraine under Poland

Meanwhile, life in Polish-controlled Right-Bank and Western Ukraine differed significantly. Few Cossacks remained, as most urban areas suffered substantial economic decline, with their populations becoming heavily Polish or Jewish. Discontent among the serfs occasionally resulted in uprisings.

Russian Expansion

The Russian absorption of the Left-Bank Hetmanate coincided with Russia's expansion south. Seeking access to the Black Sea, Russia conquered the Crimean Khanate in 1774, then annexed the entire Black Sea northern coast by 1783. Ukrainians, along with smaller numbers of Russians, Germans, and residents of the Balkans, then colonized these lands.

Russia also interfered heavily in Polish affairs throughout the 18th century, culminating in initial partitions of the Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772 and 1793. By the final partition in 1795, Russia claimed all of Right-Bank Ukraine as well as most of Lithuania. Thereafter, Russia controlled about 80% of Ukrainian lands, while the remaining 20% fell to the Austrian Habsburg monarchy (Illustration: 19th-century painting of Tsar Peter the Great).

Ukraine under Russian Imperial Rule

The Russian Empire reorganized the Ukrainian territories as regular Russian provinces. As a result, the Ukrainian lands lost their national distinctiveness. The label "Little Russia" (***Malaya Rus'*** or ***Malorossiya***), the Russian term for the Left Bank, all but replaced "Ukraine," while the Right Bank was called Southwestern Land.

In the Left Bank, descendants of Cossack officers gradually became Russified nobility through education, intermarriage, and government service. Other developments affirmed Russian control, such as bureaucratic reforms, the introduction of military conscription, and the founding of Russian universities in Kharkiv and Kyiv. In 1861, Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom. While the estimated 45% of Ukrainians who were serfs found new freedoms, economically they suffered through burdensome taxes or a lack of land. By 1914, some 2 million Ukrainians had emigrated east to Central Asia, Siberia, and Russia's Far East in search of better conditions.

Nevertheless, entrepreneurs established large agribusinesses, developing Ukraine's reputation as the bread basket of Europe. Ukraine also underwent industrial growth in the eastern Donbas region, although the workers were primarily Russian immigrants from elsewhere in the Empire. The Right Bank fared worse under Russian imperial rule. After suppressing an uprising by Polish residents in 1830-31, Russia implemented harsh Russification policies, deporting some 340,000 Polish nobles to the East. Russia also abolished the Uniate Church, while forcing conversion to Russian Orthodoxy.

Imperial Russia restricted Jewish residence to the so-called Pale of Settlement, a large area encompassing modern-day Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, parts of Latvia and Russia, and much of Ukraine (see p. 3 of *Religion and Spirituality*). By the end of the 19th century, Jews made up approximately 8% of the population of Ukraine's Right Bank, primarily in urban areas. From 1881, the Jewish population experienced increased anti-Semitism and waves of *pogroms*, or violent anti-Jewish attacks (Pictured: 19th-century painting of a Cossack playing music as rebels hang a tax collector).

The Rise of Ukrainian Nationalism

In the 1840s, the region experienced a Ukrainian national revival. The most significant figure was poet and artist Taras Shevchenko, whose works glorified Cossack heritage while condemning Tsarist oppression (see p. 6 of *Aesthetics and Recreation*) The Ukrainians living in Austrian-controlled Galicia also became active, establishing the first Ukrainian-language newspaper.

In the late 19th century, Ukrainians in the Russian Empire formed ***hromadas***, secret brotherhoods dedicated to Ukrainian nationalism. In an attempt to suppress their activities, the Russians banned virtually all Ukrainian publications in 1863, extending the prohibitions to performances and education in Ukrainian in 1876.

World War I (WWI)

WWI pitted the Central Powers, comprising Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria, against the Allies, comprising France, Britain, the US, and Russia. Ukrainian territories saw significant conflict and tremendous loss of life, while some 3 million Ukrainians mobilized for Russia and 250,000 fought for Austria. In the first years of the war, both Russia and Austria brutally suppressed Ukrainian nationalists under their rule, as both powers suspected their Ukrainian populations harbored ties with the adversary. In 1917, revolution consumed Russia. Inspired, Ukrainian nationalists established the Ukrainian ***Tsentralna Rada*** (Central Council) and declared the Ukrainian National Republic.

Interwar Soviet Ukraine

Nominally independent for the next 3 years, Ukraine continued to experience conflict and chaos as a re-emergent Poland, the Tsarist Whites, and the communist Bolsheviks fought for control of the region. Between 1917-20, Kyiv changed hands some 15 times. By 1920, the Bolsheviks secured control of Eastern and Central Ukraine, establishing the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkrSSR) with the eastern city of Kharkiv as its capital. The communists' economic policies, namely the nationalization of all businesses and the forcible requisition of food, contributed to a famine in 1921-22 that killed a million Ukrainians. In response, Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy in 1921, which permitted some private enterprise while allowing farmers to control their surplus crops. In 1922, Soviet Ukraine became one of the founding states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). While the 1924 USSR constitution granted each republic government extensive authority over their own affairs, in reality the Communist Party exercised supreme power (Photo: Ukrainians dismantle a Russian monument in 1917 Kyiv).

Early policies established Ukrainian as the official language of the government and military, while expanding Ukrainian education and scholarship. Nevertheless, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin reversed course in 1928, enforcing Russification along with industrialization and agricultural collectivization. While industrialization was somewhat effective, Ukrainians objected to collectivization by revolting, slaughtering cattle, and destroying farm machinery.

The *Holodomor*: To destroy the resistance, Stalin deliberately set unattainably high grain quotas for the 1932 harvest. The Soviets then seized the grain while closing Ukraine to food imports. The result was a massive food shortage leading to the Great Famine or ***Holodomor***. Within 15 months, some 7 million Ukrainians died, 1/3 of which were children. The Soviets then repopulated Ukraine's devastated villages with Russian settlers (Photo: Ukrainian girl during the *Holodomor*).

The Soviets also repressed religious activities, (see p. 3-4 *of Religion and Spirituality*) with several years of purges known as the "Great Terror" to follow. The secret police monitored citizens, then without warning, arrested, tortured, exiled, or executed those deemed disloyal. By 1941, around a million Ukrainians had been shot or sent to labor camps.

Western Ukraine under Polish Rule

Meanwhile, Poland emerged from the chaos of WWI as an independent state whose territory included much of Western Ukraine. Attempting to repress Ukrainian nationalism, Poland imprisoned some 70,000 Ukrainians and censored the Ukrainian press. Further, Poland repressed Ukrainian language use, forced conversion to Roman Catholicism, and encouraged Polish colonization of the region.

The Great Patriotic War

Known as the Great Patriotic War among the Soviet republics, World War II (WWII) began with Germany's 1939 invasion of Poland. In accordance with the terms of their secret non-

aggression pact, Germany and the USSR partitioned Poland within weeks of the invasion. In this way, the USSR acquired Poland's Ukrainian territories, which it incorporated into the UkrSSR, while deporting some 1 million people east, many of them Jews and Poles.

In mid-1941, Germany launched a surprise invasion of the USSR, crossing Ukraine's western border and bombing Kyiv. The retreating Soviets conducted a scorched earth policy while evacuating nearly 4 million skilled laborers and intellectuals, as well as hundreds of factories, to Russia. By year's end, the Nazis occupied most of Ukraine. Although some Ukrainians initially greeted the Germans as liberators, Nazi polices soon proved brutal and oppressive (Photo: WWII-era tanks at a Kyiv museum).

Besides deporting some 2.2 million Ukrainians to Germany as slave labor, the Nazis annihilated the Jewish population through mass deportations and extermination. Some 800,000 Jews living in Eastern Ukraine escaped by fleeing further east into the USSR. While some Ukrainians sheltered Jews, local recruits also aided the Nazis. Meanwhile, 2 resistance movements arose. The nationalist anti-Soviet Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and a Soviet partisan movement battled both the Nazis and each other, embroiling Ukraine in civil war.

By 1943, a Soviet counteroffensive forced the Nazis into a slow retreat, returning all of Ukraine to Soviet control by October 1944. Overall, some 5-7 million Ukrainians died in the war, including some 1.5 million Jews. Conflict destroyed 80% of industrial and agricultural capacity and devastated nearly 29,000 cities, towns, and villages, leaving 10 million homeless. In mid-1944, the Soviets forcibly deported all Crimean Tatars, Armenians, Bulgarians, and Greeks from Crimea to Central Asia and made Crimea a province of Russia a year later.

Post-War Soviet Ukraine

WWII events along with national border shifts following the war compelled population transfers of some 10 million people

across Eastern and Central Europe. Most of Ukraine's German inhabitants fled to Germany with the Nazi retreat. Other transfers were involuntary – Poland expelled some 500,000 Ukrainians while Ukraine forcefully deported over 800,000 Poles. All these movements created clear ethnic territorial boundaries in the region for the first time. Of the 1.3 million slave laborers that were forced to repatriate to Ukraine from Germany, the Soviets deported around 300,000 to Siberia and subjected the rest to political re-education. Western Ukraine, new to the Soviet world, suffered a particularly harsh Sovietization process, with around 500,000 inhabitants deported due to the ongoing rebellious activities of the UPA.

Central planning continued to emphasize heavy industry, yet the Ukrainian economy was slow to recover. Agricultural recovery also lagged, resulting in some 1 million deaths due to famine in 1946-47. Following Stalin's 1953 death, the USSR instituted some reforms. In celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 (Photo: Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Stalin in 1936).

Russification: As part of a broader effort in the 1950s-60s to develop a common communist identity among Soviet citizens, Khrushchev reinvigorated Russification policies by favoring the Russian language over Ukrainian in all realms (see p. 1 of *Language and Communication)*. Policies also encouraged the migration of Russians into Ukraine, while forced migrations and incentives led Ukrainians to settle in other Soviet republics.

Dissident Activity: Begun in the 1950s, the dissident movement blossomed in the mid-1960s under the ***shestydesyatnyky***, the generation born since the Great Terror. Despite the threat of arrest, dissidents communicated through ***samizdat***, self-published protest letters and essays. In the early 1970s, the Soviets cracked down, making widespread arrests while shuttering Ukrainian language publications.

Nuclear Disaster at Chernobyl

On April 26, 1986, the region suffered the world's worst nuclear accident, namely the explosion of a reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant located 65 mi north of Kyiv on the Dnieper River near the Belarus border. While 2 workers died the night of the accident, 28 others succumbed to acute radiation poisoning within weeks. Ultimately, elevated radiation exposure affected some 5 million people, with hundreds of thousands receiving doses high enough to increase cancer risks (see p. 4 of *Political and Social Relations*).

An Opening

Beginning in 1985, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev (pictured with then US President Reagan) introduced a series of reforms that would eventually result in the unintended dissolution of the USSR. These reforms – most notably ***perestroika*** (restructuring) and ***glasnost*** (openness) – introduced market forces into the struggling Soviet economy and increased individuals' freedom of expression. Although the reforms were largely unsuccessful, deteriorating economic conditions sparked a wave of protest movements across Eastern Europe. Prominent protest issues in Ukraine included resistance to Russification, Ukrainian nationalism, religious freedom, and environmentalism sparked by the Chernobyl incident.

New political organizations, such as the Popular Movement of Ukraine for Reconstruction (shortened to ***Rukh***), pressed for change. In spring 1990, the first partially free elections for the Ukrainian Parliament saw many seats go to noncommunist candidates. Meanwhile, Gorbachev sought to preserve the crumbling USSR, proposing a new union treaty among the Soviet republics. In response, students led mass demonstrations and a hunger strike in Kyiv. In August 1991, Gorbachev survived an attempted coup d'état by communist hardliners. Days later, on August 24, 1991, the Ukrainian Parliament declared independence and banned the Communist Party.

Post-communist Ukraine

In December 1991, Ukrainian voters approved independence by national referendum while electing Leonid Kravchuk their first President. Although Ukraine joined the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States, several issues strained relations between Ukraine and Russia, notably the status of Crimea and control of the USSR's Black Sea fleet.

Following its ejection of the Crimean Tatars and other minorities from Crimea at the end of WWII, the USSR encouraged significant Russian migration to the peninsula, resulting in a Russian-majority population. In 1991, Crimeans voted in support of Ukrainian independence. Nevertheless, Russia continued to claim ownership of Crimea. Meanwhile, some 250,000 Crimean Tatars returned to their homeland after years of exile (see p. 15 of *Political and Social Relations*). In 1994, a Crimean separatist movement gained substantial momentum before collapsing, followed by the Ukrainian government reaffirming direct political rule.

The dispute between Ukraine and Russia over the Black Sea fleet lasted several years. After laying claim to the whole fleet, Ukraine eventually allowed Russia to acquire the majority of the fleet in exchange for debt forgiveness. The question of basing rights at the port of Sevastopol was settled in a 1997 treaty that allowed Russia to lease the port facilities for 20 years. The agreement also acknowledged Ukraine's existing borders, including Crimea (Photo: A Russian ship in Sevastopol harbor in 2012).

Economic Collapse: Meanwhile, the severing of economic ties with the rest of the USSR, compounded with government financial mismanagement, resulted in Ukraine's economic collapse (see p. 2 of *Economics and Resources*). The highly corrupt process of privatizing industry resulted in a new class of corrupt and criminal business leaders known as "oligarchs" (see p. 16 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Leonid Kuchma succeeded Kravchuk as President, serving 2 terms from 1994-2004. Kuchma oversaw privatization and the signing of a cooperation agreement with the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1997. Despite calls for his impeachment following accusations of corruption and media suppression, he remained in office.

The Orange Revolution

Former Prime Minister (PM) Viktor Yuschenko (pictured) appeared poised for victory in the 2004 presidential elections against staunchly pro-Russian PM Viktor Yanukovych. After surviving dioxin poisoning on the campaign trail allegedly carried out by Ukraine Security Forces, Yuschenko lost. When evidence of election tampering emerged, some 200,000 Kyivans gathered on ***Maidan Nezalezhnosti***, Kyiv's Independence Square, sparking a wave of protests called the Orange Revolution after Yuschenko's campaign colors. In December, the Supreme Court ruled the election invalid. In new elections, Yuschenko prevailed.

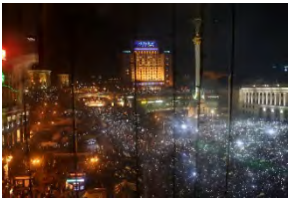
Yuschenko and Yanukovych

During his Presidency, Yuschenko pursued membership in the EU and NATO, yet achieved only closer cooperation. Meanwhile, relations with Russia deteriorated. Turmoil in Parliament resulted in frequent PM changes. Even his rival Yanukovych held the PM post during his term. By 2010, Yuschenko's popularity had plummeted.

Yanukovych won the 2010 presidential election with strong support from Russian-majority and economically depressed Eastern Ukraine. Besides instituting reforms to increase the power of the Presidency, Yanukovych took several actions to appease Russia, notably halting Ukraine's efforts to join NATO and extending Russia's naval base leases in Sevastopol until 2042 in exchange for a discount on Russian natural gas. He and his administration also enriched themselves by siphoning government funds into foreign accounts. International concern regarding the rule of law in Ukraine increased.

Euromaidan: The Revolution of Dignity

Bowing to Russian pressure, Yanukovych's administration abruptly announced it would not sign a long-anticipated association agreement with the EU in late 2013. The move sparked protests on Kyiv's *Maidan* called the Revolution of Dignity and known internationally as Euromaidan (pictured). A heavy-handed government response turned the situation violent in early 2014, leading to deaths. Protests erupted across the country, even in Eastern Ukraine, historically supportive of Yanukovych and his pro-Russia policies. In February, scores of Ukrainians were killed and hundreds injured when police tried to retake the *Maidan* from protesters. An EU-brokered agreement between Yanukoych and opposition leaders called for early elections and the formation of an interim government. With his power base crumbling, Yanukovych fled Ukraine for Russia. As of early 2018, Yanukovych remains on trial in absentia for treason.



Russia Annexes Crimea and Occupies Eastern Ukraine

Taking advantage of Ukraine's political chaos, Russia engineered its annexation of Crimea. In early March 2014, groups of unidentified armed men captured Crimea's airports and occupied the Crimean Parliament building, raising a Russian flag. Pro-Russian lawmakers then dismissed the government and installed their own PM. On March 6, the Parliament voted to secede from Ukraine. In a referendum held 2 weeks later, some 97% of Crimean voters approved of joining Russia. Many observers condemned the voting, citing irregularities such as armed men at polling stations, suggesting the vote was rigged. On March 18, 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a treaty incorporating Crimea into the Russian Federation, prompting significant international protest.

As Russia strengthened its hold on Crimea, it revoked the 2010 treaty regulating its lease on the port of Sevastopol, since Russia now considered it part of Russia. It subsequently increased the price of natural gas to Ukraine by 80%, causing

significant hardship. Russia then announced it had no further interest in Ukrainian territory, yet a NATO report showed that some 40,000 Russian troops were massed on Ukraine's eastern border. In April, pro-Russian gunmen stormed government buildings in several cities in Ukraine's Donbas region. Despite international efforts to defuse the situation, the pro-Russian militants expanded their control, even abducting international monitors and journalists.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government managed to control armed forces loyal to President Yanukovych and to hold together a country divided by the Revolution of Dignity. In May 2014, Ukrainian voters elected Petro Poroshenko, a prominent businessman and *Euromaidan* protester, to the Presidency. Although pro-Russian militants disrupted voting in the Donbas region (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*), turnout elsewhere was strong. Shortly after taking office, Poroshenko signed the long-delayed association agreement with the EU (see p. 11 of *Political and Social Relations*) (Photo: President Poroshenko and former US Senator McCain).

Intense fighting resumed following the election, but by July, the Ukrainian military had made some headway against the insurgents. In response, Russia supplied the rebels with new armaments, including antiaircraft missiles. On July 17, 2014, one such missile shot down a Malaysian Airlines passenger jet over Ukraine, killing all 298 civilians on board.

Ukraine Today

Crimea remains an internationally unrecognized province of Russia, and Ukrainian forces remain locked in conflict with insurgents in the East. As of 2020, the Donbas conflict has resulted in over 14,000 deaths, over 24,500 injuries, and some 1.7 million displaced. Despite the uncertainty caused by the conflict, Poroshenko's administration has been active in implementing reforms to the financial sector, the healthcare system, and the notoriously corrupt gas sector.

Myth Overview

In contrast to history, which is supposed to be an objective record of the past based on verifiable facts, myths embody a culture's values and often explain the origins of humans and the natural world. Myths are important because they provide a sense of unique heritage and identity. For Ukrainians, myth and folklore played an important role in maintaining pagan beliefs in the face of pressures to convert to Christianity during the medieval period. Other stories helped to bolster Ukrainian identity through years of foreign rule. Many tales feature spirits, demons, and other mythical creatures while others tell of the exploits of Cossacks (Photo: Early 20th-century painting of riders on the steppe).

The Tale of the Iron Wolf

Once upon a time, a man gave his servant a magic egg in payment for years of loyal service. The man gave his servant instructions, telling him to go home, build an animal pen, then break the egg in the middle of the enclosure. Warning him not to break the egg on his way home, the man sent the servant on his way. Despite the warning, the servant could not repress his curiosity. He stopped and broke open the egg. Immediately, hundreds of cattle sprang out. The servant was amazed but quickly realized there was no way he could get the cattle home.

Suddenly, an iron wolf appeared and suggested a solution. The wolf would put the cattle back in the egg, but would return to eat the servant on his wedding day. The servant agreed, and the iron wolf put the cattle back in the egg and sealed it. Returning home, the servant followed the original instructions, becoming a wealthy cattle herder. Eventually he wanted to marry. When the iron wolf appeared on his wedding day, the servant leaped on his horse and fled across the steppe. For each of the next 3 nights, he stopped at a different cottage, where the inhabitants presented him with a dog with sharp hearing who would warn of the approach of wolves. Hearing the Iron Wolf approaching on the 4th night, the 3 dogs attacked and killed it. Safe, the man returned home to his bride.

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Official Name
Ukraine
Ukrayina
Україна (Ukrainian)

Political Borders
Belarus: 690 mi
Russia: 1,208 mi
Moldova: 747 mi
Romania: 373 mi
Hungary: 80 mi
Slovakia: 60 mi
Poland: 332 mi
Coastline: 1,729 mi

Capital
Kyiv

Demographics
Ukraine's population of about 44 million is declining at an annual rate of -0.1%, due in part to historically low birth rates (see p. 4 of *Sex and Gender*) and a stagnant economy which has prompted many Ukrainians to emigrate (see p. 2 of *Economics and Resources*). About 70% of the population lives in urban areas, concentrating primarily in and around the capital city of Kyiv, the eastern city of Kharkiv, and the Black Sea port of Odesa.

Flag
The Ukrainian flag divides evenly into 2 equal horizontal blue and gold bands. The blue represents the sky, mountains, and rivers, while the gold symbolizes Ukraine's fields of grain. First adopted in 1918 then banned during the Soviet era, the Ukrainian flag was reinstated in 1992 following the end of communism (see p. 17 of *History and Myth*).

Geography

Situated in Eastern Europe, Ukraine borders Belarus to the north, Russia to the east, the Sea of Azov and Black Sea to the south, Romania and Moldova to the southwest, and Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland to the west. Ukraine's total land area is about 224,000 sq mi, making it Europe's 2nd largest country after Russia and slightly smaller than Texas. Russia currently occupies about 7% of Ukrainian territory, including the entire Crimean Peninsula in the South and about 1/3 of the eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk (see "Security Issues" below and p. 19-20 of *History and Myth*).

Extending north from Ukraine's southern shoreline, vast, rolling plains and steppe plateaus cover most of the country. Ukraine's Black Sea coast is lined with sandy beaches and occasional, rocky cliffs. The rugged Carpathian Mountains (pictured above) dominate much of Ukraine's western regions. Here, Ukraine's highest point, Mount Hoveria, rises to 6,762 ft (Photo: The beach at Yalta, a resort city on the Crimean Peninsula).

Ukraine is home to thousands of small lakes and nearly 23,000 rivers. Most rivers flow north-south, emptying into the Black Sea and Sea of Azov. Ukraine's longest and economically significant rivers include the Dnieper, Dniester, and Donetsk, while the Danube, Europe's longest river, comprises Ukraine's border with Romania. The Pripyat Marsh, one of Europe's largest wetland areas, occupies the northern basins of the Dnieper and Pripyat rivers. Some 70% of Ukraine comprises pastures and arable land characterized by

black, nutrient-dense soil, making Ukraine one of the world's most fertile agricultural areas. Located primarily in the North, forests cover about 1/5 of the country.

Climate

Ukraine experiences a temperate continental climate with 4 distinct seasons. Summers are hot and dry, while winters tend to be long, cold, and wet. By contrast, the southern Crimean Peninsula experiences a moderate, Mediterranean climate with mild winters and long, hot summers. Generally, northeastern and mountainous regions experience colder temperatures than southern and coastal regions, which are warmed by winds sweeping in from the Mediterranean Sea. On average, temperatures in the summer month of July average 75°F and dip to 21°F the winter month of January. Precipitation is heaviest in the North and the mountains of the West. Snowfall typically occurs December-February (Photo: US, Canadian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian service members participate in marksmanship training in Ukraine).

Natural Hazards

Ukraine is vulnerable to various types of natural hazards, predominantly harsh winters, floods, and occasional droughts. In 2012, severe winter temperatures plummeting to -9°F killed over 130 people. Floods primarily affect western regions near the Carpathian Mountains and low-lying river basins. In 2014, for example, flooding forced hundreds to evacuate after heavy rains caused the Dniester River to overflow. Commercial logging, the clearing of land for agricultural development, and illegal timber production result in rampant deforestation, degrading and eroding soil and contributing to flooding and landslides. Ukraine also occasionally experiences wildfires, which are exacerbated by droughts and more prevalent in deforested areas, notably the Chernobyl fallout region (see "Environmental Issues" below).

Environmental Issues

Unrestrained and damaging industrialization during Ukraine's communist period (see p. 12-16 of *History and Myth*) resulted in massive nationwide environmental degradation. Significant water and air pollution was caused by the improper disposal of industrial waste, untreated sewage, and hazardous chemicals. Despite some efforts by the Ukrainian government to clean up affected areas, rivers and lakes remain polluted by raw sewage, industrial waste, and agricultural runoff, particularly in Ukraine's more developed and industrialized East.

Most of Ukraine's major rivers empty into the Black Sea, dumping high concentrations of heavy metals, pesticides, and urban waste along its shores. Moreover, overfishing, heavy shipping traffic, occasional oil spills, and the introduction of non-native species threaten the Black Sea's marine habitats. Industrial emissions continue to degrade air quality in large industrial centers and some urban areas, notably Luhansk, Donetsk, and Zaporizhia, where factories and coal-burning power plants emit toxic fumes. The eastern city of Mariupol ranks as Ukraine's most polluted city.

Radioactive contamination from the 1986 Chernobyl incident (see p. 16 of *History and Myth*) likely will continue to linger for decades. In 2017, Ukraine replaced the aging concrete sarcophagus used to protect Chernobyl's damaged reactor. The replacement structure will eventually allow engineers to dismantle and remove hazardous nuclear materials from the area (Photo: A portion of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant).

Government

Ukraine is a semi-presidential constitutional republic with a parliamentary government. The country divides into 24 provinces (***oblasti***), 2 municipalities (***mista***) of Kyiv and Sevastopol, and the autonomous republic of Crimea. The US

government does not recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, nor does it recognize Russia's designations of the areas as the Federal City of Sevastopol and Republic of Crimea. Adopted in 1996, Ukraine's constitution separates power among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, while outlining the fundamental rights of Ukrainian citizens.

Executive Branch

The President, who is head-of-state and commander-in-chief of Ukraine's Armed Forces, is elected by popular vote to serve up to 2 consecutive 5-year terms. Among others, Presidential powers include the ability to propose constitutional amendments and veto legislation passed by the Parliament. A special National Security and Defense Council helps the President develop Ukraine's national defense policy and advises the President on issues affecting domestic and international stability. Current President Volodymyr Zelensky took office in 2019 (Photo: Volodymyr Zelensky in 2019).

The President shares executive power with the Prime Minister (PM), who is head-of-government. With the support of a Cabinet of Ministers, the PM oversees the country's day-to-day affairs. Nominated by the President and confirmed by the Parliament, the PM is traditionally a member of the political party or coalition that holds the most seats in the legislature. The current PM, Denys Anatoliyovych Shmyhal, took office in 2020.

Legislative Branch

Ukraine's legislature is a 1-chamber Supreme Council (SC) (***Verkhovna Rada***) composed of 450 members serving 5-year terms. While 225 members are directly elected in single-seat constituencies by a simple majority vote, the remaining 225 are directly elected through a nationwide vote based on proportional representation. Russia's annexation of Crimea and

occupation of Ukraine's eastern provinces prevented the affected regions from participating in the 2019 legislative elections, leaving 26 seats vacant in the current SC. The SC controls all national legislative powers, including amending the constitution, appointing positions in government, approving declarations of war, passing the national budget, and ratifying international treaties.

Judicial Branch

The judiciary includes a Supreme Court of Ukraine (SCU), a Constitutional Court, Courts of Cassation, Courts of Appeals, and a system of lower courts. As the highest court, the SCU is the final court of appeal for both civil and criminal cases and is organized into civil, criminal, commercial, and administrative chambers, as well as a military panel. A 20-member Supreme Council of Justice (SCJ) elects the 95 Supreme Court justices, each formally appointed by the President to serve a 5-year term or until age 65, with SCJ approval. Meanwhile, the President, the SCU, and the SC each appoint 6 justices of the 18-member Constitutional Court to serve nonrenewable 9-year terms (Photo: the capital city of Kyiv).

Political Climate

Ukraine's political landscape is characterized by a multi-party system in which political parties or coalitions of parties compete for power. Generally, those parties and coalitions which hold the majority of seats in the SC also hold the bulk of government leadership positions and retain considerable control over the political environment. Parties and coalitions dissolve, reform, or rebrand frequently, resulting in a political climate often characterized by infighting and frequent changes of government.

Ukraine's former President, Petro Poroshenko, came to power in mid-2014 after massive protests forced the removal of former President Viktor Yanukovych, whose pro-Russian and increasingly authoritarian term in office was marred by

scandals, corruption, and accusations of election fraud (see p. 19 of *History and Myth*). Taking office amid an ongoing separatist conflict in Eastern Ukraine (see "Security Issues" below), Poroshenko vowed to restore peace to Ukraine, while politically and economically realigning the nation with the EU and the West (Photo: Former Ukrainian President Yanukovych with former US Secretary of State Clinton in 2010).

While progress has been slow, Poroshenko's government passed legislation to reduce corruption, increase transparency, decentralize industry, launch public broadcasting, and grow civil society. As a result, civil liberties restricted under Yanukovich, notably freedom of expression and assembly, have largely been restored.

Moreover, former PM Volodymyr Groysman, who took office in 2016 following the abrupt resignation of his predecessor, shares Poroshenko's political ideology. Like Poroshenko, Groysman promoted integration with Europe, held a rigid anti-corruption stance, and sought to strengthen Ukraine's democratic institutions.

Although government transparency and the strength of democratic institutions have improved since 2014, Ukraine's preoccupation with the violent conflict in the East and deep economic crisis (see p. 3 of *Economics and Resources*) have slowed the progress of recent reforms. As a result, widespread corruption persists and increasingly provokes public distrust of officials and of democratic institutions.

In addition, the government's inability to subvert Ukraine's extensive organized crime networks – which link to the judiciary, police, and political and business leaders – further erodes the public's confidence. A 2016 poll indicated that just 14% of the population approved of the former administration, raising fears among observers that the popular unrest could spark political upheaval. Ukraine's most recent elections were held in 2019.

Defense

The Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) are a unified military force consisting of ground, air, and maritime branches, with a joint strength of 209,000 active duty troops, 900,000 reserve personnel, and over 88,000 paramilitary troops. With a few exceptions, all men aged 20 must serve between 18-24 months of compulsory military service. The UAF are charged with defending against both domestic and foreign threats, protecting critical infrastructure, supporting disaster relief efforts, and engaging in international peacekeeping missions (Photo: US Senator John McCain with members of a Ukrainian Anti-Terrorist Operation).

Ill-equipped, underfunded, and inadequately trained, the UAF was largely unprepared to respond to Russia's 2014 occupation of Crimea and the subsequent outbreak of hostilities in eastern Ukraine (see "Security Issues" below). Since then, Ukraine has taken steps to posture its military to respond effectively to the current security environment. As a result, the UAF has been increasingly able to engage with separatist forces in the East (Photo: Ukrainian soldiers participate in a blank-fire training exercise with US soldiers in 2018).

Army: The Ukrainian Army consists of 145,000 active-duty troops, organized into 22 maneuver battalions and brigades (including reconnaissance, armored, mechanized, and light), a surface-to-surface missile brigade, 18 combat support brigades, regiments, battalions, and companies, 4 combat service support regiments and companies, 5 helicopter brigades and regiments, and 4 air defense regiments.

Air Force: The Ukrainian Air Force consists of 45,000 active-duty personnel and has 4 fighter brigades, 2 fighter/ground attack brigades, 2 intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) squadrons, 3 transport brigades, training squadrons, transport helicopter squadrons, and 6 air defense brigades.

These units are equipped with 125 combat capable aircraft and 47 helicopters (Photo: 2 US Air National Guard F-16Cs rest on the runway as a Ukrainian SU-27 aircraft takes off in the background at Mirgorod Airbase in Ukraine).

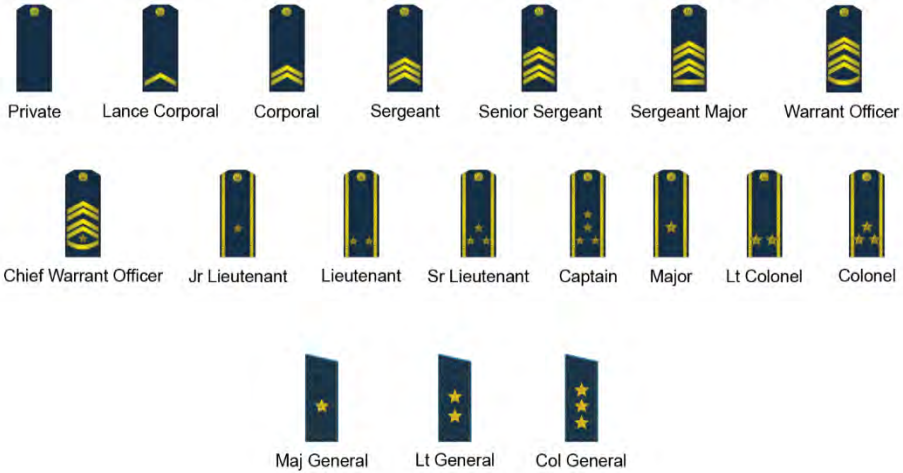
Navy: Consisting of 11,000 active-duty personnel, the Ukrainian Navy includes Naval Aviation and Naval Infantry units and is equipped with a principal surface combatant, 4 patrol and coastal combatants, a mine warfare and mine countermeasures vessel, 4 amphibious landing ships and craft, and 10 logistics and support vessels.

Russia's annexation of Crimea forced the Ukrainian Navy to relocate its headquarters from Sevastopol to Odesa in 2014. Several Ukrainian naval vessels remain under Russian possession in Crimea (see p. 19-20 of *History and Myth*).

High-Mobility Airborne Troops: The high mobility branch of the UAF, the Ukrainian Airborne Troops (also known as the Ukrainian Paratroopers), consists of 8,000 active duty personnel divided into 5 air maneuver brigades.

Paramilitary: The Ukrainian Paramilitary forces consist of approximately 46,000 National Guard members divided into armored, mechanized, and light maneuver battalions and about 42,000 Border Guards, including a Maritime Border Guard subdivision.

Ukrainian Air Force Rank Insignia



Foreign Relations

Ukraine's strategic geographic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia has resulted in a foreign policy influenced by the political, miltary, and economic components of the European Union (EU) and Russia. Upon emerging from communism, Ukraine initially pursued balanced ties with both Western Europe and Russia.

As relations with Russia deteriorated in 2014 (see p. 19 of *History and Myth*), Ukraine eventually drew closer to Europe. That year, Ukraine signed the Ukraine-European Union Association agreement, which formally establishes closer political and economic cooperation between Ukraine and the EU's 27-member states and more decisively demonstrates Ukraine's recent divergence from Russian influence.

International Cooperation: Since the outbreak of conflict in 2014, Ukraine has received military support from the West, primarily from the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – a political and military alliance among 29 nations (including the US) that promotes its members' security through collective defense. While not a NATO member, Ukraine has recently passed reforms to modernize and restructure its military to better meet NATO standards and increase interoperability with NATO forces.

Since 2014, Ukraine has participated increasingly in NATO-led and other international military exercises, conducting 500 training exercises in 2015 alone (Photo: Ukrainian, US, Canadian, and Lithuanian snipers conduct marksmanship exercises as part of NATO interoperability training).

Ukraine is a member of various international organizations, including the United Nations, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization.

Regional Relations: Ukraine maintains friendly relations with all 4 members of the Visegrad Group (V4) – a political and economic alliance of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Individually, the V4 share bilateral trade and energy ties with Ukraine, while also collectively promoting Ukraine's integration into Europe. The V4 also has helped shape Ukraine's foreign policy and domestic affairs to better meet European standards.

Recently, Russia's aggressive military actions in the region have prompted Ukraine to pursue warmer relations with its border nations, Belarus and Romania in particular. Despite having an unresolved border dispute with Belarus and resource rivalries with Romania, Ukraine has expanded military and economic cooperation with both nations.

Relations with the US: The US and Ukraine first established diplomatic ties in 1991, when Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union. Since then, the US has helped Ukraine transition to democracy, better integrate into the European community, and strengthen its free market economy, governance structures, and civil society. Today, the 2 nations share political, economic, and military ties, cooperating in areas such as national defense, regional security, energy and trade, and cultural exchanges (Photo: A Ukrainian marching band performs the US national anthem at the opening of joint military exercises in 2013).

Following Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea and involvement in the separatist conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the US and Ukraine signed the Ukraine Freedom Support Act (UFSA) – a broad bilateral agreement that increases US military and economic assistance to Ukraine, while also requiring the US to impose strict economic sanctions against Russia. While UFSA successfully established closer military cooperation between the 2 nations, Ukraine rejected a

proposal to allow the US to establish a permanent base within its borders in 2016. As a result, US access to and involvement in the conflict remains somewhat limited. Nevertheless, the US continues to train Ukrainian troops and perform joint miitary operations.

In addition to bolstering Ukrainian military capability, the US also provides substantial financial assistance to Ukraine. Since 1992, the US has delivered over $5.1 billion in aid to promote judicial reform, combat corruption, provide humanitarian aid, and strengthen democractic and civic institutions. Further, the US and Ukraine have signed a bilateral trade and investment agreement allowing some goods, services, and capital to move more freely between the 2 nations. Moreover, a US-Ukraine Council on Trade, established in 2008, seeks to increase bilateral trade by identifying mutually beneficial economic opportunities and removing impediments to investment flows (Photo: Ukrainian, Canadian, and US soldiers stand in formation).

Security Issues

Ukraine's security environment is dominated by elevated tensions with a recently aggressive Russia and an ongoing separatist conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Relations with Russia: Ukraine and Russia share historically tense and contentious relations that progressively deteriorated as Ukraine cultivated ties with the West over the last several decades. Most recently, Ukraine's 2014 ouster of pro-Russian President Yanukovich (see p. 19 of *History and Myth*) elevated hostilities between the 2 nations. Tensions spiked significantly a few months later, when Russia invaded and annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. The international community, including the US, EU, and 100 members of the UN, condemned and rejected the move as illegitimate, while affirming Ukraine's territorial sovereignty.

Since then, Russia's fortification of military capacity in Crimea and along Ukraine's eastern borders, as well as its continued support of pro-Russian separatist rebels in Eastern Ukraine (see "Internal Instability" below), have considerably escalated bilateral tensions. Responding to Russian aggression, Ukraine has bolstered its military and invited additional military and economic support from its Western allies (the US, EU, and NATO). For example, the US-led Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine oversees defense and security training of Ukrainian forces and promotes their integration with Western forces from Canada, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom.

Although Ukraine has diversified trade and energy networks with the West, its continued reliance on Russian imports (see p. 5 of *Economics and Resources*) make it particularly vulnerable to economic disruptions from Russia. This vulnerability has become more pronounced since the annexation of Crimea, when Ukraine lost access to much of its domestic supply of oil, as Russia increased the price of its natural gas (see p. 20 of *History and Myth*) (Photo: US Senator McCain meets with Ukrainians affected by instability).

Internal Instability: Since 2014, pro-Russian separatists seeking political autonomy from Ukraine have been waging an insurgency in Ukraine's eastern provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk, together commonly referred to as the Donbas region. Although both sides have attempted to alleviate ongoing clashes through multiple ceasefire agreements – most recently in late-2018 – they have failed to withstand following renewed outbursts of violence. As of 2019, sporadic fighting between Ukrainian forces and separatist militias continues. The severity of the conflict is exacerbated by Russia's involvement in the region. Although Russia publicly denies it, Ukrainian and international observers have documented Russian financial, military, and political support of rebel groups and accuse it of prolonging the hostilities.

As of 2020, more than 14,000 Ukrainians have been killed in the violence and nearly 1.7 million displaced. Hoping the dispute will soon be resolved, most refugees from the hostilities have settled just outside the conflict zone, with about 1 million residing in neighboring Russia. Additionally, the insurgency has severely stressed Ukraine's already scant national resources, with damage to national infrastructure amassing to over $350 billion. As of early 2019, Ukraine's economy remains deeply troubled, threatening to destabilize Ukraine's government and its ability to adequately respond to the ongoing violence.

Ethnic Groups

Ukraine's historical ethnic diversity (see p. 2-10 of *History and Myth)* was significantly bolstered in the 20th century by Soviet policies that encouraged Russian workers to relocate to Ukraine (see p. 13-15 of *History and Myth*). According to the 2001 census, the latest available data, Ukrainians comprise the majority (78%) of the population, while Russians make up the largest minority at about 17%. Most Russians live in Ukraine's South and East. Russians also comprise the majority of the population in Crimea, at about 60%.

Crimea is also home to a large population of Crimean Tatars. Expelled by the Soviet government after World War II (WWII) (see p. 14 of *History and Myth*), thousands of Crimean Tatars have returned to Ukraine since the late 1980s, and today comprise approximately 12% of the Crimean population. Although approximately 3 million Jews lived in Ukraine prior to WWII, the Nazis' criminal activities during the war (see p. 14 of *History and Myth*) and emigration during Ukraine's communist era decimated the community. Today, Ukraine's approximately 103,600 Jews primarily live in urban areas and speak Russian (see p. 7 of *Religion and Spirituality*) (Photo: Ukrainians visit a Jewish memorial for a massacre carried out during WWII).

Ukrainians who identify as Roma or “Gypsy” also constitute a significant minority. While Ukraine’s census tallies the Roma population at about 48,000, human rights organizations estimate the actual population to be much larger, between 200,000-400,000. The Roma live throughout Ukraine in small communities on urban peripheries, with the largest population of around 42,000 in Ukraine’s far west Zakarpattia (Transcarpathia) Oblast. Other minority groups include Moldovans (0.5%), Bulgarians (0.4%), Hungarians (0.3%), Romanians (0.3%), and Poles (0.3%), as well as several hundred Turkic-speaking Krymchaks and some 1,200 Crimean Karaites.

Social Relations

Ukrainian society features several social divisions. The rise of the oligarchs, who seized control of many of the newly privatized Ukrainian industries after independence (see p. 17 of *History and Myth*), led to the development of a new class of ultra-rich Ukrainians in the 1990s.

By contrast, educated professionals, notably teachers and scientists, largely lost their financial security and status available under the Soviet system. Additionally, a generational divide exists between older and younger Ukrainians. The generations tend to exhibit a nostalgia for life as it existed during the Soviet period, while the younger generations welcome the independence and freedom afforded by post-Soviet democracy.

Observers also note a distinct geographical divide in Ukrainian society. While residents of Western Ukraine are characterized as rural, traditional, and oriented towards Europe, residents living in Eastern Ukraine are seen as primarily urban-dwellers, who traditionally look towards Russia for guidance and influence (Photo: A Ukrainian boy in traditional dress).

Since the onset of Russian aggression in Ukraine, otherwise peaceful intra-ethnic relations between ethnic Ukrainians and

the nation's substantial Russian population have deteriorated considerably. Many Russian residents remain culturally and politically oriented towards Russia, with some supporting Ukraine's economic and political integration with Russia. By contrast, other Russians living in Ukraine feel a cultural affinity with Ukraine and are committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and sociopolitical alignment with the West. Amid an increasingly hostile environment, some Russian residents fear that rising Ukrainian nationalist sentiment may lead to restrictions on Russian culture and language and lead to violence by far-right nationalist groups.

Some social divisions exist among ethnic Ukrainians and other minorities. While some minority members have fully integrated into Ukrainian society, a few communities remain socially segregated. For example, most Roma continue to live in isolated communities, experience significant barriers in access to education, healthcare, and social services, and regularly face discrimination, violence, and poverty (Photo: A Ukrainian military member stationed in Crimea during the Russian invasion poses for a portrait).

Ukraine's legal framework has historically protected the cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of all ethnic groups. In late 2017, however, the government adopted a new law restricting the use of minority languages in schools (see p. 1 of *Language and Communication*), prompting criticism from minority groups. Moreover, police and the judicial system often fail to protect minorities from violence and discrimination, leaving some groups increasingly vulnerable to harassment. Tatars and members of other minority ethnic groups living in Russian-occupied Crimea are vulnerable to heightened levels of violence such as killings and abductions by Russian authorities, suppression of their native languages, and denial of their religious and economic rights.

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Overview

A 2016 national survey conducted by an independent Ukrainian research organization estimates that about 65% of the population belongs to an Orthodox Christian Church, around 7% are Greek Catholic, 2% Protestant, 1% Muslim, another 1% Roman Catholic, and 0.2% Jewish. The survey also indicates that about 7% of the population claims to be "simply a Christian," while the remaining 16% claim no religious identity (Photo: St. Andrew's Church in Kyiv).

Ukraine's constitution protects freedom of religion, recognizes no state religion, and calls for the separation of church and state. The law criminalizes discrimination based on faith, while allowing all religious groups to practice freely. Nevertheless, the government retains the ability to restrict religious groups' activities if those practices threaten public order, the health or morality of the population, or the rights and freedoms of other Ukrainians. Religious groups must register with the state to gain legal recognition. Once registered, groups retain privileges not granted to unregistered groups, including the rights to receive government funding, perform religious services in public, own property, open religious schools, and publish religious materials.

Ukraine's Early Spiritual Landscape

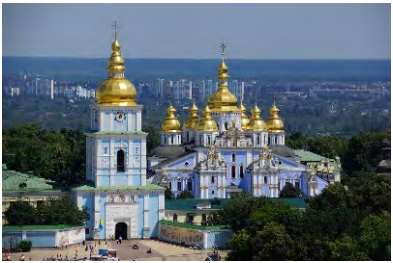
The region's early inhabitants had a rich spiritual life, practicing polytheistic religions in which worshippers recognized and venerated multiple deities and spirits. Deities represented different aspects of life and nature and included ***Perun*** (the God of thunder and order), ***Veles*** (the God of prosperity), ***Dazhboh*** (the God of the sun), and ***Mokosh*** (the Goddess of fertility and birth), among others.

Believing the deities could guide or obstruct human behavior, worshippers performed elaborate ceremonies at outdoor shrines or altars. These rituals often incorporated offerings of food or animal sacrifice. Other early Ukrainians practiced animism, the belief that the spirit of life or consciousness resides in natural objects such as trees, mountains, fields, and animals. Today, a few Ukrainians continue to observe traditional beliefs, while others incorporate aspects of indigenous faiths into their Orthodox or other devotional practices.

The Arrival and Spread of Christianity

Although Christianity already had a small presence in the region in the early 10th century, the religion did not fully take root until 988, when King Volodymyr I converted to the Eastern Orthodox tradition of the Byzantine Empire (see p. 3 of *History and Myth*). Ukraine's leaders subsequently converted much of its population to the new faith, while suppressing followers of pagan traditions.

Nonetheless, many Ukrainians continued to practice elements of their pagan faiths in subsequent centuries, gradually fusing both Byzantine and indigenous traditions to form a unique Ukrainian Orthodox religious identity (Photo: St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery in Kyiv).



Over subsequent centuries, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) served as a center of Ukrainian cultural and literary life and helped define and sustain Ukrainian identity throughout years of foreign occupation and influence (see p. 3-7 of *History and Myth*). Although Poland attempted to spread Roman Catholicism during its control of the region, the prominence of Orthodox Christianity among the peasantry limited Catholicism's reach (see p. 5 of *History and Myth*).

Religion under Russian Rule

When Russia absorbed most of Ukraine in the late 18th century (see p. 10 of *History and Myth*), it proclaimed Russian Orthodoxy as the state religion. Although the UOC lost its religious autonomy when it was placed under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church, Ukrainian religious leaders were able to retain their distinct traditions, and the UOC continued to flourish through the 20th century. While it tolerated Ukrainian Orthodoxy, the Russian state severely repressed other churches and religions, particularly Judaism. Although Ukraine was home to a Jewish community of about 3 million in the mid-19th century, rising anti-Semitism and religious pogroms during Russian rule drastically reduced the population by the start of the 20th century (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*).

The Plight of Ukraine's Jews in World War II

With Ukraine serving as a major battleground in World War II, the population experienced significant losses. Like elsewhere in Europe, Ukraine's Jewish community suffered the most (see p. 14 of *History and Myth)*. In areas they controlled, Nazi occupiers confined Jews to ghettos, shipped them to labor camps, exterminated them in concentration camps, or murdered them by other means. In Ukraine's largest single massacre, Nazi forces murdered over 33,000 Jews in a mass shooting in Kyiv's Babi Yar ravine in 1941. By war's end, nearly 1 million Jews – more than 1/2 of Ukraine's Jewish population – had perished.

Religion during the Soviet Period

Ukraine's 1922 incorporation into the Soviet Union (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*) significantly altered the country's religious landscape. Soviet authorities imposed their communist worldview of atheism, or the disbelief in deities and the rejection of religion. Consequently, the Ukrainian communist state discouraged churchgoing and religious worship, persecuted or outlawed religious organizations, and destroyed places of worship or converted them for alternative uses.

Religious repression was particularly brutal in the 1930s, when the Soviets executed, deported, or banned many Orthodox clergy as part of their efforts to rid Ukraine of any dissidents to the new Soviet political system (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*).

While the UOC continued to function over the next 7 decades, the communist state drastically restricted its activities. For example, the government banned the performance of traditional rites-of-passage rituals such as marriage, baptism, and burial in churches, replacing them with secular ceremonies. The state also systematically persecuted Muslims, Protestants, Jews, and members of other minority religious groups, drastically reducing their populations. While Ukraine experienced a significant revival of Orthodox religious activity following the 1991 collapse of communism (see p. 16 of *History and Myth*), Jewish, Muslim, and some other religions remain small in contrast to its pre-20th century presence in the region.

Religion Today

Over the last several decades, the government has rebuilt and restored many places of worship, notably traditional wooden churches dating to the 15th century (pictured), along with ancient religious altars, icons, and frescoes. Religious participation tends to vary by geography and age and is higher in rural areas and among women and older generations. Orthodoxy continues to play an important role in society, with many Ukrainians intrinsically linking Orthodox Christianity to their national identity.

The Ukrainian government promotes interfaith tolerance, and minority groups are generally safe from religious persecution. Yet since the outbreak of separatist violence in Eastern Ukraine (see p. 20 of *History and Myth*), Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and other members of minority religious communities report harassment and vandalism of their places of worship. Moreover, Muslims in Russia-occupied Crimea (see p. 13-14 and 17 of *Political and Social Relations*) face increased levels of violence.

Orthodox Christianity: Ukraine's Orthodox faithful comprise one of the world's largest Orthodox communities. Orthodoxy in Ukraine divides into several branches. The 2 most predominant are the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP). Established in 1992 soon after the fall of communism, the UOC-KP formed as part of a Ukrainian nationalist movement to distance Ukraine's religious identity from Russian influence.

UOC-KP founders failed to follow canonical procedures when establishing the branch. As a result, the Moscow Patriarch excommunicated the Kyiv Patriarch. As of 2018, the UOC-KP has no formal canonical status. Despite its lack of recognition, the UOC-KP is Ukraine's largest Orthodox branch, with membership totaling about 25% of the population. UOC-KP followers concentrate primarily in western regions, with a few churches located in central districts (Photo: Alter of St. Vladimir's Cathedral, a prominent UOC-KP site).

With a membership of about 15% of the population, the UOC-MP is Ukraine's 2nd largest religious institution. The UOC-MP traces its roots to the original Ukrainian church founded in 988. Although the UOC-MP has held autonomous canonical status since it formally separated from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1990, the UOC-MP still recognizes Moscow's ecclesiastical authority. While it has a smaller membership than the UOC-KP, the UOC-MP owns most of the Orthodox churches located in Ukraine. While followers of UOC-MP reside across the country, they predominate in Russian-speaking areas in eastern and southern Ukraine.

Slightly over 1/5 of Ukrainians choose to remain unaffiliated with a specific Orthodox church, while fewer than 5% attend other, smaller Orthodox churches such as the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), founded in 1921. Heavily persecuted by the Soviet regime during the communist

era, many UAOC clergy and members fled Ukraine to avoid execution. The UAOC re-emerged in 1991, yet membership in the church remains small (less than 2%), with most followers living in Western Ukraine.

Societal divisions sometimes overlap with religious divisions. Local authorities tend to be sympathetic to their region's majority Orthodox sect, while simultaneously discriminating against members of the region's religious minorities. As a result, all Orthodox groups, including the UOC-MP and UOC-KP, are subjected to routine discrimination and prejudice by local authorities. Moreover, amid recent political tensions with Russia (see p. 13-14 of *Political and Social Relations*), some Ukrainians accuse the Russian government of provoking social unrest by leveraging its historic ties to the UOC-MP.

For example, in 2016 Ukrainian parliament members claimed Russia was using the UOC-MP to spread anti-Ukrainian propaganda in order to destabilize the country. Parliamentarians consequently proposed a controversial bill intended to increase government oversight of Ukraine's religious institutions, while restricting some of UOC-MP's activities. In response, the UOC-MP denied any involvement with Russia and criticized the proposed legislation as unconstitutional, discriminatory, and endangering Ukraine's otherwise tolerant religious landscape (Photo: Former US Secretary of State Kerry walks by Kyiv's St. Andrew's Church).

Other Christian Groups: About 4 million Ukrainians belong to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), first established as the Uniate Church in the late 16th century (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*). Seeking to preserve their culture and escape religious persecution during Polish-Lithuanian rule of Western Ukraine (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*), UGCC members accepted the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope in Rome, while retaining their traditional Orthodox doctrine and beliefs. Today, UGCC followers subscribe to a mixture of

Orthodox, Catholic, and indigenous traditions and live primarily in Ukraine's western Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Ternopil districts.

Some 1 million Ukrainians are members of the Roman Catholic Church. Primarily ethnic Poles or Ukrainians of Polish descent, Roman Catholics concentrate in Ukraine's West. Ukraine is also home to a small community of Protestants, whose presence in Ukraine dates to the mid-16th century. Other Christian groups include Pentecostals, Methodists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Seventh-day Adventists.

Islam: While the government estimates that about 500,000 Ukrainians are Muslim, community leaders suggest the population is closer to 2 million. According to government estimates, some 60% are Crimean Tatars who adhere to the Hanafi sect of the Sunni branch, a generally tolerant and liberal school of Islamic thought. First settling in Ukraine as early as the 13th century, the Crimean Tatars suffered significant persecution during the Soviet era (see p. 12-16 of *History and Myth*). Driven out in 1944, Tatars began returning to Crimea in the late 1980s (see p. 17 of *History and Myth*).

Today, most Crimean Tatars continue to live on the southern Crimean Peninsula, a region currently annexed by Russia (see p. 13-14 of *Political and Social Relations*). Since the annexation and subsequent outbreak of conflict in Eastern Ukraine, Tatars and other Muslims have become vulnerable to intimidation, harassment, and incidences of outright violence by Russian occupiers and separatists.

Judaism: Ukraine's most recent census of 2001 tallies the Jewish population at about 104,000. By contrast, Jewish leaders estimate the population is closer to 370,000, making it Europe's 3rd and the world's 5th largest Jewish population. Ukrainian Jews concentrate in Kyiv, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Odesa (Photo: A Jewish cemetery in Western Ukraine).

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Overview

Through centuries of political upheaval and foreign occupation, strong familial bonds remained a constant in Ukraine. While modern economic hardship often results in smaller family units, parents maintain close relationships with their children through adulthood, and extended families are typically tight-knit.

Residence

While more than half of the population lived in rural regions before 1960, heavy industrialization promoted widespread migration to the cities in subsequent decades. Today, about 69% of Ukrainians live in urban areas. Since property is expensive and financing tools are largely unavailable, few Ukrainians own their own homes. Instead, most Ukrainians rent their dwellings, often from the government. In order to defray housing costs, Ukrainians may lease rooms in their homes or share a dwelling with roommates (Photo: Ukrainian apartment building).

Urban: While some larger cities feature a few pre-Soviet era buildings and some new skyscrapers, most urban dwellers live in concrete, multi-story apartment complexes built during the Soviet era. Often small, apartments typically have 1-2 bedrooms and a pull-out sofa in a living room to maximize sleeping space. Some Ukrainians live in a ***hurtozhytok*** arrangement, where a communal kitchen and bathroom adjoin private living areas for several families. Traditional Ukrainian interior decoration includes colorful wallpaper and wall and floor rugs, though modern European home décor is increasingly popular.

Rural: Many rural Ukrainians live in self-built homes with pitched roofs of straw or tile. Houses in the West and North traditionally feature white walls and brightly colored window frames with colorful floral accents. Within the home, the main living space houses a ***pech*** (stove) across from a family table. During the

winter, family members may roll out bedding on the floor near the stove. Among Orthodox families, white-washed walls serve as a backdrop for the display of religious icons (see p. 4 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Outdoor spaces typically include a porch and garden surrounded by a tall fence. Few rural homes have access to running water, and only 1/3 connect to sewer lines. Almost no rural houses have central heating.

Family Structure

Ukrainians value strong familial bonds. Forged through centuries of political and economic hardship, loyal family relations emphasize cooperative work and collective wellbeing. While most Ukrainians today live as nuclear families (2 parents and their children), households comprising extended family members remain common. In such households, ***babtias*** (grandmothers) often serve as caregivers for their grandchildren, while passing on local customs and traditions. Even if both parents work outside the home (see p. 1 of *Sex and Gender*), the father is traditionally the head of the household and primary breadwinner, while the mother holds responsibility for most household chores.

Children

Due primarily to the country's ongoing difficult economic conditions (see p. 3 of *Economics and Resources*), most Ukrainian families have just 1-2 children. Authoritarian parenting styles are common, although parents and children typically maintain a deep and abiding affection for each other. Relatives and parents lovingly pamper children as a means of tempering the strict discipline. Children usually live at home until marriage, even upon graduation from university, and some parents economically support their children well into adulthood (Photo: Ukrainian children in traditional clothing release doves during Independence Day celebrations).

Abuse of minors is a problem that goes largely unreported, with the government lacking effective social services to appropriately

handle cases and serve victims. Of particular concern is child pornography produced for international distribution. Children in state-run residential institutions are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Further, international observers suggest some separatist groups in Ukraine's East (see p. 20 of *History and Myth* and p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*) coerce adolescents into fighting. In 2018, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine counted 180 child casualties over the previous 4 years of conflict. Overall, the ongoing violence in Eastern Ukraine has affected some 1.7 million children, with many forced to flee their homes (Photo: US Servicewoman poses with Ukrainian child).

Birth: According to superstition, denying a pregnant woman's requests brings bad luck. Consequently, Ukrainians typically treat an expectant mother with great care. A birth is a festive occasion, though visits to the mother and child after the birth are usually limited to family members. Because they believe that compliments bring bad luck, some Ukrainian mothers tend to reject praises for their babies.

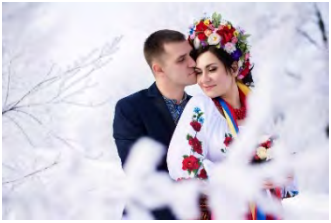
Following a birth, Ukrainian parents typically appoint godparents who provide moral and financial support to the child throughout his life. Among Orthodox families (see p. 5 of *Religion and Spirituality*), parents christen their babies during the first few weeks of life. The ritual typically includes a priest performing a blessing, anointing the child with oil, and ceremonially dunking the baby into a baptismal basin. A ceremonial haircut sometimes follows the event. Godparents usually feature prominently in both the ceremony and the celebration that follows.

Dating and Marriage

Boys and girls typically interact from a young age and tend to begin casual dating in their early teens. Popular activities for young couples include going to movies, clubs, or discos. In general, a relationship may last several years before an

engagement. Traditionally, a man formally sought permission to wed from the potential bride's parents or asked a close friend to seek permission on his behalf. Today, such traditions are rare, with most families considering the decision to marry solely the couple's. One exception is among couples who are not financially independent. They often seek permission to marry from the parents with whom they plan to live following the marriage. Ukrainians typically marry in their late 20s or early 30s, though cohabitation before or instead of marriage is common.

Weddings: Traditionally, Ukrainian engagements and weddings involved elaborate rituals encompassing several days of festivities and symbolic exchanges. Because marriages were often strategic matches for wealth or social position, not necessarily love, many Ukrainians believed that strict adherence to the rituals would create a joyful union in the absence of natural affection. For example, a woman traditionally presented a pumpkin to the potential groom to signal her acceptance or a loaf of bread to signify rejection of his marriage proposal (Photo: Ukrainian bride and groom).



Since the state discouraged these elaborate and uniquely Ukrainian traditions during the Communist era, they largely vanished. Today, most weddings consist of a civil ceremony before a government official at city hall or in a banquet hall followed by a dinner and reception. However, recent revivals of old traditions include a renewed popularity of a mock kidnapping of the bride which requires the groom to pay a ransom of alcohol or treats.

Many couples opt for a religious ceremony after the civil proceedings. During a traditional Orthodox wedding, various rituals symbolize the Holy Trinity. For example, the best man and maid of honor hold gold crowns over the couple's heads while the priest leads the couple around the altar 3 times. The priest then blesses the rings 3 times, and the couple takes 3 sips of wine from a shared goblet. For the duration of the ceremony, the

bride and groom clasp right hands while holding lighted candles in their left hands (Photo: The interior of an Orthodox Christian church).

Divorce: Ukrainian divorce rates have steadily increased since 1960. In 2019, the divorce rate was 3.6 per 1,000 people, higher than regional neighbors Poland (1.6), Romania (1.6), and the US (3.2). Reasons cited for increased divorce rates include alcoholism, infidelity, domestic abuse, and financial issues.

Death

Following a loved one's death, Ukrainians typically cover the mirrors of the deceased's home. Family and friends usually gather for 3 days of prayer. Mourners visit to express their condolences and present flowers to the family. Some mourners may eat a symbolic meal of wheat and honey that signifies eternal life. Family and friends then gather for a funeral, and afterwards, the deceased is buried at a cemetery.

Following the burial, loved ones share a "meal of mercy" in honor of the deceased, then gather again on the 9th day after the death. Leading up to the 40th day after the death, the Orthodox faithful pray fervently for the soul of the departed, as Orthodox Christians believe that God determines where a soul spends eternity during this period. After the 40th day, mourners gather to share another meal. During this event, they traditionally display a small glass of vodka and a piece of bread in memory of the deceased. These offerings remain in place until the alcohol evaporates (Photo: An old cemetery in Dubove in Western Ukraine).

5. SEX AND GENDER

Overview

Ukraine's society is traditionally patriarchal, meaning men hold most power and authority. Social, economic, and political disparities persist despite legal guarantees of gender equality. Moreover, many women become victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Gender Roles and Work

Domestic Work: Ukrainian women traditionally hold responsibility for all household chores and childrearing. During the Communist era, social policies like subsidized childcare and extensive paid maternity leave supported working mothers. Since independence in 1991 (see p. 16 of *History and Myth*), these programs have largely disappeared, yet the expectation that women balance domestic and professional responsibilities remains. As a result, many women today shoulder most domestic responsibility, while also working outside the home. Because rural areas generally lack utilities such as running water and electricity, domestic chores are particularly burdensome, making life for (Photo: A Ukrainian woman).

Labor Force: In 2019, about 47% of women worked outside the home, lower than the US (56%) and Russian rates (55%), on par with Poland (49%), yet higher than regional neighbors Moldova (40%), Romania (45%). In the labor market, Ukrainian women consistently earn about 21% less than their male counterparts, a much larger wage gap than the European Union (16%) and US (19%) averages. Moreover, although Ukrainian women are generally better educated than men, they are overrepresented in low wage jobs and the informal economy, inhibiting their access to benefits and financial independence.

Within the labor force, professions typically have gender associations, with higher-wage positions traditionally designated masculine. Since the end of Communism, some of these associations have changed. For example, during the Soviet era, women made up the majority of workers in the financial sector, yet as that field grew in importance and salaries rose following the shift to market capitalism (see p. 2 of *Economics and Resources*), the sector became dominated by men. Today, women typically work in healthcare, education, food processing, and legal services, while men dominate technology, agriculture, and defense. Even within these "female" fields, women are underrepresented in managerial roles and positions of authority. Within the workplace, women experience significant sexual harassment and discrimination in hiring and promotion (Photo: A Ukrainian woman works in a shop).

Gender and the Law

Social and financial inequalities persist despite legal stipulations of equal treatment in inheritance, property, and work. Similarly, there exists a host of civil and criminal legal repercussions for workplace discrimination and harassment, although enforcement is rare. In addition, women are legally entitled to equal access to credit and loans, but their lower incomes often bar them from eligibility. If they do receive loans, their low incomes often subject them to higher interest rates.

Gender and Politics

As early as the 16th century, women engaged in political life and served as local governors, often because men were engaged in battle during Ukraine's years of foreign occupation (see p. 6-11 of *History and Myth*). Later, during the Soviet era, quotas ensured women served at various levels of government. For example, women routinely made up more than 30% of the national legislature and nearly half of the members on some local councils.

Today, women play a less prominent role in politics. With independence, the quota system ended and as of 2019, just 21% of national parliament members were female, compared to almost 23% in the US Congress. While many women serve as civil servants, they become significantly less represented at higher levels of government and management. Yulia Tymoshenko, Prime Minister from 2007-2010, is a prominent exception. Other politically active women include the members of Femen, a Ukrainian feminist activist group started in 2008 that gained notoriety across Europe for its protests of human trafficking (Photo: Oksana Syroyid, Deputy Speaker of the Ukrainian parliament, participates in a US-led defense forum).

Gender Based Violence (GBV)

GBV is a prevalent problem, though experts believe just 10% of abused women file complaints or seek help. This underreporting is likely due to shame about the abuse and fear of law enforcement. Legal barriers to justice include the failure of the law to recognize spousal rape and domestic violence as criminal offenses. Until recently, a clause even allowed law enforcement to warn victims against “provoking” abuse instead of charging abusers. Some victims remain with their abusers due to housing shortages, a lack of financial independence, and fear of retaliation. Further, the sense of responsibility women feel for their children makes them less likely to leave an abusive partner. Finally, a lack of social services and the reluctance of law enforcement to intervene discourage many women from seeking help.

Trafficking: Human trafficking remains a serious problem. Many trafficked persons in Ukraine are subject to forced labor and sexual exploitation. Ukraine’s economy and geography make it a prime destination for recruitment of women for the international sex trafficking market. Traffickers often target 16-year-olds who have been released from the orphanage system.

Traffickers also use a host of deceptive tactics to recruit women, such as advertisements for well-paying work abroad or talent auditions. Without strong foreign language skills or financial stability, women easily become trapped within the sex trafficking industry.

Sex and Procreation

During the Soviet era (see p. 11-16 of *History and Myth*), public displays of affection and sexuality were largely uncommon. Attitudes have liberalized in recent years, and public displays are now more common.

Independent Ukraine largely adopted the liberal abortion law of the Soviet era. In the immediate post-independence years, the combination of widely-available abortions, few contraceptive alternatives, and scarce information about sexual health and safety resulted in high abortion rates. In 1995, the rate was 4 times that of the US. Since then, improved sexual education and availability of contraception has resulted in lower abortion rates. (Photo: Ukrainian women attend a concert by the USAFE Band).

The Ukrainian birth rate of 1.56 children per woman is below that required to maintain the population and also below the US rate of 1.84. Experts believe poverty and political turmoil contribute to this low rate. To incentivize child-bearing, the government provides monetary bonuses to pregnant women and 4 months of fully-paid maternity leave.

Homosexuality

Though decriminalized after independence, homosexuality remains a socially sensitive issue in Ukraine. Laws banning employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation are seldom enforced. Despite a slow increase in societal acceptance, most LGBT individuals avoid public displays of their sexuality, as harassment and violence remain common. Reports suggest some incidents of violence against gay individuals in Russian-occupied Crimea have been government sponsored.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language Overview

Ukraine's official language is Ukrainian, spoken as a native language by about 68% the population. Beginning around the 17th century, Russian became the official language in some Ukrainian territories and was the primary language of Soviet Ukraine in the 20th century. Consequently, almost 90% of the population also speaks Russian today, many as a native language.

The official status of Ukrainian changed over the course of the 20th century. The right to use Ukrainian in educational institutions was enshrined under Bolshevik rule in 1918 (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*). During Stalinist repression of the 1930s (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), Russian was favored over Ukrainian, yet in the immediate post-World War II years, instruction in Ukrainian was again allowed. Laws changed again in the 1960s favoring Russian. Thus, even though Ukrainian was afforded some official status under Soviet rule, it usually played a secondary role to Russian. Upon independence from the Soviet Union (see p. 16 of *History and Myth*), Ukrainian became the official language, a status that was confirmed in the 1996 constitution (Illustration: Page from a Ukrainian Bible published in 1561).

Today, language remains a sensitive issue. In 2017, the government announced that Ukrainian would be the primary language of instruction in school after grade 5. Further, the law specified instruction using other languages would be allowed only for official European Union (EU) languages. This law has sparked outrage among Ukraine's neighbors, notably Russia and some EU members, who have protested that it removes legal protections for speakers of minority languages (see p. 4 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

Ukrainian

Ukrainian is a member of the East Slavic branch of the Slavic family of languages. It is closely related to Belarusian and Russian, sharing about 60% of its vocabulary with Russian. It also has notable similarities with some West Slavic languages, especially Polish. Written in the Cyrillic script with 33 characters, Ukrainian has 5 characters (Ґ, І, Ї, Є, ‘) that do not appear in Russian. Ukrainian is primarily spoken as a native language in Western Ukraine, although a sizeable minority of the population in Eastern Ukraine also speaks the language (Photo: Metro sign in Kyiv).

Russian and Other Minority Languages

Recognized as a minority language with certain rights, Russian is the native language of about 30% of the population. Russian is the Slavic language with the greatest number of speakers worldwide and is written in the Cyrillic script, although 4 letters (Ы, Э, Ё, Ъ) appear in Russian and not in Ukrainian. Russian is most prevalent in Ukraine’s South and East, particularly the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas region, where up to 90% of residents speak Russian as their first language (see p. 15 of *Political and Social Relations)*.

Ukrainian law recognizes the languages of several other minority groups besides Russian, namely Belarusian, Bulgarian, Armenian, Gagauze, Greek, Urum, Yiddish, Crimean Tatar, Moldavian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Hungarian, and Czech. As of 1990, the latest year for which data are available, Russian has the most speakers (39 million) in Ukraine, followed by Yiddish (630,000), Romanian (330,000), Crimean Tatar (260,000), Hungarian (160,000), Polish (140,000), and Bulgarian (130,000). The other languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers each.

Speakers of these recognized minority languages are afforded certain rights under the law. For example, if a language is

spoken by more than 10% of the population in a certain area, this so-called "regional language" may be used in court and in similar government venues.

English

English has increased in importance as Ukraine's western-oriented government has sought greater ties to the EU (see p. 11 of *Political and Social Relations*). While many young people speak the language at varying levels, English proficiency overall remains poor, with a recent assessment ranking Ukraine as one of Europe's lowest-proficiency countries.

In 2016, then-President Petro Poroshenko declared a "Year of English," offering free language courses and summer camps with the help of international organizations. The Ukrainian government aims to enroll 1.5 million Ukrainian children in the program by 2020.

Communication Overview

Communicating competently in Ukraine requires not only knowledge of Ukrainian or Russian, but also the ability to interact effectively using language. This broad notion of competence includes paralanguage (rate of speech, volume, intonation), nonverbal communication (personal space, touch, gestures), and interaction management (conversation initiation, turn-taking, and termination). When used properly, these forms of communication help to ensure that statements are interpreted as the speaker intends (Photo: Ukrainians at a running festival in Kyiv).

Communication Style

Ukrainian communication patterns are highly dependent on the specific relationship. Ukrainians tend to be friendly and gregarious among friends, but guarded among strangers and acquaintances. Ukrainians may sound rude when they are speaking English, simply because they tend to omit English formalities and grammatical structures that do not exist in their native language. Ukrainians tend to be talkative, often

responding to simple questions such as “how are you” with long answers that reveal a great deal of information about themselves. This talkativeness is especially evident in Ukraine’s traditional celebratory toasts and speeches.

Greetings

Greetings vary depending on age, gender, and social situation. In informal contexts, Ukrainians generally greet each other with a wave and a simple ***Pryvit*** (“hi”). Among friends, men typically kiss a woman once on the cheek, and greet other men with a hug and pat on the back. Female friends usually exchange 3 alternating cheek kisses, starting on the left. In more formal settings and with elders, Ukrainians generally shake hands and say ***Dobryj den’*** (“good day”) (Photo: Former US Secretary of State Kerry shakes hands with then-Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman).

Names

Ukrainian names comprise a first (given), a middle (patronymic), and a last (family) name. The patronymic name denotes male ancestry and is formed by adding an ending (***-vych*** for males and ***-vna*** for females) to a person’s father’s first name. For example, the former Prime Minister’s name Yulia Volodymyrivna Tymoshenko indicates that she is the daughter of Volodymyr. Traditionally, last names had different forms to indicate gender. Upon marriage, a wife historically took her husband’s name and added an -***a*** ending as a gender marker. However, this convention is becoming uncommon, with few Ukrainian women making that change today.

Forms of Address

Forms of address underwent a significant change post-independence, with ***Pane*** (Mr. or Sir) and ***Pani*** (Mrs. or Madam) replacing ***Tovarysh*** (comrade). In formal situations, Ukrainians generally use these forms or professional titles followed by the last name. In informal situations, Ukrainians may address each other using only the first name or the first name with the

patronymic, a combination considered more respectful. In some areas, particularly rural regions, Ukrainians commonly address strangers with generic terms like ***molodoy chelovek*** (young man) or ***devushka*** (girl).

Conversational Topics

Among acquaintances and in business settings, conversation tends to be quite formal and focused on basic information such as occupation, family, interests, and hobbies. In less formal situations, Ukrainians tend to speak more freely, discussing current events and world politics. While some Ukrainians are comfortable discussing politics, even speaking critically of their own country's situation, foreign nationals should avoid such topics. Current hostilities with Russia (see p. 13-14 of *Political and Social Relations*) have inflamed nationalistic passions, and Ukrainians may take offense to any criticism of their country. Similarly, referring to the country as "the Ukraine," as it was known during the Soviet era, may also be offensive (Photo: US and Ukrainian troops participate in training).

Gestures

Foreign nationals should avoid pointing with the index finger, which is considered uncultured, and placing the thumb between the index and middle fingers, which is considered extremely rude. Clapping hands during conversation signifies approval and encouragement, while whistling, especially during concerts and performances, signals disapproval. Ukrainians place particular emphasis on manners, such as pulling out chairs and opening doors for others. They consider it rude to speak with one's hands in his pockets.

Language and Training Sources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ for language training resources. Click on the Resources tab on the upper toolbar then Language Resources.

Useful Words and Phrases

English	Ukrainian	Russian
Hello	Vitayu (formal)/Ahov (informal)	Zdrastvuyte
Hi	Privyit	Privyet
Good morning	Dobroho ranku	Dobroe utro
Good afternoon/evening	Dobroho dnia/večora	Dobriy den'/vyecher
Good night	Na dobranič	Dobroy nochi
What's your name?	Jak tebe zvaty?	Kak vas zovut?
My name is...	Mene zvuť ...	Menya zovut…
Yes	Tak	Da
No	Ni	Net
Please/ You're Welcome	Bud' laska	Pozhaluysta
Thank you	Diakuju	Spasibo
Cheers!	Za zdorovja	Na zdarovie
Where are you from?	Zvidky vy?	Oktuda vy?
I am from…	Ja z …	Ja iz...
Where do you live?	De ty zhyvesh?	Gde vy zhivete?
I am American	Ya amerykanets'	Ya amerikanets /amerikanka (m/f)
Do you speak (English/Ukrainian/ Russian)?	Vy rozmovliajete angliyskou / ukrajinskou / rosiyskoyu?	Vy govorite po-anglijski/ ukrainski / russki?
Today	S'ohodni	Segodnya
Tomorrow	Zavtra	Zavtra
Yesterday	Vchora	Vchera
Have a nice meal	Smačnoho	Prijatnogo appetita
Good luck!	Nechaj scastyt'	Udachii!
Excuse me	Pereprošuju	Izvinite
I don't understand	Ja ne rozumiju	Ja ne ponimaju
What?	Shcho?	Chto?
Me	Meni	Menya
What time is it?	Kotra hodyna?	Kotoryy seychas chas?

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy

- Total population over age 15 who can read and write: 99.8%
- Male: 99.8%
- Female: 99.7%

Early History of Education

Before the arrival of formal education that accompanied the introduction and spread of Christianity in Kyivan Rus (see p. 3 of *History and Myth*), regional inhabitants informally transmitted values, skills, beliefs, and historical knowledge to younger generations. During the 10th-11th centuries, Kyivan Rus experienced a flowering of culture and arts that also included education, with Orthodox priests teaching some people to read and write.

The decline of Kyivan Rus in the 13th century (see p. 3 of *History and Myth*) halted the educational development of the area. With no source for higher education, most educated Ukrainians traveled to universities elsewhere in Central and Western Europe to continue their studies. Nevertheless, a network of mostly parochial lower-level schools developed to serve the population in general. In the 16th-17th centuries, new schools associated with the Protestant Church and Catholic Jesuit missionaries competed for students. Instruction at these schools was primarily in Polish, German, or Latin.

Founded during a period of Cossack control and Orthodox resurgence in the early 17th century (see p. 6-7 of *History and Myth*), Kyiv's Mohyla Academy was the region's first institution of higher learning. Lviv University, Ukraine's oldest continually operating university, was established in 1661 (Photo: The National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy is a bilingual Ukrainian-English institution today).

Under Russian rule in the 19th century, new universities were founded, greatly expanding the reach of higher education (see p. 10-11 of *History and Myth*). Even with this renewed focus on higher education, instruction in the Ukrainian language was largely prohibited at any level. In the late 19th century, Russian imperial authorities even banned the importation of Ukrainian-language books and public readings in Ukrainian. Only about 13% of Ukrainians were literate at the turn of the 20th century.

Education during the Soviet Era

The education system underwent a dramatic transformation as Ukraine was incorporated as a Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*). Change included the expansion of technical and vocation offerings to support the Soviets' industrialization goals (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*). Schools also became centers for political indoctrination, while religious instruction, previously a backbone of the system, was banned. Early policies encouraged "Ukrainization" or the use of Ukrainian as the language of instruction in schools. Yet by the early 1930s, the political climate had shifted and new policies mandated Russian as the language of instruction (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*) (Photo: Graduates of Kyiv's Shevchenko State Art School in 1940).

World War II (WWII) severely disrupted education in Ukraine. Within German-occupied regions, Ukrainian-language schools were only permitted until grade 4. The Soviets established schools for the millions of Ukrainians it evacuated to Russia and Kazakhstan (see p. 14 of *History and Myth*). Dozens of higher education institutions that were also "evacuated" to the East in the face of the Nazi threat continued to function in exile.

While Ukrainian was again a language of instruction in the years after WWII, by the 1960s, Soviet authorities had reestablished Russian's primary place in institutions of higher learning. By the 1970s, Russian-language primary and secondary schools

generally taught no Ukrainian language or literature. By 1987, just 16% of Ukraine's schools used Ukrainian as a language of instruction, some 72% taught in Russian, and 12% used both languages.

Modern Education

With independence, Ukraine's education system underwent major changes again. Reformers moved quickly to create a new Ministry of Education while re-introducing Ukrainian history and literature to the curriculum. Meanwhile, private and religious schools that had been banned under the Soviets re-opened

(Photo: A Ukrainian soldier conducts a mine risk education class for school children in Maheriv in Western Ukraine).

Economic collapse in subsequent years (see p. 2 of *Economics and Resources*) severely affected the provision of education. More recently, Russia's annexation of Crimea and ongoing support to Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine (see p. 19-20 of *History and Myth*) have prevented some children from attending school altogether. While Ukrainian students enjoy relatively high international rankings, the education system faces persistent problems in teacher training and retention, access (especially in rural areas), and enrollment. In 2017, the government spent about 13% of its budget on education, comparable to its Eastern European neighbors and to the US (14.5% in 2014).

In 2017, the Ukrainian government implemented several reforms to modernize the education system. Changes for the 2018 school year include the extension of general secondary schooling from 2 to 3 years, thus making 12 years of education compulsory, and capping general secondary class size at 30 students. Seeking to attract and retain better teachers, the government raised the teacher base salary by some 83%, yet it remains below that of the lowest EU country. To ensure sufficient funding of these salaries, the law also mandates that

the government increase its spending on education to 7% of GDP (compared to 5.4% in 2017).

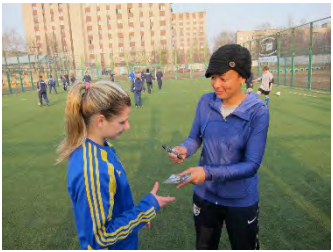
One reform has been especially controversial. According to the new law, national minorities (see p. 1 of *Language and Communication*) have the right to bilingual education in grades 1-4. Starting with grade 5, the law stipulates Ukrainian as the primary language of instruction, though local authorities may choose to offer instruction in a few disciplines in English or any other official EU language. However, the languages spoken by several national minorities, among them Russian, are not official EU languages. According to the law, then, these minorities have no right to instruction in the core subjects in their native languages. The law presumably would allow schools to offer lessons in non-EU minority languages like Russian just as they might for Latin, Chinese, or any other foreign language. Nevertheless, removal of Russian as a language of instruction has been soundly criticized as discriminatory towards Ukraine's Russian-speaking minority.

Pre-Primary: Public and private preschools provide non-compulsory education for children aged 3-5. A 2001 law mandates that preschool education be free of charge in public institutions. In 2013, 85% of children of the appropriate age enrolled in pre-primary programs.

Primary: Primary school comprises 4 years starting at age 6. Compulsory subjects include language, math, social studies, geography, natural science, handicrafts, PE, and art. These are complemented by elective subjects of the students' choosing. In 2014, 96% of children of the appropriate age were enrolled in primary school (Photo: US Army soldiers pose with schoolchildren in Starychi in Western Ukraine).

Secondary: Secondary education divides into basic secondary (grades 5-9) and general secondary (grades 10-12). The curriculum of basic secondary is similar to that of primary. After completing grade 9,

students take final examinations in Ukrainian, math, biology, and geography. General secondary education offers specialized instruction in preparation for university studies or technical/vocational training. At the end of grade 12, students must pass state examinations to receive a certification of completion. In 2014, some 89% of children of the appropriate age were enrolled in secondary education (Photo: US Olympic medalist Angela Hucles speaks to a secondary school student).



Post-Secondary: To study at the post-secondary level, Ukrainians must pass an entrance examination which varies by institution. Ukrainian post-secondary institutions offer technical/vocational education leading to a Junior Specialist Diploma (2-4 years) or Bachelor's degree (3-4 years), and academic programs leading to a Bachelor's, Specialist, Masters, or Doctoral degrees (requiring 4-8 years).

As of 2016, Ukraine had over 800 institutions of higher learning. Acknowledging that many are of poor quality, the government recently announced plans to revoke accreditation of more than 1/2 of these institutions. The government recognizes outstanding performance by granting the label "national" to a university. Although no Ukrainian university ranks among the world's best, Ukraine's system of higher education usually ranks among Eastern Europe's highest. The country's most renowned institutions include Lviv Polytechnic National University, National Technical University of Ukraine/Kyiv Polytechnic Institute (pictured), Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, and the Karazin Kharkiv National University.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Overview

Ukrainians value close relationships in both their personal and professional lives, though they reserve physical affection for close friends and family. In general, personal connections are key to successful business in Ukraine.

Time and Work

Ukraine's work week runs Monday-Friday from 9:00am-5:00pm with a break from 1:00pm-2:00 pm for lunch. While hours vary, many food stores and markets open daily (including Sunday) from 8:00am-8:00pm, though convenience stores are often open until 11:00pm or even round the clock (Photo: Shopping along Khreschatyk Street in Kyiv).

Most banks are open Monday-Friday from 9:00am-5:00pm. Post offices typically open Monday-Friday from 8:00am-9:00pm and from 9:00am-7:00pm on Saturdays.

Working Conditions: While the standard work week is 40 hours, laws protecting laborers in hazardous conditions limit some work weeks to 36 hours. Generally, the work week consists of 5 days, although the right to work part time, with shorter days or weeks, is available by law to pregnant women, mothers of children aged 14 and under, or for the caretakers of the disabled or infirm. All Ukrainians are legally entitled to 24 vacation days a year. The workday before a national holiday ends an hour early.

Time Zone: Ukraine adheres to East European Time (EET), which is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Ukraine follows daylight savings from the end of March-October, when Ukraine is 3 hours ahead of GMT.

Date Notation: Like the US, Ukraine uses the Western (Gregorian) calendar. Unlike Americans, Ukrainians often write the day first, followed by the month and year.

Julian Calendar: Dating to ancient Roman times, the Julian calendar is 2 weeks ahead of the modern Gregorian calendar. For example, Christmas on the Julian calendar generally falls on January 7th instead of December 25th. The Julian calendar was used widely among Orthodox populations through the 19th-20th centuries. The Soviets (see p. 12-16 of *History and Myth*) adopted the Gregorian calendar in part to suppress the unique religious traditions associated with the Julian calendar. Today, Orthodox Ukrainians use the Julian calendar to track religious holidays.

National Holidays

- January 1: New Year's Day
- January 7 (on or around): Orthodox Christmas
- March 8: International Women's Day
- March/April (dates vary): Orthodox Easter
- May 1,2: International Labor Day
- May 9: Victory Day
- June 5: Holy Trinity Day
- June 28: Constitution Day
- August 24: Independence Day
- October 16: Ukrainian Defenders Day

Any holiday that falls on a weekend is observed on the following Monday.

Time and Business

Ukrainian business interactions tend to be somewhat formal. Business partners typically refrain from using first names, preferring titles and last names. Upon meeting, Ukrainians greet each person individually, usually by shaking hands (see p. 4 of *Language and Communication*). While Ukrainians accept tardiness in informal situations, business associates typically expect punctuality.

Personal connections and informal networks were crucial for navigating the extensive red tape and bureaucracy of the Soviet era, and they remain important tools for effective business dealings today. Consequently, business partners commonly gather for meals and other social events to create and solidify business relationships (Photo: Former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko meets with US Secretary of Defense Mattis).

Strictly hierarchical organizational structures are common, a holdover from the Soviet era. Further, the Soviet legacy of central planning and top-down policymaking continues to contribute to a reluctance for quick decision-making. Generally, the Ukrainian workplace emphasizes individualism over teamwork, though praise of performance is neither common nor expected.

Personal Space

As in most societies, personal space in Ukraine depends on the nature of the relationship. Ukrainians typically maintain minimal personal space with friends and family yet preserve a greater distance among acquaintances. When waiting in line or riding public transportation, Ukrainians tend to stand or sit much closer to each other than Americans typically do (Photo: US Army Europe senior female leaders meet with Ukrainian Parliamentarians).

Touch: Conversational touching depends largely on the level of familiarity. While formal situations rarely involve touching beyond handshakes (see p. 4 of *Language and Communication*), Ukrainians typically engage in same-sex touching in informal situations**.** For example, female friends often link arms to demonstrate the depth of their affection.

Eye Contact: Ukrainians typically engage in direct eye contact during greetings (see p. 4 of *Language and Communication*) to convey interest, respect, and transparency. During conversation, moderate eye contact signals attentive engagement, while Ukrainians may interpret a complete lack of eye contact as dishonesty. Nevertheless, staring may be considered rude.

Photographs

Foreign nationals should acquire a Ukrainian's permission before taking his photo. Government and military installations, especially in Ukraine's conflict areas (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*) discourage or prohibit photography (Photo: Petro Sahaydachnoho Street in Kyiv's historic Podil neighborhood).

Driving

Some Ukrainian drivers have aggressive habits, often ignoring traffic laws and the right of way of pedestrians. In urban areas, some drivers may refuse to yield to pedestrians, particularly those who jaywalk. While road conditions in urban areas are fair, heavy traffic, potholes, cobblestones, and streetcar lines can make driving uncomfortable.

Conditions in rural areas are typically poor, where the combination of badly maintained roads and lack of lighting makes driving after dark especially dangerous. Despite severe penalities, drunk driving is common. In 2016, Ukraine recorded 14 traffic fatalities per 100,000 people, higher than the rates in neighboring Romania (10) and the US (12) yet lower than the Russian (18) rate. Like Americans, Ukainians drive on the right side of the road (Photo: A car breaks down in the Carpathian Mountains).

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Overview

Ukrainian traditional dress, recreation, music, and arts reflect the nation's rural peasant history, foreign influences, independence movements, and modern global trends.

Dress and Appearance

Traditional: Ukrainians tend to wear traditional clothing only for folk-dance performances and other special events. Specific patterns vary by region. For example, sheepskin vests and wide leather belts are typical in the Carpathian Mountains. The elaborate embroidery of both men's and women's wear serves to identify the wearer's gender, age, and origin (Photo: Ukrainians in traditional costumes pose with members of the USAFE Jazz Band).

Men's wear consists of baggy trousers (***sharovary***) paired with a white, embroidered shirt, often worn with a vest or embroidered and tasseled waistband. An alternative to the vest is the ***kozhukh***, a long, embroidered robe. Additional traditional wear includes leather boots and hats made of felt, fur, or wool. Dating to the Cossack period (see p. 6-9 of *History and Myth*), the traditional ***oseledets*** hairstyle features a lock of hair at the top or front of an otherwise shaved head.

Women's wear typically consists of a vest and corset over a white, embroidered shirt paired with a wraparound skirt and an embroidered belt or apron. In the winter months, ***svyta*** (fur coats) offer an extra layer. Clothing often incorporates red, which signifies beauty. Traditional leather boots with curled toes are typically painted red, blue, or green. While unmarried girls traditionally weave flowers and ribbons into their hair, married women wear headscarves.

Modern: Everyday wear varies by region and age. In general, older Ukrainians prefer conservative clothing in dark colors. By contrast, younger generations typically favor modern European styles in bright and varied colors. In professional settings, Ukrainians tend to wear suits or skirts and dresses.

Recreation and Leisure

Ukrainians typically enjoy spending their leisure time with family members and friends, gathering frequently to socialize or share a meal. Ukraine's natural features facilitate a variety of outdoor recreation activities. During the summer, families typically go camping, swimming, boating, or rafting in the Black Sea or one of Ukraine's many rivers. The Carpathian Mountains offer a variety of winter sports like skiing and snowboarding (Photo: Ski lift in the Carpathian Mountains).

Holidays and Festivals: Following the end of Communism in 1991(see p. 16-17 of *History and Myth*), Ukraine experienced a revival of interest in religious celebrations (see p. 4 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Previously repressed traditions and rituals, such as a symbolic 12-course vegetarian meal served on Christmas Eve and elaborate Easter celebrations, were restored. Other Christmas traditions include caroling and anticipating the delivery of presents by ***Ded Moroz*** and ***Sniguronka*** (Santa and his snow maiden granddaughter). Besides Christmas and Easter, Orthodox Christians celebrate the Day of the Pentecost and the Baptism of Kyivan Rus, commemorating the arrival of Christianity to the region (see p. 2 of *History and Myth*). Orthodox Christians celebrate their religious holidays some 1-2 weeks later than most other Christians (see p. 2 of *Time and Space*).

Other holidays combine Christian and pagan traditions. For example, Ivan Kupala Day commemorates both the Slavic pagan goddess of water and the Christian prophet John the Baptist. Occurring around the summer solstice, celebrations include jumping over fires, water fights, and releasing garlands of flowers into rivers and streams. Ukrainians also observe

numerous secular holidays and events such as ***Vyshyvanka*** Day, which highlights Ukrainian heritage, art, and culture.

Sports and Games

Ukrainians enjoy a variety of sports and games. Extensive sports infrastructure built during the Soviet era enables the widespread enjoyment of basketball, volleyball, hockey, boxing, and swimming. Tennis and martial arts are also increasingly popular. Ukrainian athletes have performed well in the Olympics, winning medals in gymnastics, boxing, wrestling, and track and field, among other sports. Ukrainian gymnast Larissa Latyina won 18 medals for the Soviet Union in the 1950s-60s, becoming the most decorated female athlete in Olympic history. Figure skater Oksana Baiul became independent Ukraine's first Olympic medalist in 1994. The Ukrainian Klitschko brothers dominated world boxing for years beginning in the late 1990s.

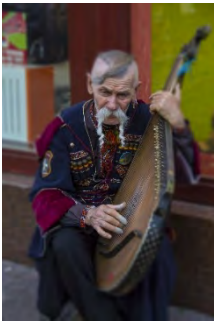
Soccer: Soccer is Ukraine's most popular sport and national pastime. Some 31 clubs make up the Ukrainian football league. Ukraine's most successful professional team is Dynamo Kyiv, with numerous domestic and European titles.

Games: Chess is a serious competitive pastime in Ukraine, which has produced some of the world's youngest grandmasters. The Cossacks (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*) were known for their athleticism, horseback skills, and military prowess. Today, exhibition groups perform trick horseback riding (pictured), gymnastic dancing, and weapons demonstrations based on these Cossack traditions.

Music

Traditional: Traditional Ukrainian music utilizes a variety of folk instruments, such as the ***basolya*** (similar to a cello), the ***bandura*** (a lute with up to 68 strings), the ***volynka*** (a type of bagpipes), and the ***trembita*** (an Alpine horn up to 10 ft long).

Centuries ago, ***kobzari*** or singers traveled from town-to-town performing folk songs and ***dumas***, epic songs about the past, mythical deeds, and current events. Following a loved one's death, Ukrainian women traditionally sang the ***holosinnia*** an expression of grief that included ritual wailing. Many of these ancient traditions were banned during the Soviet period (see p. 12-16 of *History and Myth*) (Photo: A musician with a traditional *oseledets* hairstyle plays a *bandura*).



Considered the father of Ukrainian music, 19th-century composer Mykola Lyseko used music to define a distinct Ukrainian national identity in a time of Russian occupation (see p. 10-11 of *History and Myth*). Utilizing the sounds and rhythms of Ukrainian folk music, Lyseko composed songs and folk operas that helped build a common cultural identity distinct from that of Russia. A contemporary of Lysenko, Mykola Leontovych is known for his choral compositions, notably the Christmas favorite "Carol of the Bells."

Modern: During the Soviet era, Ukrainian-language music often accompanied resistance activities (see p. 15 of *History and Myth*). Following independence, music continued to support political movements. For example, during the 2004 Orange Revolution (see p. 18 of *History and Myth*), popular rock and hip-hop bands performed for protesters, with the song "Razom nas bahato" (Together we are many, we can't be defeated) by the band GreenJolly becoming a popular protest song. Today, Ukrainians enjoy the full range of international pop, rock, hip-hop, and other styles.

Dance

Traditional dances vary by region but are typically high energy and fast paced. For example, Ukraine's national dance, the ***Hopak***, evolved from exercises performed by Cossack soldiers (see p. 16 of *History and Myth*). Often featuring both men and women today, the dance includes acrobatic jumps and spins performed by male dancers that appear improvised yet are

highly choreographed. Another well-known group of dances comes from the Hutsul people of the Carpathian Mountains. Characterized by stamping and intricate footwork, these dances also incorporate vertical movement (Photo: Ukrainian dancers).

Theater and Cinema

An early form of Ukrainian theater was the ***Vertep***, a puppet performance dating to the late 16th century. With a standard set of characters operated by a puppet master, a *Vertep* performance typically included a reenactment of the Nativity with interludes depicting everyday life, local news, or satire. Today, costumes representing *Vertep* characters are popular among Christmas carolers, while some modern theaters re-create the *Vertep* with live actors.

During the Soviet era, theater and film were mostly limited to state-supported "Socialist Realism," an artistic tradition intended to glorify the industrial worker and farmer. Some artists objected to the Soviet constraints, producing works in other styles that brought them into conflict with the Soviet regime. Today, some Ukrainian films reexamine moments of the country's tumultuous history. For example, Oles Yanchuk's 1991 film *Holod 33* depicts the devastating famine caused by Soviet leader Stalin that killed millions of Ukrainians in 1933 (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*). Some contemporary films have received international acclaim. For example, Oles Sanin's 2003 film *Mamay* portraying the forbidden love of a Cossack man and a Tatar woman became the first Ukrainian film nominated for an Academy Award.

Literature

Ukraine's oldest literary forms consist of orally-transmitted poems, myths, and legends (see p. 21 of *History and Myth*), while sermons and heroic epics comprise the oldest written pieces. Compiled around 1133, the Kyiv Chronicle gives a history of the early Eastern Slavs, while providing insight into the political and cultural life of Kyivan Rus (see p. 2 of *History*

and Myth). The 17th-18th centuries were a golden age for Ukrainian poetry, with secular verses focusing on emotions, politics, and national themes, while spiritual versions were often delivered in song. Historical chronicles, notably those describing the struggles of the Cossacks (see p. 6-9 of *History and Myth*), were also developed during this period.

The 19th century brought a blossoming of Ukrainian literature that accompanied the rise of Ukrainian nationalism (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*). Poet and playwright Ivan Kotliarevsky produced the first literary work in the modern Ukrainian language, which was a reworking of Virgil's *Aeneid* set among the Cossacks. Ukraine's most admired poet and symbol of national consciousness was Taras Schevchenko (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*), who is remembered for his musical verses about politics. In the first decades of the Soviet era, many authors were deported or jailed for their failure to conform to the ideals of "Socialist Realism." With the 1960s growth of the dissident movement (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*), literary works became more diverse. With independence, literary freedom returned to Ukraine, inspiring poets, essayists, and novelists to explore an array of topics.

Arts and Crafts

Ukraine has a rich tradition of decorative arts and crafts, such as embroidery, woodcarving, and ceramics. Since the 12th century, Ukrainians have been creating religious icons, which are small paintings of Biblical figures or events. Today, these religious icons are prominently in Ukrainian homes. Similarly, Ukraine's many historical churches feature precious frescoes and mosaics. While associated today with Easter, the Ukrainian art of egg decoration originated as a pre-Christian spring celebration of new life and renewal. Repressed during the Soviet era, egg painting has recently experienced a resurgence. Ukrainians decorate both boiled eggs (***krashanka***) and hollow shells (***psyanka***) by using wax to draw patterns on the eggs, then dipping them in dyes to reveal intricate designs (pictured) that differ by region and town.

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Sustenance Overview

Ukrainians like to socialize with family and friends, often gathering for meals at home or in cafes and restaurants. Meals typically include lightly seasoned, hearty dishes prepared from seasonal, local ingredients (Photo: Potatoes with butter and dill).

Dining Customs

Ukrainians typically supplement 3 daily meals with light snacks throughout the day. While breakfast was traditionally the largest meal, lunch and dinner are more substantial today.

Most visits to the home are usually arranged in advance, though close friends and relatives may drop by unannounced. Visitors may bring flowers or sweets for the hostess, a bottle of alcohol for the host, or toys for the children. Guests typically remove their shoes upon entering the home and replace them with slippers, usually provided by the hosts. In most families, women take great pride in preparing the meal, using few pre-prepared ingredients and seldom referencing cookbooks. On special occasions in particular, dinners often consist of multiple courses and last several hours.

Hosts usually serve their guests first, beginning with the eldest or most honored guest. While dining, Ukrainians keep their hands on the table rather than their laps and avoid placing their elbows on the table. After guests finish their portions, hosts offer additional servings. Generally, guests accept second helpings to avoid offending the host and must decline several offers of additional servings if they do not want more. Alcoholic beverages are prominent during most meals. The host usually offers the first toast, often made with vodka. All diners then toast frequently, generally maintaining eye contact when clinking glasses.

Diet

Ukrainian cuisine reflects the nation's unique geography, fertile soil (see p. 4 of *Economics and Resources*) and history of foreign influence. Demonstrating elements of Russian, Polish, German, and Turkish culinary traditions, dishes vary by region but generally are characterized by rich, locally harvested ingredients that are simply seasoned with pepper, salt, garlic, and various herbs like dill, chives, and parsley (Photo: Ukrainians present bread to US servicemen).

Fresh bread, which Ukrainians typically purchase daily, accompanies most meals. While Ukrainians enjoy a wide variety of bread types, one of the most common is a dark and dense rye loaf made from a sourdough starter. Pork and beef are the most popular protein, followed closely by fish, chicken, and lamb. Meats are typically stewed, boiled, or baked and served alongside starches like potatoes, pasta, and rice. Fish is often smoked or salted. Common staples include buckwheat (***kasha***), oats, millet, and wheat flour made into crepes and various dumplings. Yogurt, cheese, milk, sour cream, and other dairy products also feature prominently in many dishes.

Ukrainians consume a variety of native vegetables such as mushrooms, squash, peppers, cucumbers, cabbage, green onions, and carrots. Popular fruits include apples, pears, berries, plums, cherries, and melons, among others. Because many fruits and vegetables are available only in the summer and fall, families often pickle or preserve them for consumption during the winter months.

Meals and Popular Dishes

Breakfast (***snidanok***) is usually a light meal, consisting of fruit, cheese, bread, or a pastry served with coffee, tea, or milk. Both lunch (***obid***) and dinner (***vecheria***) typically consist of a thick stew or soup followed by a main course of meat or fish paired with a starch and vegetables.

In urban areas, workers may bring a packed lunch from home or purchase a meal from a café or office cafeteria. On weekends and special occasions, meals tend to be hearty and incorporate a variety of appetizers, salads, or soups served alongside meat, chicken, or fish with potatoes, *kasha*, or other starch.

Popular dishes include ***holubtsi*** (stewed cabbage leaves stuffed with ground meat and rice and topped with a creamy tomato sauce); ***borsch*** (a hearty soup of cabbage, beets, potatoes, carrots, and meat, served hot or cold and garnished with sour cream); ***varenyky*** (Ukraine's national dish consisting of large dumplings stuffed with minced meat, cheese, potatoes, or mushrooms and typically smothered with fried onions and sour cream); ***salo*** (sliced pork fat, served raw or fried as a snack with bread and salt or as a meal alongside potatoes); and ***balyk*** (smoked pork tenderloin). For dessert, Ukrainians enjoy fresh fruit, ***kompot*** (fruit stewed with sugar), and various cakes and pastries, such as sweet *varenyky* stuffed with berries or fruits.

Beverages

Ukrainians enjoy coffee or tea, often served with sugar and lemon (pictured), throughout the day. Other popular non-alcoholic beverages include fresh fruit juices and ***kvas***, a lightly-carbonated, fermented drink made from black bread. Alcohol is inexpensive and widely available. In addition to beer and wine, popular varieties include ***horilka*** (vodka), distilled from grain or potatoes and flavored with honey, fruits, chili peppers or other spices. ***Samogon*** (homemade vodka) is also popular, but may be laced with dangerous ingredients to increase its potency.

Eating Out

During the communist era (see p. 12-16 of *History and Myth*), economic difficulties prevented most Ukrainians from dining out. Today, urban Ukrainians increasingly socialize at restaurants and bars, particularly on special occasions. By contrast, rural residents generally dine at home.

Serving primarily Ukrainian and European cuisine, restaurants range from upscale establishments to small, casual eateries offering inexpensive and hearty meals. In large urban areas, international fast food restaurants are also popular. Street vendors sell fresh fruits, *kvas*, and a variety of light snacks, such as ***pirozhki*** (fried dough filled with meat, potatoes, or seasoned cabbage). While restaurants automatically add a 10% surcharge to the bill, some waiters may expect an extra tip for good service.

Health Overview

While Ukrainians' overall health has improved in recent years, many health indicators fall short of US and European standards. For example, maternal mortality dropped from 46 to 19 deaths per 100,000 live births between 1990-2017, although it is on par with the rate of the US (19), it remains significantly higher than that of the EU (6). Moreover, life expectancy at birth increased only slightly during this same period, from 70 to 73 years, remaining below the US and EU averages of 80 and 81 years, respectively. Further, infant mortality (the proportion of infants who die before age 1) reduced from 17 to about 7 deaths per 1,000 live births, yet remains more than double the EU average of 3.

Although Ukrainians generally have access to free healthcare, existing health services fail to properly prevent, detect, and treat diseases. Quality of care diminishes considerably in rural areas and varies between private and public facilities (Photo: A rural market).

Traditional Medicine

Traditional medicine consists of the knowledge, practices, and skills that are derived from a native population's beliefs, experiences, and theories. Traditional Ukrainian medicine centers on the use of home remedies, notably herbal and other natural non-surgical methods, to identify and treat illnesses.

Ukraine has a rich history of traditional medicine. Plants with healing properties feature prominently in Ukrainian folklore, and those knowledgeable in the application of such remedies enjoyed special status in early Ukrainian society. Many of the region's residents relied on alternative therapies during the tumultuous 20th century, when war and political conflict (see p. 12-16 of *History and Myth*) resulted in often acute shortages of modern medicines.

Today, many Ukrainians continue to supplement modern treatments with traditional therapies. Some Ukrainians collect or grow their own medicinal plants, while merchants in both urban and rural areas commonly sell herbal remedies. Popular therapies include periwinkle, belladonna, and lily of the valley to treat cardiovascular disorders; juniper, wormwood, and shrub aloe to cure skin diseases; rosemary, mint, and caraway to treat gastrointestinal ailments; and pastes of stinging nettle, yarrow, and viburnum (pictured) as coagulants to stop bleeding.

Modern Healthcare System

Ukraine's Ministry of Health regulates the national healthcare system, which provides all Ukrainian citizens and registered long-term residents free universal healthcare. Ukraine's national health insurance scheme is funded by government, private, and employee contributions and covers most medical services and procedures. These include preventive care, treatment by specialists, emergency services, prescription medicine, maternal care and childbirth, and rehabilitation. Unemployed or retired Ukrainians must also contribute to the national insurance fund, though their payments are considerably smaller than those of job-holders.

Despite increased government investment in healthcare over the last several decades, Ukraine's healthcare system remains in significant disrepair. Inefficient allocation and use of resources has left public hospitals outdated, understaffed, ill-equipped, and overcrowded. Quality of care further diminishes

in rural areas, where small, often dilapidated clinics offer limited medical procedures and are largely ill-prepared to meet rural dwellers' needs (Photo: US Army medical personnel listen to a Ukrainian Ministry of Defense doctor during a tour of a military hospital in Lviv).

While healthcare is technically free, corruption permeates the system. Patients must often pay bribes to receive even basic services such as examinations by physicians, medical tests, hospital stays, and medical procedures. Consequently, adequate healthcare is inaccessible to many Ukrainians. In fact, in a recent survey, over 90% of Ukrainians indicated they could not afford certain treatments or medicines due to the prominence of these "informal payments."

While low public-sector wages compel some healthcare providers to supplement their incomes with bribes, they also force many of Ukraine's finest physicians to reject public-sector employment and seek opportunities in the private sector or elsewhere in Europe. Private facilities offer higher quality care and address the public sector's gaps in service but only the wealthy can afford them. Significantly, Ukraine's aging population and rising proportion of retirees is likely to add substantial strain to the nation's already faltering healthcare system in the coming decades. While the Ukrainian government and international observers have called for reforms to end the healthcare paralysis, recent political volatility and an ongoing internal conflict (see p. 6-7 and 14 of *Political and Social Relations*) have stalled progress.

Health Challenges

As in most developed countries with aging populations, non-communicable "lifestyle" diseases – cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, cancer, diabetes, and liver disease – account for about 91% of deaths. Preventable "external causes" such as accidents, suicides, and drug use result in about 5% of all deaths, the same as the US rate.

Communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis cause about 4% of all deaths. About 1% of the population is HIV positive, Europe's highest rate. With roughly 31% of children vaccinated in 2016, Ukraine's immunization rate is one of Europe's lowest and leaves Ukrainians increasingly vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, rubella, mumps, and tetanus (Photo: A US Peace Corps volunteer speaks to Ukrainian high school students about HIV/AIDS in 2012).

Significantly, the average life expectancy of Ukrainian men is 11 years less than the EU and 10 years less than the US averages. While life expectancy gaps are less pronounced among Ukrainian women, they also suffer from comparatively shorter life spans than women living elsewhere in Europe and the US. Experts attribute these stark differences to Ukrainians' unhealthy lifestyle habits. These include unbalanced diets, high rates of alcohol and tobacco use, reduced physical activity, and the inability of Ukraine's healthcare system to prevent and treat diseases. Unhealthy habits have also led to rising obesity. As of 2016, about 26% of Ukrainian adults are obese, slightly higher than the EU average of 25% yet lower than the US rate 40% (Photo: An elderly man sells antiques alongside a road).

Some Ukrainian cities remain heavily polluted as a result of unrestrained industrial development during and after the Soviet era (see p. 12-16 of *History and Myth* and p. 4 of *Political and Social Relations*). In highly industrialized regions, toxic discharge continues to contaminate soil, water, and air, causing disproportionately high rates of respiratory and other pollution-related diseases.

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Overview

For centuries, the area of modern-day Ukraine had an agrarian and trade-based economy, first emerging as an important regional center during the medieval Kyivan Rus period (see p. 2 of *History and Myth*). In subsequent centuries, Ukraine became a major supplier of agricultural products to its Polish and Russian rulers (see p. 4-11 of *History and Myth*). In the 19th century, Ukraine began to exploit its significant coal deposits and industrialize, although the country's economy remained focused on agriculture.

Soviet rule in the early 20th century brought more rapid industrialization. For example, of the 1,500 industrial plants constructed in the USSR from 1928-33, 400 were in Ukraine. Industrialization activities centered in Eastern Ukraine, the site of the country's significant mineral wealth, and where Soviet authorities believed factories would be less susceptible to potential German or Polish attack (Photo: Kyiv and the Dnieper River).

Along with industrialization, central planning mandated agricultural collectivization, which forced peasants to work on communal farms and sell their goods to the state. Harsh agricultural policies in the early 1930s caused a devastating famine that killed millions (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*).

Ukraine continued to industrialize until World War II, when the German invasion devastated the country, leaving just 20% of industrial and 15% of agricultural equipment intact (see p. 13-14 of *History and Myth*). By 1950, Ukraine's industrial capacity had recovered, although agricultural output did not return to pre-war levels until the 1960s. Nevertheless, Ukraine emerged as one of the USSR's most productive republics, contributing 1/4 of its total agricultural output and a significant portion of its industrial production. Also during this period, the Soviets

encouraged ethnic Russians to relocate to Eastern Ukraine's industrial centers (see p. 14 of *History and Myth*).

In the 1970s-80s, Ukraine's economy stagnated, as coal mining and iron production slowed and agriculture output decreased due to drought and inefficient central planning. Meanwhile, shelter was inadequate, with over a million Ukrainian families on a wait-list for housing in 1974.

Following Ukraine's 1991 independence, the transition to a liberal free-market economy was difficult. New policies lifting price controls and initiating privatization led to hyperinflation, and an economic contraction of about 60% between 1990-2000 plunged many Ukrainians into poverty. Driven by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and a strong industrial sector, the economy began a rapid recovery in the early 2000s. From 2000-07, Ukraine's GDP grew some 24% a year (Photo: Ukrainian farmers in a wheat field).

This growth ended in 2008 when internal instability (see p. 18 of *History and Myth*) plus a global financial crisis caused a 15% drop in GDP. In exchange for a bailout by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Ukrainian government implemented several reforms, and the economy began to improve.

In 2014, Russia's annexation of Crimea and support of a separatist uprising in Eastern Ukraine (see p. 19-20 of *History and Myth*) severely impacted the economy, causing a contraction of about 50% between 2013-15. Although Russia's 2015 suspension of its free-trade agreement with Ukraine was a serious blow to the already weak economy, the impact was lessened by a free-trade deal with the European Union (EU) that went into effect in 2016.

Ukraine's currency then underwent a severe devaluation, making the country's exports more competitive and making a living more difficult for average Ukrainians, who found their

purchasing power significantly reduced. A $17.5 billion aid package from the IMF helped to prop up the economy.

Today, Ukraine seems to be recovering from this economic crisis. Led by a larger than normal harvest and growth in the manufacturing, construction, domestic trade, and transport subsectors, economic growth measured 3.3% in 2018 and is projected to trend around 3% in 2020.

Nevertheless, weak global demand for Ukrainian exports, especially manufactured goods, could hinder long-term recovery. Other threats to recovery include corruption (an international ranking places Ukraine 126th out of 180 countries), domination by oligarchs (see p. 17 of *History and Myth* – in 2018, the 10 richest Ukrainians controlled some 10% of the country's GDP), and the prevalence of the "shadow" economy (untaxed and unregulated businesses). The most serious threat to Ukraine's economy remains the prospect of continued conflict in the country's industrial center located in Eastern Ukraine, (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Services

Accounting for about 54% of GDP and 61% of employment, the services sector is the largest component of Ukraine's economy. Key services include tourism, financial services, health, education, information technology, and transportation.

Tourism: Once a major contributor to the economy, Ukraine's tourism subsector was devastated by the outbreak of hostilities with Russia in 2014, especially the annexation of Crimea, an important tourist destination. Before 2014, some 25 million tourists visited Ukraine annually, yet by 2018, that number had declined to 14.2 million. Today, tourists visit such attractions as the Carpathian Mountains, the capital of Kyiv, and the seaside resort of Odesa, but until conflict with Russia ceases, the sub-sector is unlikely to make a full recovery (Photo: Ukrainian-built passenger ship).

Industry

As the 2nd largest component of the economy, the industrial sector accounts for 23% of GDP and 25% of the labor force. The most significant sub-sectors are manufacturing, coal mining, and food processing. The sector has been particularly hard hit by conflict from separatists in the Donbas region (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*), home to most of Ukraine's heavy industry. Since spring 2017, the Ukrainian government has blockaded coal and steel shipments from rebel-held territories.

Manufacturing: This sub-sector has experienced a steady decline since the early 1990s, when it represented some 43% of GDP. Today, manufacturing comprises about 11% of Ukraine's GDP and focuses on shipbuilding, machinery, and transport equipment. Light manufacturing includes food processing and textiles. Ukraine is the world's 12th largest weapons exporter.

Mining: Ukraine is a major producer of coal, iron, and steel, much of which is exported. In 2018, Ukraine was the world's 5th largest exporter of iron ore, the 13th largest steel producer, and produced 0.4% of the world's coal. Ukraine's mining industry has been hit hard by the conflicts in the Donbas region. About 1/2 of Ukraine's mines are in separatist-controlled areas, causing coal production to reduce by 1/2 since 2013.

Agriculture

Historically the most important sector of the Ukrainian economy, agriculture today makes up just 9% of GDP and employs 14% of the labor force. Much of Ukraine's farmland contains a fertile black soil known as ***chernozem***, which contributes to particularly high crop yields. Ukraine is the world's largest exporter of sunflower oil, 6th largest of barley, 5th largest of corn, and 6th largest of wheat (Photo: US soldier poses with Ukrainian farmer in background).

Fishing: Ukraine's fishing industry has suffered a steady contraction since the early 2000s, due to overfishing in the Black and Azov seas. The total catch declined from 350,000 tons in 2000 to just over 200,000 tons in 2013. The 2014 loss of Crimea to Russia caused the Ukrainian catch to decrease again to under 100,000 tons in 2015-2018.

Currency

Introduced in 1996, Ukraine's currency is the ***hryvnia*** (**₴**) (pictured), issued in 9 banknote values (1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500) and 1 coin value (1). It subdivides into 100 ***kopiyky,*** issued in 6 coin values (1, 2, 5, 10, 25, 50), although 1 and 2 *kopiyky* coins are rarely used. As of mid-2020, $1 equals ₴27.44 (₴1 is about 4¢). From 2009-14, the currency was pegged to the US dollar at about ₴8 to $1, but as part of the IMF's 2014 fiscal bailout, Ukraine was required to decouple the *hryvnia* from the dollar.

Foreign Trade

Totaling $47.35 billion in 2018, Ukraine's exports consisted of metals, fuel and petroleum products; chemicals; machinery and transport equipment; and foodstuffs to Russia (8%), Poland (7%), Italy (6%), Turkey (5%), Germany (5%), China (5%), and India (5%). In the same year, imports totaled $57.05 billion and comprised fuel and petroleum products; machinery and equipment; and chemicals primarily from Russia (14%), China (13%), Germany (11%), Belarus (7%), Poland (6%), and the US (5%).

Foreign Aid

In 2019, Ukraine received about $214 million in aid from the US, with the majority earmarked for democracy, human rights, and governance projects; peace and security initiatives; health; and economic development. In 2016, Ukraine received some $10 billion in loans to finance economic reforms, much of it from multilateral institutions like the IMF. As of early 2020, the EU has provided $4.5 billion in macro-financial assistance loans since 2014.

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Overview

Despite plans for improvements, much of Ukraine's physical infrastructure remains in poor condition. Ukrainians enjoy a free and unrestricted Internet yet face some restrictions to their constitutionally-protected freedoms of speech and press.

Transportation

A minority of Ukrainians use a privately-owned vehicle (POV). The majority travel instead by bus, train, streetcar, taxi, bicycle, or foot. In urban areas, a public network of buses and streetcars (pictured) provides efficient service. In some areas, unofficial and unregulated taxis and buses also offer transportation. Underground metro systems operate in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk. Trains and buses run between large cities and offer connections to the rest of Europe, though connections to Russia have been disrupted by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Ukraine's location between Europe and Russia, with ports on the Black Sea and river connections to the Baltic Sea, makes the country an important trade corridor. Accordingly, the government has sought to invest in infrastructure to attract foreign capital and revitalize the economy. Centered as it is in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine, the country's industrial transportation infrastructure has been disrupted by the ongoing conflicts there (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Roadways: In 2017, some 95% of Ukraine's 107,124 mi of roads were paved. While highways connect all major cities, many roads are in poor condition, especially those beyond urban areas. The government plans significant upgrades to the road system, spending over $2.15 billion in 2017 and 2018 to repair over 4,350 miles of roadway.

Railways: Ukraine has just over 13,500 mi of railways, comprising the world's 12th largest network. Significantly improved since the end of the Soviet era, the network is efficient, extensive, and connects Ukraine's towns and cities to international destinations. Most recently, the state-owned Ukrainian Railways has proposed a capital infusion of $5 billion from 2017-2021 to further modernize the entire system.

Ports and Waterways: Ukraine has over 1,000 mi of waterways. The main navigable rivers are the Danube (which connects Ukraine to 9 countries) and the Dnieper (which also flows through Belarus and Russia). These rivers remain navigable even through the winter months with the aid of icebreakers. Ukraine has some 18 ports on the Black and Azov seas, notably Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Mariupol. Since 2014, Russia has held the Crimean Peninsula's Black Sea ports, notably Sevastopol and Yalta (see p. 19-20 of *History and Myth*).

Airways: Ukraine has 187 airports, 108 with paved runways. The largest, Kyiv's Boryspil International Airport, served over 15.3 million passengers in 2019. The national carrier, Ukraine International Airlines, offers flights to Europe, the Middle East, the US, and Asia (Photo: Ukraine International Airlines plane).

Energy

Ukraine remains highly dependent on nuclear energy despite the devastating 1986 Chernobyl accident (see p. 16 of *History and Myth*). With 15 reactors in 4 locations and 2 more reactors under construction, Ukraine receives more than 1/2 of its electricity from nuclear power and generates the remainder from fossil fuels or hydroelectric and other renewable sources. Ukraine produces a surplus of electricity that it exports to neighboring countries. Ukraine aims to increase the share of renewables in electricity production to 25% by 2035. As part of this strategy, the government has pursued joint investment projects with China.

Since independence, Ukraine has purchased natural gas from Russia, which uses pipelines across Ukrainian territory to transport its natural gas to other European customers. In 2014, however, Russia severed all gas exports to Ukraine over a payment dispute that was aggravated by the Russian annexation of Crimea (see p. 19-20 of *History and Myth*). While a European Union (EU)-brokered deal eventually restored gas shipments, Russia stopped them again in 2015 over non-payment. As of early 2020, Ukraine buys no natural gas from Russia. Instead, it is encouraging investment to develop its own natural gas industry, while importing gas from EU members. Meanwhile, Russia continues to transport gas through Ukrainian territory to the EU in the interim of constructing new pipelines that circumvent Ukraine (Photo: Former US Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt visits a Ukrainian gas pipeline).

Media

While Ukraine's constitution protects freedom of speech and press and specific laws regulate the media and protect journalists, the government has restricted these rights. Recent legislation banned the use of Communist and Nazi symbols, while prohibiting statements that promote war, instigate racial or religious conflict, or support Russian aggression. In 2017, the government consolidated several publicly-owned TV channels into a single public television broadcaster in an attempt to centralize and better control state-owned media.

Ukraine's ongoing conflict with Russia has negatively impacted media freedom in various ways. To hinder Russian propaganda efforts, Ukrainian authorities frequently block Russian TV broadcasts; ban movies, songs, and shows; and prohibit Russian journalists from working in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government also sanctions, fines, or imprisons journalists and citizens who criticize Ukraine's role in the Donbas regional conflict (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*). Some observers speculate that the government has even instigated attacks against pro-Russian journalists.

The ownership of Ukraine's media is concentrated in the hands of oligarchs (see p. 17 of *History and Myth*), who use their power to influence reporting by encouraging journalists to engage in self-censorship. Likewise, some journalists accept payments for favorable reports, a widespread practice known as ***jeansa***. The Ukrainian government has sought to combat the oligarchs' control of the media, most recently with a 2014 law requiring media companies to publicly divulge their ownership (Photo: US Army Lt Gen Mark Hertling and his Ukrainian counterpart conduct a press conference).

Print Media: The Ukrainian press includes local and national periodicals printed in multiple languages. The largest newspaper is the Ukrainian-language *Ekspres*, popular in Western Ukraine. Other prominent newspapers include the Russian-language *Fakty I Kommentarii, KP,* and *Seyodnya*. A 2015 law required all print media owned by the government to be privatized, though the transition is ongoing.

Radio and TV: The state-owned National Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine operates various popular radio stations and TV channels, while several politically powerful individuals have their own private broadcasters. For example, current President Petro Poroshenko owns the TV station *5 Kanal.* A 2016 law stipulates that 30% of radio stations' playlists and 60% of TV news programs must be in Ukrainian.

Telecommunications

Ukraine has a modern telecommunications network. As of 2018, Ukraine had about 14 landline and 123 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people.

Internet: Despite the relatively low cost of Internet access, only about 63% of Ukrainians use the Internet regularly. Most people access the Internet from home or work, although increasing numbers of Ukrainians utilize smartphones. Since 2017, the government has instructed Internet providers to block some Russian sites it deems contrary to Ukrainian interests.

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